



ONTARIO
PARKS

Great Lakes Beaches and Coasts
Workshop
April 15, 2010

Nearby and Natural

Overview

- Background on Ontario Parks
- Number and Areas of Ontario's Coastal Provincial Parks by Great Lake
- Lessons Learned and Best Practices
- Challenges and Opportunities
- Questions and Discussion

Background on Ontario Parks

Ontario's regulated protected areas (PAs) include:

- 330 provincial parks with 7.9 million hectares
- 294 conservation reserves with 1.5 million hectares
- Total: 624 PAs Total area: 9.4 million hectares.
- Six classes of parks (wilderness, natural environment, nature reserve, waterway, recreational, cultural heritage)
- 113 “operating parks” annually host 10.1 million visits with about \$380 million value added economic benefits.
- Largest park – Polar Bear, 2.3 million hectares
- Highest visitation - (campers) Algonquin 650,000; (day use) Wasaga Beach 1 million +

Background ...

- Ontario Parks Organization
 - **230 full time staff**
 - **600 seasonal staff (2 – 10 months)**
 - **1900 Students and Summer Experience Program participants**

Background ...

- **Economic Impact**

- **Total Economic Impact: \$972.5M**
- **\$145.5M direct, indirect and induced impacts as a result of park expenditures (capital and operating)**
- **\$350.0M generated by Visitor Expenditures**
- **Total of 8,246 jobs generated by park and visitor expenditures.**

Background ...

- **Ontario Parks Legislation**

“Permanently protect a system of provincial parks and conservation reserves that includes ecosystems that are representative of all of Ontario’s natural regions, protects provincially significant elements of Ontario’s natural and cultural heritage, maintains biodiversity and provides opportunities for compatible, ecologically sustainable recreation”

(Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act 2007)

Number and Areas of Ontario's Coastal Provincial Park by Great Lake

- Lake Superior 239,022 ha; 9 parks;
- Lake Huron & Georgian Bay 177,426 ha; 25 parks;
- Lake Erie 7,988 ha; 11 parks
- Lake Ontario 2,944 ha; 5 parks

Key Accomplishments

- **Economic and Tourism Development**
- **Species and Habitat Protection**
- **Strong Partnerships with Municipalities and Stakeholders**
- **Wasaga Beach Examples**
 - **Partnership with Town of Wasaga Beach (Blue Flag, Tourism Capital, Town Committees)**
 - **Invasive Species (Phragmites)**
 - **Species at Risk (Piping Plovers)**



Lessons Learned & Best Practices

- Partnerships are important – it is hard to go alone
- Engage the public and stakeholders on big decisions – process and transparency are critical
- Beaches and coasts are dynamic places – be flexible, open to change and engage an adaptive management approach
- Ecological sustainability is key when managing fragile habitats– difficult and costly to repair if damaged
- Networks are important for seeking support, sharing ideas, and remaining at the front edge of emerging information and knowledge
- Hard and Soft Protection are both important – never underestimate the power of natural heritage education and engaging the public in stewardship activities.

Challenges & Opportunities

- **Managing for Ecological Integrity and Sustainable Recreation in a dynamic, ever-changing, sensitive, and highly desirable Great Lakes beach or coast**

