

Concluding Observations on the Special Session on the Proposed Monitoring Framework for Ontario Parks

Gordon Nelson
Chair of Parks Research Forum of Ontario

I found this session to be particularly informative and encouraging. It was informative because the consultants produced a useful report on a monitoring framework for Ontario Provincial Parks. Their report also clearly benefited from the questions from and observations of the close to 80 people who attended the workshop. These people were representative of universities, federal and provincial parks agencies, non-government organizations and concerned citizens.

Among the most intriguing remarks were those relating to the monitoring of the human dimensions of provincial parks. Of particular interest, in this regard, were the questions about the role of First Nations in developing, implementing and following up on the proposed monitoring framework. Indeed the whole matter of citizen's role in general in monitoring was explored to some extent and raised fundamental questions about what should be monitored, by whom, in what ways, and for what purposes.

This type of multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral discussion of the proposed monitoring framework and other research and planning issues relating to provincial as well as other parks and protected areas in Ontario, is of course at the heart of what PRFO is all about. I found the monitoring workshop to be especially interesting because it clearly brought an array of relevant groups together around a problem of interest to all of them, and not just agencies and individuals in government and the universities.

I want to thank Ontario Parks for their willingness to offer this workshop on their proposed monitoring program, and so incur the risks and benefits ensuing from such an initiative. PRFO can continue to serve a useful forum for the evaluation of new policies and programs that are of interest to us all.