



East Sister Island

Terms of Reference

Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve the **Terms of Reference** for the preparation of a Management Plan for **East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve**. These Terms of Reference meet all requirements as set out in the *Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual*. They will effectively guide the management planning process.



Managing Director
Ontario Parks

Date May 12/03

East Sister Island TERMS OF REFERENCE Park Management Plan

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Terms of Reference is to:

- *explain the rationale for initiating a park management plan for East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve;*
- *outline a proposed planning program for the preparation of the plan; and*
- *identify the staff and other resources required for the planning process.*

2.0 BACKGROUND

East Sister Island is located in the western basin of Lake Erie, 25 kilometres south of Leamington, and 18 kilometres west of Pelee Island (see Figure 1). The island was regulated under the *Provincial Parks Act* in 1976 as East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Regulation 741/76). The regulation describes the park as being in the Township of Pelee in the County of Essex, being composed of the 15 hectare East Sister Island and a surrounding 38 hectare water lot (being 122 metres in width extending from the high-water mark) for a total area of 53 hectares. The *East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve Interim Management Statement* was developed in 2000 to provide direction for the custodial management of the nature reserve.

The island is nearly flat and only a few metres above lake level at its highest point. The bedrock of East Sister Island provides excellent examples of glacial striae (grooved lines) due to the scraping and scouring of glacial ice. The island's interior limestone bedrock is covered by shallow, moist soils. The nature reserve has had minimal human disturbance and is most characteristic of the pre-settlement flora and fauna of the Erie islands. The combination of the island's southern location and the moderating effects of the lake result in one of the longest growing seasons in eastern Canada, the occurrence of the endangered Lake Erie watersnake (*Nerodia sipedon insularum*) as well as several other animal and plant species not found elsewhere in Canada. Significant vegetation communities identified in this area include the Black Maple – Hackberry Forest and Hackberry – Elm – Red Ash Forest. Kentucky Coffee-tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), considered threatened in Canada, is more numerous here than elsewhere in the Erie islands. In the west central part of the island a Kentucky Coffee-tree stand provides sanctuary for a large heronry. This heronry represents a major breeding colony for Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) and Black-crowned Night-herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). Increasingly, Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) also use the Kentucky Coffee-tree for nesting. As a result, the accumulation of large amounts of strong excrement from such high densities of fish-eating birds causes severe damage to the foliage of the nest trees themselves, as well as any vegetation nearby.

The *Provincial Parks Act* and Ontario Parks' policy require that a management plan be prepared for East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve. A management plan will define the park's goal, objectives and long term direction for the protection and management of the nature reserve. In particular, management issues such as unauthorized access, control of cormorants and restoration of the island's significant vegetation communities will be addressed in the planning process.






The primary role of this planning process will be to identify the contributions that East Sister Island makes to the achievement of the four Ontario Provincial Parks system objectives (protection, heritage appreciation, recreation, tourism) and to identify and establish management policies aimed at maintaining or enhancing those contributions. Recent reports, supporting documents unpublished data and other relevant information will be made available for public review in the development of this plan.



East Sister Island

Figure 1:
Regional Context

Legend

-  East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve
-  Provincial Parks
-  Urban Centres
-  Waterbodies
-  Highways
-  Roads

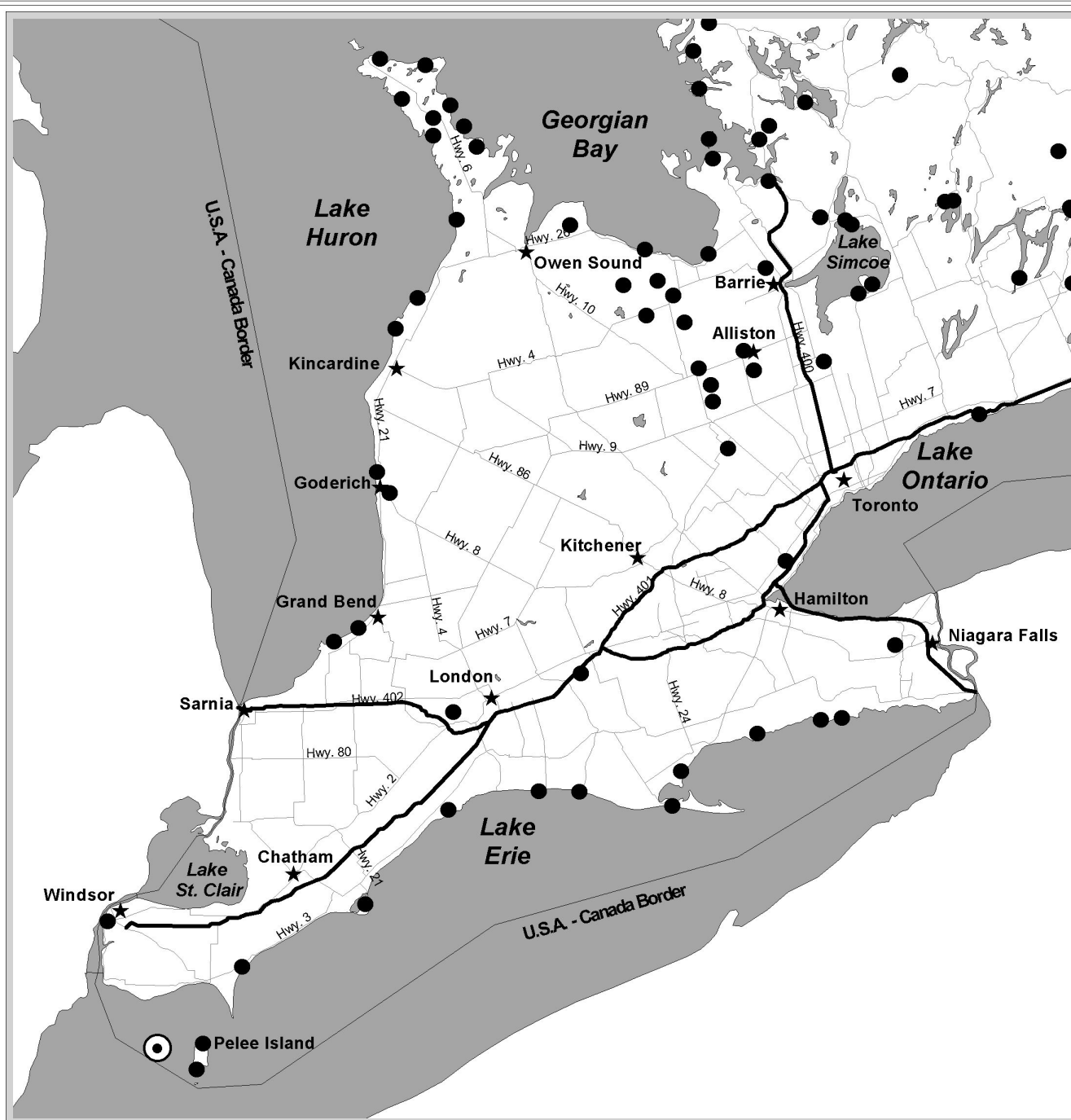


Scale 1:2,250,000



Produced by Ontario Parks, Southwest Zone.
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This map is for illustrative purposes only.
Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of
routes, locations or features nor as a guide to
navigation.



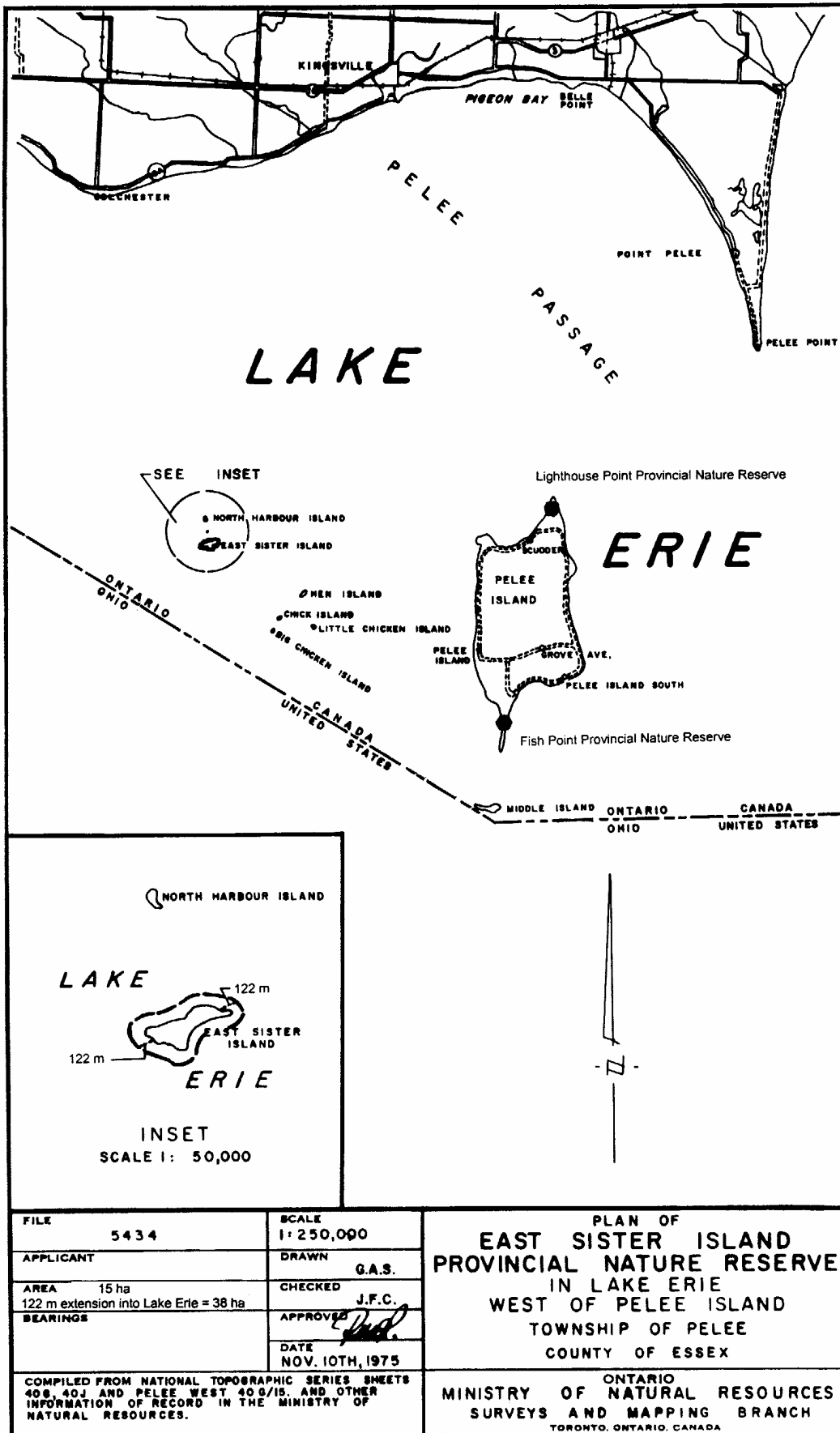


Figure 2: Local Setting

The Ministry's *Statement of Environmental Values* will be considered by Ontario Parks during the development of both the preliminary and recommended management plans for East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve.

3.0 PLANNING AREA

The planning area will include the 53 hectares which are currently regulated under the *Provincial Parks Act* as East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Regulation 741/76) (refer to attached map) and the adjacent waters of Lake Erie.

The regulated nature reserve boundary is an administrative mechanism - it should not be viewed as a physical barrier which separates the park from the surrounding landscape. The greater ecosystem will be considered in the planning process. This can be defined as the area of influence surrounding East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve from an ecological, social and economic point of view. It is the area where most of the impacts affecting the park occur.

4.0 PLANNING TEAM

The planning team will consist of:

- Chuck Fawdry, A/Park Superintendent, Wheatley Provincial Park (project leader and technical support);
- Brian Huis, Park Planning Specialist, Southwest Zone, Ontario Parks, London (planning advisor);
- Tim Marchand, Parks Planner, Southwest Zone, Ontario Parks, London (planning support).

Ex officio members of the planning team will be Peter Sturdy, Zone Manager, Southwest Zone, Ontario Parks, and Barton Feilders, Manager of Planning and Research Section, Ontario Parks. The planning team may consult externally with academics, knowledgeable interest groups and others as required for scientific and technical expertise.

5.0 INTEGRATION

Integration of the various resource management and stewardship interests will be addressed at appropriate stages during the planning process.

Internal Integration

- The draft terms of reference, preliminary park management plan and recommended park management plan will be circulated for review to Ontario Parks, Ministry of Natural Resources (i.e., Chatham Area, Aylmer District and Southcentral Region) prior to Ontario Parks' approval and release to the public;
- MNR program specialists will be asked to identify significant resource values within the park and environs, and management options which could be considered within the existing park policy framework;
- If mutually desirable, a meeting regarding the planning process, issues, options, etc., could be held with Ontario Parks, District and/or Regional staff;
- Staff from other ministry programs may be asked to serve as resource contacts during the public consultation phase of the planning process; and
- Advance copies of all communications products will be shared with the local MNR communications/information officer.

External Integration

- Meetings may be held with key interest groups to discuss the planning process, issues, options, etc.;

The following documents or materials, among others, will guide and support the planning project. By no means is this a comprehensive list:

- Chapman, L.J. and Putnam, D.F. *The Physiography of Southern Ontario*. 2nd Edition, Ontario Research Foundation, Toronto. 1973.
- Kamstra, J., M.J. Oldham and P.A. Woodliffe. *A Life Science Inventory and Evaluation of Six Natural Areas in the Erie Islands, Essex County, Ontario*. Aylmer District (Chatham Area) Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1995.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Environmental Assessment in Ontario Provincial Parks: An Interim Field Reference for Staff, Revised Edition*. Corporate Policy and Planning Secretariat. 1997.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Environmental Bill of Rights Procedures Manual (Working Draft)*. Corporate Policy and Planning Secretariat. 1995.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual*. 1994.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies*. 1978.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies, 1992 Update*.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Chatham District Land Use Guidelines*. Chatham District. 1983
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. *Beyond 2000 – Ministry of Natural Resources Strategic Directions*. Natural Resources Information Centre, Peterborough. 2000.
- Tracey, A.G., MacDonald, I.D., and Beechey, T.J. *East Sister Island, Essex County, Ontario - A Natural Science Inventory Report*. Lake Erie District, Department of Lands and Forests. 1971.

6.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The planning team will arrange public consultation throughout the planning process. During the term of the planning process, the public and various interest groups will be provided with:

- *an initial invitation to participate in the planning process and an invitation to inspect the approved terms of reference;*
- *an opportunity to review background information;*
- *an opportunity to review the preliminary park management plan; and*
- *an opportunity to inspect the approved park management plan.*

Public consultation is outlined in the following sections. Additional public consultation opportunities may be provided to address potential needs not anticipated at the project's outset.

6.1 Phase 1 - Terms of Reference and Initial invitation to Participate

Consultation carried out at this stage will consist of the following:

- *circulation of the approved terms of reference by mail, e-mail, over the counter, etc.;*
- *notice mailed to agencies, interest groups, local politicians (municipal, provincial and federal) and local First Nations;*
- *notice inserted in local newspapers;*
- *notice of Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) policy proposal posted on the Environmental Registry; and*
- *45-day comment period.*

Notices will announce that a park management plan will be prepared and invite interested external participants to become involved in the planning process.

6.2 Phase 2 - Background Information

This phase involves the collection and review of relevant background information. There is no intention to publish a separate background information document. Information related to the nature reserve will be consolidated on file, and made accessible for public review at Wheatley Provincial Park. Consultation carried out at this stage will consist of the following:

- *notice mailed to agencies, interest groups, local politicians (municipal, provincial and federal) and local First Nations;*
- *notice inserted in local newspapers;*
- *revised notice of EBR policy proposal posted on the Environmental Registry; and*
- *45-day comment period.*

6.3 Phase 3 - Preliminary Park Management Plan

Following the evaluation and public review of background information, a preferred approach is developed, draft policies are refined, and this package becomes the basis for the preliminary park management plan. This document will meet all content requirements as set out in the *Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual*. The plan will outline a prioritized implementation strategy for the plan's elements and summarize any public consultation that has occurred. The preliminary management plan will stand as a statement of Ontario Parks' preferred policy for the nature reserve. Consultation carried out at this stage will consist of the following:

- *circulation of the preliminary park management plan by mail, e-mail, over the counter, etc.;*
- *notice mailed to agencies, interest groups, local politicians (municipal, provincial and federal) and local First Nations;*
- *notice inserted in local newspapers;*
- *revised notice of EBR policy proposal posted on the Environmental Registry;*
- *staffed open house;*
- *meetings with groups and agencies (as required or requested); and*
- *45-day comment period*

6.4 Phase 4 - Approved Park Management Plan

The final park management plan takes into consideration public response to the preliminary park management plan. The approved park management plan will meet all content requirements as set out in the *Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual*. The document will contain all policies and directional statements for the management of the nature reserve. Interested participants in the planning program have a final opportunity to determine if their concerns had been considered and addressed and to initiate an appeal concerning the plan contents where appropriate. Consultation carried out at this stage will consist of the following:

- *circulation of the approved park management plan by mail, e-mail, over the counter, etc.;*
- *notice mailed to agencies, interest groups, local politicians (municipal, provincial and federal) and local First Nations;*
- *notice inserted in local newspapers;*
- *notice of EBR policy decision posted on the Environmental Registry; and*
- *45-day comment period.*

7.0 PLANNING SCHEDULE SUMMARY

See Table 1.

8.0 STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to preparing the management planning documents and related products, the planning team will be responsible for consultation with interest groups, municipalities, local First Nations and the general public. Staff responsibilities will be as follows:

- Chuck Fawdry, A/Park Superintendent, East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve, will chair the planning team and provide ongoing assistance to the project by providing information about current resource stewardship issues and community concerns, and will serve as a liaison to local interest groups, First Nations and the public.
- Brian Huis, Parks Planning Specialist, Southwest Zone, Ontario Parks, will provide specific guidance and advice regarding the Ontario Parks' planning and public consultation process, and will fulfill all EBR requirements.
- Tim Marchand, Parks Planner, Southwest Zone, Ontario Parks, will conduct research and background information collection including public consultation, communications products (letters, paid advertisements, draft documents, planning documents), prepare associated mapping products, compile and maintain mailing lists, track public responses, etc.
- Peter Sturdy, Zone Manager, Southwest Zone, Ontario Parks, will approve final drafts of planning materials.

Other planning team members and contacts may be assigned various tasks throughout the project.

9.0 BUDGET

Adequate funding will be allocated to cover the costs associated with the planning and consultation process.

TABLE 1: East Sister Island Park Management Planning Schedule Summary

STAGE IN PLANNING PROCESS	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCT(S)	CONSULTATION/ COMMUNICATIONS	PROPOSED TIMETABLE
1. Terms of Reference and Initial Invitation to Participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify scope of the planning program • schedule • costs • responsibilities • public consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circulation of approved terms of reference • notice mailed • paid advertisement inserted in local newspapers • notice of EBR policy proposal posted on Environmental Registry 	Spring 2004
2. Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collection of relevant background information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background Information (file) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notice mailed • paid advertisement inserted in local newspapers • revised notice of EBR policy proposal posted on Environmental Registry 	Summer 2004
3. Preliminary Park Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • content requirements defined by <i>Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Park Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circulation of preliminary park management plan • notice mailed • staffed open house • meetings (as required/requested) • paid advertisement inserted in local newspapers • revised notice of EBR policy proposal posted on Environmental Registry 	Fall 2004
4. Approved Park Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • content requirements defined by <i>Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circulation of approved park management plan • paid advertisement inserted in local newspapers • notice of EBR policy decision posted on Environmental Registry • opportunity to initiate an appeal of the plan contents where appropriate 	Spring 2005