

Panel Commentary

Key Issues in Heritage Coast Planning and Conservation

Dick Hunter¹ and Jim Faught²

¹Conservation Ontario

²Federation of Ontario Naturalists

The background paper by John Marsh (Trent University) on Heritage Coasts in the U.K. and Europe and panel presentations on protected areas and the coastal zone by Evan Ferrari (Wildlands League) and Brian O'Donoghue, and others, have covered a very wide range of experience and perspectives which it is impossible to discuss in any comprehensive way in this summary and response. We have made the choice therefore to highlight some issues that we think are salient as a result of the presentations. In selecting these issues we have been guided not only by their significance to protected areas and conservation generally, but also by the need to address them in research, the principal interest of the Parks Research Forum of Ontario. With this in mind we put the issues in the form of questions meriting study by concerned persons in government, the universities and the private sector, particularly students.

- To what extent should preservation, protection, restoration and other approaches have roles in planning and managing protected areas in the coastal zone? Why, and how?
- Is a wide range of types of protected areas more effective, efficient and equitable than a narrow range of types? Can evidence be derived in regard to this question from comparative studies of different protected area systems in the U.K., the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and other areas?
- What are the optimal boundaries for protected areas in the coastal zone? To what extent should they be linked to marine environments and to what extent to watershed and other terrestrial environments? Why, and how?
- From both a theoretical and a practical standpoint, how can protected areas relate or contribute to biodiversity and nature conservation, as well as recreation and tourism and other forms of development in coastal areas? What challenges do these different roles pose and how can these challenges be dealt with?
- What roles do protected areas have in addressing threats to the environmental quality of coastal areas, where these threats include: flood,

erosion and other hazards; degradation of wetlands, dunes and other significant coastal ecosystems; oil spills, waste disposal and other pollution; agricultural runoff, nitrate and other enrichment; exotic species; outfall from nuclear power plants; climate change; and fluctuating water levels? In what ways can the addressing of such threats be improved?

- What roles do protected areas have in conserving and sustaining fisheries? What uses should be permitted and what regulations or other incentives applied and why?
- How effective are protected areas in managing for nature conservation and environmental quality in areas where they have been in place for some time? What monitoring and assessment research has been carried out in this regard, what does this research tell us? What more is needed and why?
- What research results are available on the relative roles and contributions of public and private stewardship in protected area planning and management? Is more monitoring, assessment and research needed? If so, why and in what ways and where should it be carried out?
- To what extent and in what ways have protected areas linked nature conservation with protection of water quality and other roles in the context of a broad ecosystem perspective on coastal planning, management and decision-making?
- What economic and other studies of the human dimensions of protected area planning and management have been conducted in Ontario and other countries, especially with respect to the coastal zone? What do they tell us? What more is needed?
- What research is available on interrelations and co-ordination among government agencies with responsibilities for nature conservation and sustainability in the coastal zone? What does this tell us? What additional research is needed along these lines in Ontario and the Great Lakes?
- What research is available on linkages and roles among non-government organizations and between these organizations and government agencies and citizens? What does this research tell us? What more is needed and why?
- What research has been done on the roles and values of First Nations in the broad field of coastal planning, management and decision-mak-

ing? What more is needed, why, how should it be carried out and by whom?

- To what degree do we understand fish ecology and the dynamics of the Great Lakes? What are the key areas requiring research, why, and how should the research be conducted?
- How clear to citizens are the concepts and systems used in science, planning, management, and decision-making of protected areas in the Great Lakes? How does this understanding contribute to their support for conservation and active participation in it?
- How do protected areas and conservation systems compare among Superior, Huron, Lake Erie and the other Lakes? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these systems? How can experience be shared more effectively and efficiently among planners, managers and citizens responsible for or living in these basins? More particularly how do conceptual, planning, management and decision-making systems compare across the boundary between the U.S. and Canada? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these systems and how can experience be shared and reconciled?

The foregoing list raises some of the significant research questions arising from the presentations and discussion on protected areas in the coastal zone. However, others may find that some key issues have been missed in this commentary. Our principal intention is to highlight key research issues and stimulate the identification of others, the general aim being to encourage more vitally needed research on protected areas, conservation, environmental quality and sustainable development in the coastal zone of the Great Lakes, particularly Ontario.

Note:

This commentary was summarized by the Editors from notes taken by Dick Hunter and Jim Faught at the PRFO 2002 meeting.