

Pukaskwa National Park and the 1998 White River Forest Plan Review: A New Definition for Transboundary Ecosystem Management

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Pukaskwa National Parks Management Plan (PMP) received signatory approval in 1995. This was one of Parks Canada's first approved PMPs that integrated and applied the major the legislative amendments of the National Parks Act (1988) and our Operational Policies and Procedures (1994). Many of the significant changes were in the approach to protection and presentation of the park. This approach was carried on into the Ecosystem Conservation Plan, which was approved in 1996. This plan gave very specific objectives, priorities and methods of how to carry out ecosystem management. But what do these plans really mean in terms of practical ecosystem management? We will present and discuss one example—the park involvement in adjacent land use planning, specifically, White River Forest Management Plan. Our involvement is this planning process was ground breaking in applying ecosystem management.

The White River Forest is managed for industrial timber production and is a major neighbour of the park as we share 70 km of boundary. The 1998 plan proposed major forest harvest and road construction adjacent the park boundary and wilderness zone of the park. We expressed concerns that these activities would impair the integrity of the park. After two years on often intense and complex negotiations we ultimately came to a resolution that was progressive and innovative and above all, nurtured most stakeholder values and interests. The two years was a great learning process for all involved and clearly helped define what Ecosystem Management is? Some of the key elements of this experience showed: 1) Ecosystem Management is not a static recipe to be blindly followed, but a dynamic evolving concept; 2) the importance of involving partners and stakeholders in a meaningful way; 3) the importance of rigorous scientific research to support our concerns; 4) the importance of understanding other stakeholders values and beliefs; and, 5) the importance of consistency, communication and persistence.