

QUEEN ELIZABETH II WILDLANDS

Management Options

2026

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and

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Opportunity to Comment

Ontario Parks is seeking your input to assist in the preparation of a park management plan for Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park (QEII).

This management options document includes a brief overview of the features and uses of Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park (QEII) and invites feedback on park management themes, topics and framework presented. Input received will be carefully considered in the development of the preliminary management plan, which will outline preferred policies to guide park management, operations and development.

This document which is used to collect your response must be received by **October 31, 2026**. It can be completed online at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QEIIWildlands_ManagementOptions_CommentCard

or printed off and mailed to the park:

Mike Cappello, Park Superintendent
Ontario Parks, Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park
c/o Balsam Lake Provincial Park
2238 County Road 48, RR1 Kirkfield, ON K0M 2B0

Thank you in advance for your interest and comments on the future management of Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) is collecting your personal information and comments under the authority of section 29 of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* for the purpose of public consultation on park management planning. Your comments (not including personal information) will become part of the record of consultation and may be shared with the general public. Your personal information may be used by MECP to follow-up with you upon request or when required, and to send you information about future initiatives involving this park. Please indicate in your response if you do not wish to be notified of new initiatives. Any personal information you provide will be protected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and will be handled in accordance with the government of Ontario's Privacy Statement: www.ontario.ca/page/privacy-statement. If you have questions about the use of your personal information, please contact Kim Harris, Park Planner by email to Planning.sez@ontario.ca.

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1 Park overview

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park (QEII) is a 33,505 hectare (ha) natural environment class park located 18 kilometres (km) south-east of Gravenhurst, 28 km north-east of Orillia and 10 km west of Minden (See Figure 1). The park is situated in parts of the District Municipality of Muskoka (Ryde township), City of Kawartha Lakes (Dalton and Digby townships) and Haliburton County (Anson and Lutterworth townships).

The park was regulated as Dalton Digby Wildlands Provincial Park on May 8, 2002, as a product of the expansion of the province's protected areas through Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (1999). The park was re-named Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park in 2003 in honour of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee visit to Ontario. It is currently guided by a 2001 interim management statement.

The park is situated in Ecodistrict 5E-8, Ecoregion 5E (Georgian Bay Ecoregion). QEII represents one of the most ecologically diverse and intact landscapes in the region. The natural values of the park can be attributed to the variety of habitats present. The park is characterized by rolling rock barren ridges and troughs of shallow soil deposits, several lakes, and a rich variety of forested, non-forested and wetland vegetation types. It protects provincially rare species, significant natural areas, and has potential for sites of archaeological and cultural importance.

Wildlife corridor mapping shows that the park is an important intersection for animals migrating both east/west and north/south in Ontario which is increasingly valuable in light of urban development and climate change.

The park is an important recreational resource long used for backcountry camping, hunting and fishing. The open landscape, with rocky ridgelines, small lakes, and wetlands, is generally suited to backpacking trails. Campsites are available on several lakes within the park.

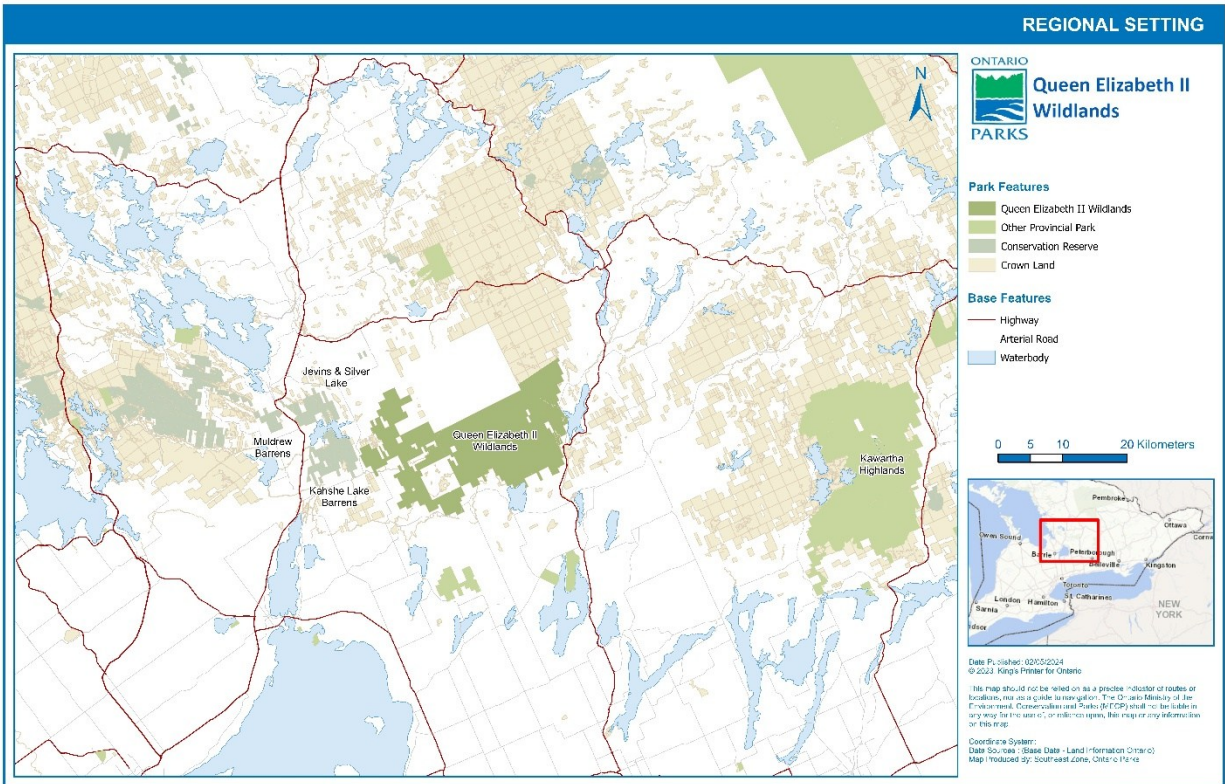


Figure 1: Regional Setting

2 Indigenous community involvement

The park is located within the traditional territories of the Chippewa Nations and the Michi Saagiig, the Mississauga Anishinaabe collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations. We recognize and respect the long history of the First Nation and Métis peoples in the province.

In the spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and reconciliation, Ontario Parks is committed to working with Indigenous communities to ensure that QEII is protected for the benefit of future generations and that cultural heritage and traditional knowledge shared by Indigenous communities are a key component of the management plan. Ontario Parks will engage all seven Williams Treaties First Nations (WTFN) communities including the Mississaugas (Alderville, Hiawatha, Scugog Island and Curve Lake First Nations) and Chippewas (Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama First Nations), and Kawartha Nishnawbe First Nation throughout the management planning process.

3 Management options

Management planning for QEII began in 2004 with the public release of the Terms of Reference, followed by the Background Information document in 2006. Planning resumed in 2014 after the project team was re-established. Since then, Ontario Parks has completed the information analysis stage and prepared this document as part of the management options stage. Feedback received during this stage will inform site-specific policy development for the preliminary management plan for QEII. The planning process will conclude with the approval of a final management plan, which will guide park management over a 20-year period.

The *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* (PPCRA) has two principles that guide planning and management for Ontario's system of provincial parks and conservation reserves, including QEII:

1. Maintenance of ecological integrity shall be the first priority and the restoration of ecological integrity shall be considered.
2. Opportunities for consultation shall be provided.

Ecosystems have integrity when they have all the parts (both living and non-living) that you would expect to find and natural functions and rates of change are happening normally. This management options document identifies topics requiring site-specific policies and actions to maintain or, where feasible, restore ecological integrity at QEII.

The following sections provide an overview of the park's key features, ecological values, and existing uses and presents management themes, topics, and potential approach for consideration. Input received will help inform the development of draft policies and proposed management actions. A comprehensive management plan is needed to manage growing visitation and recreational use, formalize camping opportunities and support the long-term protection of the park's ecological, cultural, and diverse recreational values. Questions are included throughout the document to support review and feedback.

4 Purpose, vision and management themes

Purpose and vision statements for QEII will be prepared through the management planning process. The purpose statement will describe how the park will continue to contribute to the protected areas system. The vision statement is an extension of the purpose statement and provides an outlook on the desired state of the provincial park in 20 years. The park purpose and vision will reflect the purpose of the PPCRA, which is:

- To 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.

Ontario Parks would like your input on using the following themes to form the vision, purpose statement and park management objectives. Management themes have been identified through input received from internal workshops and external focus group sessions.

Question 1)

How important are the following themes for establishing the purpose statement, vision, and management objectives for the park; where 1 is not important and 5 is very important?

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a) Maintain/enhance ecological integrity | ☐ 1 | ☐ 2 | ☐ 3 | ☐ 4 | ☐ 5 | ☐ I Don't Know |
| b) Semi-wilderness recreation | ☐ 1 | ☐ 2 | ☐ 3 | ☐ 4 | ☐ 5 | ☐ I Don't Know |
| c) Scientific research | ☐ 1 | ☐ 2 | ☐ 3 | ☐ 4 | ☐ 5 | ☐ I Don't Know |
| d) Connecting/reconnecting people to nature | ☐ 1 | ☐ 2 | ☐ 3 | ☐ 4 | ☐ 5 | ☐ I Don't Know |
| e) Cultural heritage appreciation | ☐ 1 | ☐ 2 | ☐ 3 | ☐ 4 | ☐ 5 | ☐ I Don't Know |

5 Management topics

The following management topics capture the areas of greatest interest identified from input received through public consultation processes and stakeholder engagement.

A values and pressures analysis completed for QEII determined that many of the recreational activities taking place in the park have the potential to negatively impact the local environment. Ontario Parks will continue to permit sustainable recreational use of the park in a manner that reduces impacts such as:

- wildlife disturbance
- soil compaction, sedimentation, erosion
- introduction of invasive species
- over crowding
- unauthorized use
- user conflict (e.g. non-motorized and motorized recreational uses)
- impacts to semi-wilderness characteristics

5.1 Backcountry camping and travel routes

Many campsites and associated travel routes are actively being used in the backcountry of QEII. Camping and travel have the potential to impact the local environment.

The Ganaraska Hiking Trail traverses QEI from east to west and is part of the trail network that originates in Port Hope on the north shore of Lake Ontario and ends at various points along Georgian Bay. The Ganaraska Hiking Trail and side trails offer both overnight and day use hiking opportunities.

Question 2)

Do you support or oppose the expansion of hike-in campsites and backpacking travel routes in the park? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

Water access is available through the Black River, Devil's Lake and Head Lake. The Black River paddling route is a 21 km river trip that extends well beyond the park. Other paddling routes within the park are those between the lake chains: Devil's and Wolf, Head and Crooked and the Scrabble complex.

Question 3)

Do you support or oppose the expansion of water access campsites and portage routes in the park? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

5.2 Access and infrastructure

The park offers several exceptional sustainable recreational opportunities but public road access into the park and associated parking area infrastructure is limited. At existing access points such as Victoria Bridge and Devil's Lake, overcrowding and the need to accommodate a range of recreational users and activities are concerns.

Traditional road access into the west side of the park is via the Black River Road, an unpaved seasonal municipal road that leads to Victoria Bridge at Victoria Falls. This location has

traditionally been used to access the Victoria Falls area, as well as day hike loops and the western portion of the wilderness section of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail.

Traditional road access into the east side of the park is via the Devil's Lake Road, which provides access to the eastern portion of the wilderness section of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail as well as public water access to Devil's Lake and the lake chain beyond it. This access road is also used by private landowners on Devil's Lake. A small parking area is used to access Little Gull Lake by private landowners and recreationalists for day use. Scotch Line at the northeast corner of the park provides a staging area for access to recreation camps located within the park.

Question 4)

Do you support or oppose the development of access areas in the park to enhance sustainable recreational opportunities and alleviate pressures on existing traditional access points (e.g. new parking areas or improvements to existing, new trailheads)? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

5.3 Boat caches

The use of powerboats and boat caches occurs on many of the lakes and rivers in the park. Unattended or abandoned boats and motors are found on many of the portages and shorelines. Many of the cached boats are derelict and beyond repair. Powerboats are used and cached by various park users, including anglers, private landowners, commercial operators, trappers, hunters and recreation camp users. Some boats are required to access private or tenured land while others are strictly for recreational purposes.

Question 5)

Do you support or oppose the use of boat caches for recreational purposes? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

5.4 All-terrain vehicle and motorized snow vehicle use

Motorized vehicles are being operated on many of the 350 kilometres of road and trail that have been inventoried in the park. Some use is required for access to private or tenured land or for commercial purposes while other use is strictly for recreational purposes. All-terrain vehicles are used recreationally for access to areas for hunting and fishing, and for trail riding. Motorized snow vehicles are used in the winter for recreational activities such as trail riding and ice fishing.

Question 6)

Do you support or oppose recreational use of all-terrain vehicles on trails in the park? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

Question 7)

Do you support or oppose recreational use of motorized snow vehicles on trails in the park? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

6 Management Framework

Ontario Parks is considering a landscape-based approach for the management and protection of natural and cultural values, stewardship activities, existing and potential recreational activities, and existing authorized uses within QEII. The park would be delineated into broad areas where park management would be proposed to either focus on enhanced protection objectives or sustainable recreation objectives (See Figure 2). In both areas, ecological integrity of QEII would be maintained and enhanced where possible and recreational use of the park would align with the park's natural, recreational, cultural and semi-wilderness experiences for all park users.

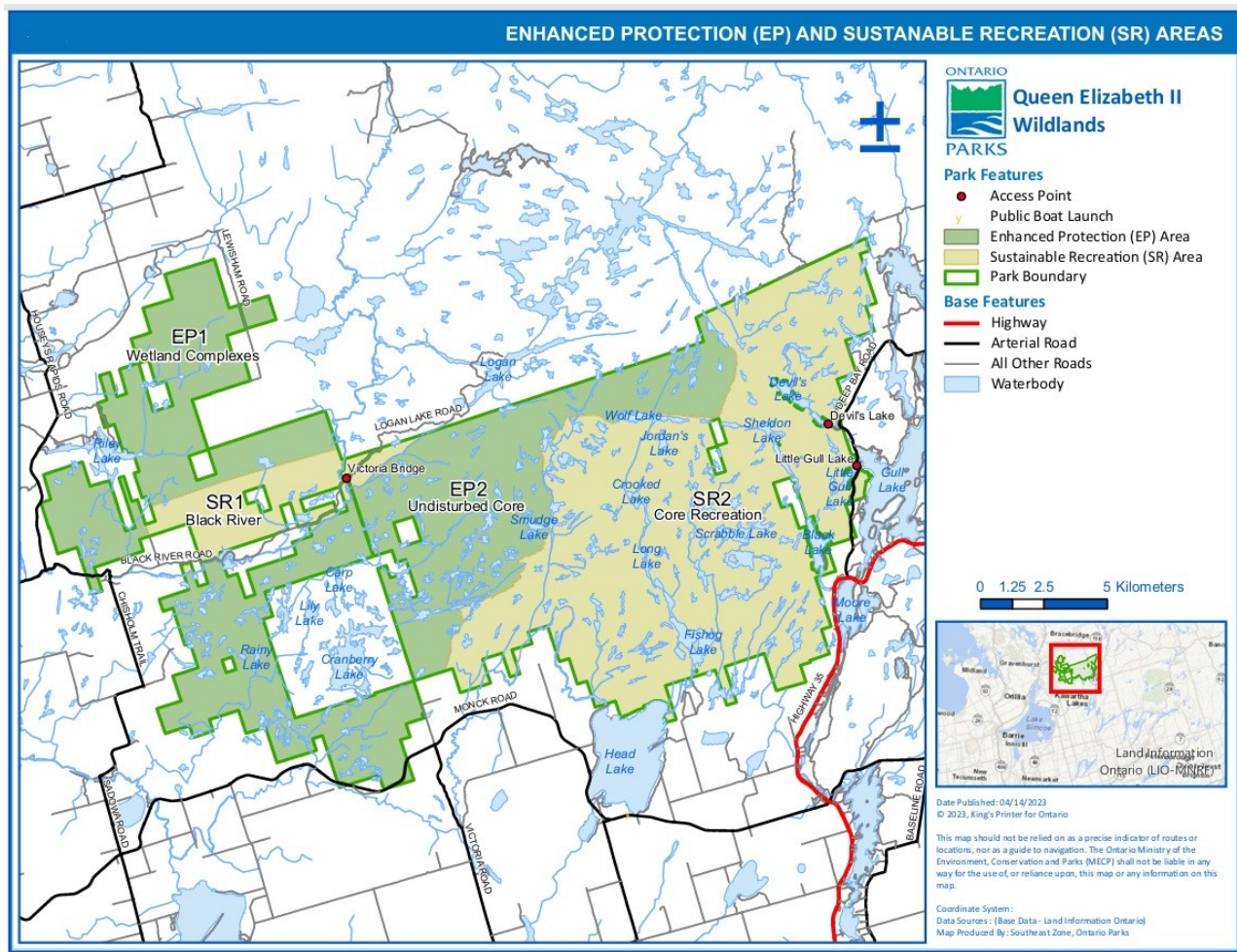


Figure 2: Enhanced Protection and Sustainable Recreation Areas

Question 8)

Do you support or oppose a landscape-based management approach that differentiates areas for enhanced protection and sustainable recreation? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

6.1 Areas where management would focus on enhanced protection

A 4,700 ha area of significant wetland complexes has been delineated (See Figure 2) as potential enhanced protection area 1 (EP1). The potential enhanced protection area 2 (EP2) is a large minimally used core area of 10,000 ha. Access to these areas is limited and they are relatively undisturbed adding to the semi-wilderness characteristics of the landscape and

allowing ecosystems to function with little human interruption. These areas were identified for their:

- high densities of critical landform vegetation types
- populations of species at risk
- low levels of recreational use
- critical wildlife habitat features
- ability to support adjacent private conservation lands to create large habitat connectivity corridors across the landscape
- ability to protect headwaters of adjacent communities

In these areas some changes may be proposed to existing land uses to protect, maintain and enhance the resilience of these natural values.

Question 9)

Do you support or oppose identifying of EP1 and EP2 as areas where management would focus on enhance protection? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

6.2 Areas where management would focus on ecologically sustainable recreation

Delineated as potential sustainable recreation area 1 (SR1) is a 1,900 ha area currently used for day use. The potential sustainable recreation area 2 (SR2) is an area of 16,725 ha extensively used for many recreational purposes. These areas were identified based on the following landscape features and existing use:

- large waterbodies
- extensive trail network
- established backcountry camping and travel routes
- existing private recreation camps and commercial outpost camps
- existing commercial activity (trapping, bear management areas, bait harvest areas)
- private property within and abutting park land
- existing motorized vehicle use (powerboats, all-terrain vehicles, aircraft)
- opportunity to enhance existing recreational use (backcountry camping/travel routes)

The focus of these areas would be on maintaining existing sustainable recreational uses including backcountry camping. Some changes to existing recreational uses may be proposed to maintain ecological integrity of the park.

Question 10)

Do you support or oppose the identifying SR1 and SR2 as areas where management would focus on sustainable recreation? Select one answer.

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

7 Additional Input

Question 11)

Do you have any other comments related to the proposed management themes, management topics and management approach presented in this management options document? Please describe below. Maximum 500 characters.

Question 12)

Which of the following best describes you? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Hiker
- ☐ Paddler
- ☐ Camper
- ☐ Hunter
- ☐ Angler
- ☐ Motorized Vehicle User (e.g., ATV)
- ☐ Motorized Snow Vehicle User (e.g., snowmobiler)
- ☐ Member of Local Indigenous Community
- ☐ Adjacent Landowner
- ☐ Land Tenure Holder (e.g., recreation or commercial outpost camp)

- ☐ Licensed Commercial Operator (e.g., Trapper, Bear Management Area Operator, Bait Harvester)
- ☐ Other

Question 13)

What is your favourite thing about Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park and why? Please describe below. Maximum 500 characters.

8 Next Steps

Responses to the park management options questionnaire will be accepted during the 45-day public review period which follows its release.

Your comments, participation and knowledge are important to ensure that we produce the best possible plan for the park. The next stage of planning will be the development of a preliminary management plan, which will present preferred policies to guide park management, operations and development. Indigenous community, public and stakeholder consultation results, background information, science, and the requirements of legislation and policy will inform preferred policy. The preliminary plan will be released for comment and review for 45 days. All comments received throughout the planning process will be considered in the development of the final plan.

If you like to be added to a contact list to be notified of future public consultation opportunities, please provide your contact information below.

Name	
Telephone	
E-mail address	
Mailing address	

Thank you for completing the QEII Management Options questionnaire.