

## ***Introduction***

Evidence for climate change is mounting and many scientists, planners, and citizens are convinced that such change is affecting environment and land use and that these effects are likely to increase in the future. Many planners, citizens, and other decision makers are also convinced that we need to adapt to these changes in various ways. Such changes have potentially great significance for Ontario's parks and related environmental and land-use policies and practices. Among the anticipated effects are changes in the species composition and other characteristics of park systems, the frequency and intensity of fire, floods, and other ecological processes, and even the ecological rationale for the establishment of the park system in the first place. Planning and management responses could include changing current park boundaries, attempting to maintain or enhance processes that are stressed by ongoing climatic changes, establishing new parks, and creating new ways of linking parks with other protected areas and surrounding regions. Another major interest for park managers and other concerned persons is the effects the changes will have on recreation and tourism. These effects will have implications for communities, the economy, and society in the wider sense.

The aim of this PRFO workshop was to explore the evidence for climate change, the uncertainties involved, and the measures that have been taken and might be taken to adapt to them. The workshop was primarily intended for Ontario's park managers and other staff so that they have an opportunity to gain state of the art knowledge about climate change as it bears on their current and future responsibilities. Some knowledgeable and concerned people from Ontario Parks, universities, conservation authorities, Parks Canada, and other relevant groups also attended. Considerable opportunity was available for discussion among attendees after presentations by keynote speakers.

The papers in the workshop's proceedings cover a diversity of topics related to climate change and protected areas, including:

- understanding the evidence for climate change
- predictions and potential impacts of climate change and the implications for policy, planning, and management in Ontario parks
- the potential impacts of climate change on recreation and tourism
- strategies for park managers to adapt to climate change
- use of an ecosystem approach in coping with climate change and its effects on protected areas

Included are essentially verbatim summaries of the comments submitted by working groups convened at the end of the workshop. The papers and commentary contain many suggestions to deal with climate change and protected areas. Several seem basic and call for early attention.

- the need for policy guidance
- the need for continuous monitoring and research on climate change
- the need for internal and external collaboration and communication in Ontario Parks and other major relevant organizations
- staff training and park interpretation programs which include information on climate change

Gordon Nelson, Chair PRFO