Using zoning and buffers in managing and maintaining ecological and cultural integrity in Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site

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Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site, Maitland Bridge, Nova Scotia

A primary mandate of Parks Canada is to maintain ecological integrity while also providing opportunities for meaningful visitor experiences. To balance these objectives, a zoning system has been established within national parks to guide areas that visitor use and where management activities may occur. These zoning designations are outlined in park management plans, which are reviewed and approved every ten years. National Park zoning is divided into five categories, from Zone I to V. Zone I areas receive the highest level of protection due to their exceptional ecological or cultural significance, whereas Zone V areas accommodate the greatest level of human use and development. This framework concentrates visitor facilities and recreational opportunities in appropriate locations while safeguarding rare species, critical habitat for Species at Risk, and other ecologically sensitive environments. Additional protections are also afforded to areas of cultural importance. Whenever new construction projects or routine maintenance activities are proposed within a park, an impact assessment process is triggered to identify, avoid, and mitigate potential effects on cultural or ecological values. This process helps ensure that park management activities are consistent with the overarching goal of maintaining cultural and ecological integrity. This paper explores how zoning and buffers are currently applied in Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site and examines how these management tools may evolve as the park moves towards co-management with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia through the Toqi'maliaptmu'k Agreement, meaning "we will look after it together."

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