

Project Summary

Issue - The Canadian Thousand Islands and Frontenac Arch region falls roughly within the area of the UNESCO designated Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve (FAB). This area is the southernmost extent of the Algonquin to Adirondacks Wildlife Connectivity Corridor. This region has 33 COSEWIC listed species and one of the highest levels of biodiversity in Canada; however, only a small amount of the land base is under protection. This area is currently an ecological unit that has well-developed communication linkages between stakeholders and regional residents and a strong sense of existing co-operation between partnered agencies and NOO's. The Species at Risk Act has imposed obligations on both federal and provincial land management agencies but the federal and provincial legislation imposes little responsibility on private lands, which form the bulk of the region's holdings. The well-being of species at risk and the ecological integrity of SLINP is directly dependent on the status of the natural environment in this study area.

Solution - The basic concept of this proposal is to develop and implement a project, in cooperation with partners, which would result in the identification of key species at risk habitats and connecting corridors. This would result in the definition of priorities and strategies for the protection or recovery of species at risk that are dependent on habitat availability within St Lawrence Islands National Park (SLINP) and adjacent lands. Since much of the land in the Greater Park Ecosystem (GPE) is privately held, this project will provide strategic tools based on current science and traditional knowledge. It will engage SLINP, individual landowners, the general public, and municipal governments in the protection and recovery of species and habitats in the area.

Strategic Fit - This proposal addresses several of the Challenges and Opportunities outlined in the Parks Canada Agency (PCA) corporate orientation.

- Protection of Heritage Areas - SLINP is currently in Management Plan review. The scientific and communication methods and results will have significant influence on land management direction that affects the park's Ecological Integrity (EI).
- Species at Risk Corporate Responsibilities - The project will provide a knowledge base and network that will permit the identification of species for which Parks Canada should take a lead role in the development of Recovery strategies and action plans. The project will establish the networks needed to coordinate action on a landscape basis and not exclusively to national park property.
- Protecting Ecological Integrity - Since much of the stress on the park's EI originates from adjacent lands there is a need to have a better understanding of the Thousand Island Ecosystem (TIE). This project will build on existing partnerships to identify areas that are crucial to the survival of Species at Risk (SAR). The methodologies developed will have applicability across the National Park system.
- Building Strong Aboriginal Relations - The park has gained the support of the Mohawks of Akwesasne and is encouraging their continued involvement. They have a particular interest in the integration of "Community Values" into the program beyond enriching the project with traditional knowledge.

- Increasing Public Support and Addressing Changing Demographics - In 2004 SLINP developed a detailed communication strategy that included an assessment of stakeholders and partners. Considerable guidance for the communication objectives of this project is provided in this plan. An essential ingredient to the project is the engagement of citizens.
- Regional Integration - Species do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. The project is built on the successful integration of government agencies, communities, NGOs, First Nations, universities and private landowners that will result in better land use decisions, leveraged investments in science, more involvement in stewardship and citizen science initiatives, new communication and education products, programs and linkages and a prominent role for Parks Canada and the Biosphere Network as sources of leadership, sound science, communications programs and co-ordination of a network of supporters. The active subscription to the Nature serve Program will further broaden the network and promote co-ordination and collaboration between parties.

In addition to the direction given by the corporate plan this project also contributes to the EI vision of the existing park management plan, which indicates, "that the ecological approach to national park management requires the consideration of conservation on a regional scale" (Parks Canada, 1998). It is recognized that communication and outreach is important at all stages of this project and that the Engaging Canadians Strategy provides such direction.

By addressing these challenges to restore and protect the EI of SLINP we will enhance the quality of the visitor experience by providing a pristine, aesthetically pleasing environment that fosters a strong sense of place.

