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BACKGROUNDER

HISTORIC CHRONOLOGY OF NATIONAL PARKS

1885 Canada's first national park (Banff) established

In 1885, the federal government established 26 km² of reserved land around the Banff hot springs on the slopes of Sulphur Mountain. The hot springs were now protected in the public interest and no longer available for 'sale, settlement or squatting'.

1911 Dominion Parks Branch - World's first national park service

In 1911, the *Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act* placed the dominion parks under the administration of the world's first national parks branch, known variously over the years as the Dominion Parks Branch, the National Parks Branch, Parks Canada, Canadian Parks Service and now the Parks Canada Agency. The same year, James B. Harkin became the first commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch.

1930 Canada's first *National Parks Act*

The *National Parks Act* of 1930 ensured that no new parks could be established or any change made in the boundaries of existing parks except by an Act of Parliament. Mineral exploration and development was prohibited and only limited use of green timber essential for park management purposes was allowed.

1964 First comprehensive statement of national parks policy is tabled in the House of Commons

The 1964 policy established the preservation of significant natural features in national parks as its 'most fundamental and important obligation'.

1970 First National Parks System Plan approved (Concept of natural regions)

In 1970, Parks Canada adopted a natural region system plan to guide park expansion activities. The government's goal is to represent the characteristic physical, biological and geographic features of each of the 39 natural regions within the national parks system.

- 1976 Canada signs World Heritage Convention; Nahanni National Park designated the world's first natural World Heritage Site by UNESCO.**
- 1979 Revised National Parks Policy introduces ecological integrity as a guiding principle**
In 1979, the revised National Parks Policy established the maintenance of the ecological integrity of national parks as a prerequisite to use.
- 1984 Ivvavik National Park: first national park established under a land claim agreement**
- 1988 Amendments to the *National Parks Act* formalizes the principle of ecological integrity**
- 1991 Tabling of the first State of the Parks Report in Parliament**
- 1993 Gwaii Haanas Agreement establishes the terms of an unprecedented co-management agreement between the federal government and the Haida Nation**
- 1996 Banff-Bow Valley Study**
The Banff Bow Valley Study (launched in 1994, report in 1996) brought the question of human use in Banff National Park of Canada into clear focus and established ecological integrity as a first priority. While this study focused on Banff, it established directions for the entire national park system.
- 1998 Moratorium announced on commercial development outside of park communities within national parks**
- 1998 Parks Canada becomes an operating agency through the proclamation of the *Parks Canada Agency Act***
- 1999 Three Arctic national parks are established through the first Inuit Impact and Benefits Agreement under the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement**
- 2000 Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks releases report**
The Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks (launched in 1998, report on March 23, 2000) reviewed Parks Canada's program with a mandate to focus the national parks program on conserving and restoring ecological integrity as a first priority. The panel concluded that 'ecological integrity in Canada's national parks is under threat from many sources and for many reasons'. This report from the panel was strongly endorsed by the Minister and followed by a ministerial action plan.
- 2001 *Canada National Parks Act* proclaimed on February 19, 2001**
The *Canada National Parks Act* states that "maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks."

The new Act sets **new standards for park management plans** with respect to ecological integrity. The Parks Canada Guide to Management Planning has been revised to reinforce the primacy of EI and management plans are now being prepared accordingly.

The new Act requires the **legal designation of wilderness areas** in national parks across the system. Wilderness areas in the Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay national parks have been declared.

The new Act **limits commercial development in national park communities**. The boundaries of all communities in the national parks will be fixed and commercial development will be capped in those communities.

Seven new national parks and one national park reserve were formally established through the new Act. Five of the new national parks have been established through agreements with aboriginal peoples.

2002 The Government of Canada announces its Action Plan to Protect Canada's Natural Heritage and Funding to Implement the Plan

The government announces the most ambitious expansion of national parks and national marine conservation areas in more than 100 years.

Canada will work to establish 10 new national parks, increasing the area of lands covered by Canada's national parks system by almost 50 per cent.

The Government will also act to restore the health of Canada's national parks. Actions will be taken in the areas of science, partnerships and education. These measures will support the return of ecological integrity in all of the country's national parks.

On February 11, 2003, the Minister of Finance announces, in Federal Budget 2003, the allocation of \$74 million over the next two years as an initial investment for the implementation of the Action Plan.

In March 2003, at the Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada, this funding was increased to \$144 million extending over five years with an additional \$29.2 million in ongoing funding to operate the new national parks and national marine conservation areas created under the Action Plan.

2003 Government of Canada Creates New National Parks

The federal government signed agreements to create the first two national parks under the action plan – an agreement with the Government of British Columbia to create Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada and an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement with Inuit and the Government of Nunavut to create Ukkusiksalik National Park of Canada, bringing the number of national parks that have been created since Banff was established in 1885 to 41.

2005 Agreements Signed to Create Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve

On January 21, 2005, the federal government signed the Labrador Inuit Park Impacts and Benefits Agreement with the Labrador Inuit Association, and a Memorandum of Agreement for a National Park Reserve in the Torngat Mountains with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, that will lead to the formal establishment of Canada's 42nd national park – the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve of Canada – on the effective date of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.