

Cultural Heritage Conservation

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Research priorities

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address cultural heritage issues in the context of your Forum on Research in Parks and Protected Areas. The conservation of heritage is a public interest which binds the activities of municipalities and government ministries and agencies under statutes such as the Planning Act and the Environmental Assessment Act. From a research and planning viewpoint, heritage sites include places of archaeological, historical, architectural, structural, and symbolic significance as well as landscapes which contain all of the above in their natural or cultural setting. Areas of traditional use such as places for resource gathering or for spiritual renewal are examples that connect natural with cultural categories of land.

For this reason we recommend that all work of the type being discussed here be done using an ecosystem approach as defined in Figure 1. Some form of human activity has altered most landscapes south of Thunder Bay. All landscapes in the province have been occupied to some degree or another. Our job would be infinitely easier if it was generally accepted that human activity has occurred and will occur throughout Ontario and that 'natural' area designations exclusive of cultural, are fictions.

Research protocols are important to analysis, curation and reporting of both existing and future data.

Data management in the past has been very uneven relying as it did on the presence of and use by the original researcher. Many of these individuals are gone; their offices closed; their files and maps dispersed. The aggregate effect of the large amount of research investment has been less than might have been the case if the data management had been standardized. Research protocols developed and signed in advance and monitored throughout are recommended for future work.

Cultural resource identification, evaluation, mitigation, and protection must be carried out prior to land use change.

Research in a time of fewer resources can be effectively carried out as part of an approach triggered by a planning process. Inventory and understanding can be less imperfect if done within a framework of expectations. Land use change must always be preceded by a level of data gathering, analysis and evaluation appropriate to the proposed level of change. The *Lands for Life* initiative for example, raises fears about a parallel, unregulated decision-making exercise being carried out in the absence of enough data. No destruction should occur without being preceded by an appropriate level of research.

Research into relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal views about cultural heritage will have wide benefit.

Non-Aboriginal views about heritage and human-land relationships are perceived as differing from Aboriginal views even though the same places are often involved. For example, a non-Aboriginal researcher may see a burial ground as data while a Native person may see it as a sacred area. Artifacts on a point of land may flag an archaeological site that may have Aboriginal significance as a traditional fishing area. The ability to protect a site or a landscape increases with the number of values that overlap. Research into parallel value systems can lead to cooperation and common ground rather than opposition.

Marketing research into inter-relationships among tourism, resident and visitor use, recreation, life-long learning, public awareness, and public priorities needs to be clearly understood and communicated.

Conservation success also flows from the economic argument which is often seen as sullyng the higher ground of moral integrity. There is little doubt that the sustainable use of conserved public land carries with it the very real danger of overuse as seen in Banff. The benefits of non-consumptive use however, are increasingly acknowledged and need to be researched, documented and widely communicated so that resource extraction can be placed in its proper perspective.

Research into interpretive alternatives has much potential.

A constant in any discussion of conservation success is the need for education and training at all levels. Reaction to *Lands for Life* has exposed a strong conservation voice in the north whose public expression is muffled by the lack of access to reliable information. Research is necessary into creative alternatives for delivering facts about the state of the environment, economic realities about resource extraction, realistic employment opportunities, and the daily intricacies of the ecosystems which include people along with all other living things. Educational opportunities embodied in park and crown lands need to be delivered widely and everywhere and we need to explore every aspect of how to do this.

ECO-SYSTEM APPROACH

A planning process which systematically considers air, land, water, living organisms including humans, and past, present and future interactions among them

The above graphic, adapted from publications of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, represents an interlocking, mutually dependant ecosystem which has included humans in the past and is strongly affected by humans in the present who have a responsibility to pass on a functioning system to future residents.

Figure 1: Ecosystem Approach