



Quinte Field Naturalists

The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is affiliated with Ontario Nature, a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research.

March 16, 2017

Protected Areas Public Consultations

Environment and Climate Change Canada
15th Floor, Place Vincent Massey
351 St. Joseph Boulevard
Gatineau, QC
K1A 0H3

RE: Public comment for the proposed Management Plan for the Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area – Submission of the Quinte Field Naturalists

Quinte Field Naturalists welcome the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions with regard to the proposed Management Plan for the Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. We would like to emphasize that we appreciate and support the ongoing work of Prince Edward County Field Naturalists and the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and strongly uphold their submissions.

Being a naturalist group living in close proximity to Prince Edward County, our members are aware of the rich diversity of flora and fauna that inhabits or visits the Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. We are pleased that you have developed a management plan that aims to protect the wild species that dwell in this beautiful location which we have frequent opportunities to enjoy.

Your plan suggests that a broader range of experiences will be available in the future and we look forward to them. We recommend that you carefully consider the details of your plan to optimize the results for both nature and humans. In sub-goal 3.2, it is suggested that visitor numbers increase to five times the present level. For this expansion to be successful, opportunities presented through trails, displays, workshops and seminars must be greatly increased, far beyond what is recommended in the draft plan. Furthermore, there must be appropriate accommodation to permit programs to proceed in a range of weather conditions. A visitor centre such as the one we enjoy at Algonquin Park would respond well to the needs and be a great attraction to many people.

Of course, expanded opportunities for human guests can come at a cost if they are not carefully and thoroughly planned with the conservation of wildlife as a priority. Many local and visiting naturalists have studied the area for years and have a wealth of information to share about the habitat requirements of flora and fauna that live there.

These people are a valuable resource that should be consulted when planning new trails and implementing other changes. The space that wildlife requires must be respected. The entire South Shore should be consolidated into one large protected area for wildlife. The one remaining industrial wind project that is still in the court appeal process should not be allowed to threaten the birds and bats that migrate through this IBA nor should it be permitted to disturb species at risk such as the Blandings Turtle that lives and reproduces near the lake shore. Industrial windmills should be prohibited in this area.

Conserving the diversity of the area is very important. We were pleased to see that attention will be given to the maintenance of grassland birds which are in great decline as successional shrubs and trees reduce their habitat. The proposed 50 hectares of grassland habitat which will be designated for maintenance (Sub-goal 1.2) should be the best possible site for these birds. Experts who have participated at Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory collecting data and studying the birds for 20 years should be consulted about the site location and the ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the area.

Finally, increased opportunities which bring more visitors to the area have the potential to pose unanticipated challenges for our natural flora and fauna. Activities must not interfere with the conservation of wildlife. As changes are implemented, they should be managed carefully and monitored closely. Quarterly visits are not sufficient to ensure the protection of all plants and animals. Consideration should be given to increased National Wildlife Area staffing and to ongoing consultation with Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory volunteers and their collaborators who have extensive experience at and knowledge of the site.

In conclusion, Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area, a very significant IBA and a rich natural home to many species, is the ideal location for the **Connecting Canadians to Nature Initiative**. Please attend to Quinte Field Naturalists recommendations so that we can live in harmony with our natural surroundings and continue to benefit from all that our life-sustaining natural world has to offer. The role of humans in the complex web of life is critical to its survival.

Sincerely,

George W. Thomson
Quinte Field Naturalist President

Cc:

Environment & Climate Change Canada – Ontario Region

PECFN

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