

**Parks Canada Responded Q & A
Waskesiu Community Council AGM
August 10, 2024**

1) Off Leash Dog Park

At last year's annual meeting we were told that a PCA staff member had been assigned to lead the project with a target to have the dog park open for summer 2024. The park spoke optimistically (and rather definitively) that there would be an off-leash dog park available this year.

- **When will Parks Canada build the off-leash dog park? What can be done to facilitate this project and deter dog owners from "creating their own" off-leash areas?**

In the face of a growing number of high priorities related to critical infrastructures and within the national park, including Waskesiu, Parks Canada is reconsidering the off-leash park. It remains unclear whether an off-leash dog park would address issues related to off-leash dogs within the park. Should an off-leash dog park proceed, a location would need to be confirmed and diligence such as an impact assessment that considers environmental and social impacts would need to be completed.

A final decision has not yet been taken as to whether there will be the development of an off-leash dog park in Prince Albert National Park.

- **Is there any thought of having an off leash sandy beach area for dogs? The area next to breakwater is okay but very small.**

There has been no consideration of an "off-leash dog beach". Dogs are allowed outside of the designated (buoyed) swimming areas on most public beaches in the park. Within Waskesiu, there is a "no dog zone" that extends from the swimming area near the breakwater to Lily Street. There are areas designated for dogs west of the breakwater and North of Lily Street. The National Park Domestic Animal Regulations apply in all areas of the park, which means that dogs must be on a leash 3 meters or less and under physical control at all times.

2) Park Entrance Gate Issues

Wait times for Park entry have, at times, been in excess of an hour at the East gate this year. Streamlining entry for those who have already purchased passes would reduce wait times, improve visitor satisfaction, and contribute to a smoother operation flow for PANP.

- a. **How can Parks Canada facilitate more efficient entry to the park, especially for seasonal pass holders, so park staff can focus on providing new passes and services for visitors?**
 - **Better signage as to which lane is for purchase and which lane is for season pass holders?**
 - **Electronic swipe to get into the season pass lane (would require third lane) and an app?**
 - **More booths?**

- **A dedicated bypass lane for pass holders?**
- **Using PCA staff to ‘triage’ vehicles into correct lanes?**

There are no plans to invest in the development of an additional bypass lane at the east gate at this time.

The best way to avoid long line-ups at the gate is plan ahead. Arrive before 10 am on long weekends to avoid lineups at the east gate or use the south gate and take the scenic route. Parks Canada can strive to improve communications regarding ‘plan ahead’ messaging and can continue to implement operational measures such as ushering cars through to purchase passes at the Visitor Centre.

3) Infrastructure Maintenance and Repairs – Park Roadways (2 questions submitted)

There is a rough patch of the road to the marina just before Kapasiwin. Whether on bike or in a car, you have to slow down to avoid possible damage. It is dangerous to cyclists. The area has been patched on numerous occasions in the past but it continues to deteriorate. The park will soon be hosting the annual Frank Dunn Triathlon and bike riders will be racing down that road.

- **Can this patch of road to the marina be properly fixed (not just patched)?**
- **Will the park commit to repairing this section of the road before August 11th?**

Highway #264 has been identified as a priority by Parks Canada’s Highways Service Centre for resurfacing. The resurfacing project is currently unfunded, but design work is complete. While we identify funding, Parks Canada will work to improve patching efforts and improve speed control and warning signage to inform motorists of the potential hazard.

4) Townsite pathways & Bike paths

A number of townsite walking and bicycle pathways are in bad condition with cracks and caved in areas on the edges.

- **Are they reviewed regularly?**
- **When will they be repaired?**
- **Will Parks Canada consider extending the bike path that runs parallel to the sidewalk along Waskesiu Drive? Currently that bike path runs from the north end of the townsite to about Kingfisher Street. Extending the bike path from Kingfisher to Bluebird will help reduce negative and dangerous interactions between cyclists and pedestrians on the sidewalk.**
- **When the park extended Lakeview Drive to cross Waskesiu Drive and connect to the highway, creating the current townsite access road, they took out the lower end of Bluebird Street in order to fit in this new section of Lakeview Drive. When this was completed, Bluebird Street no longer had a pedestrian/biking outlet on the lake end of the now shortened street, other than onto the new highway (Lakeview Drive). Adding to this unsafe condition, this outlet happens to be right after a blind curve, where incoming highway traffic may not see a pedestrian or biker exiting Bluebird onto the highway (Lakeview Drive). After input from the community the park**

constructed a gravel path connecting the end of Bluebird Street to the Waskesiu Drive sidewalk. As time has passed, however, this gravel path is going back to nature, and people are finding it more inviting to use the outlet onto the highway. Can the park remove this potential for tragedy by installing a proper path of concrete, brick or other long-lasting material to connect the end of Bluebird Street to the Waskesiu Drive sidewalk?

- **Are there any plans to resurface the path from Eagle to the beach? It is a well-used path. I have found all the dips in it a nuisance over the years but much more so now that I have mobility issues. I'm sure many people would appreciate this busy path being upgraded.**

Walking and bike paths are informally reviewed each operational season by Parks Canada staff. Based on these informal assessments, they recommend the paths that should be formally assessed or for minor works to be completed. Moving forward, the park is planning to complete formal inspections of paths every three years that will inform a regular maintenance schedule.

There is currently no plan for a large-scale recapitalization of the sidewalk and path network within Waskesiu. Parks Canada's focus for asset recapitalization is towards aging critical infrastructure and facilities within the townsite. However, we acknowledge that some locations may need repairs to address obstructions or deficiencies that are deemed a public safety hazard. These areas will be assessed and repaired as, and when, needed.

5) e-Bikes

For several years now residents at AGMs have expressed concerns about the increasing numbers, speed and generally unacceptable behaviours exhibited by riders of electric bikes, scooters, skateboards and similar artificially powered devices. This is particularly a problem on the busiest walking path along the lake where toddlers, dog walkers, wheelchair users and runners are often literally forced off the path to accommodate the above 'vehicles', often travelling up to 30kph. Most of these give no warning they are going to zoom by, and I have seen several close calls every week. I have read that a 'task force' was formed since the last Council AGM to look into this increasing problem.

- **(likely for WCC) What has this committee done?**
- **There is a 40kph limit on main townsite roads, and a few signs in the cabin/cottage areas indicating 15 kph. Should there not then be at least this limit posted on the lake path, as well as signs indicating that walkers have the right of way?**

Parks Canada does not currently have speed limits on trails within the park as the trail designs and rideability typically limit speed. We are open to reviewing the need for posted speed limits and other directional signage, as appropriate, considering the number of reported incidents.

Parks Canada promotes safe trail and bike messages on social media platforms. Recognizing safety is a shared responsibility, we encourage community partners to do the same and for the Waskesiu community to take an active, leading role to promote a culture of safety in Waskesiu.

- **What are the rules for e-Bikes, scooters, and other electric powered toys?**

Parks Canada is aware of the various modes of electric personal transportation that visitors are using both in the townsite and on trails. When parks wardens see infractions, they address them, but it is not possible to address each infraction. We are looking into ways to increase communication around safe cycling, in general, and the types of electric personal transportation vehicles currently allowed in the park to increase understanding and compliance. We understand that e-bikes and other forms of electric motorized transportation have many benefits, such as reduced congestion in the townsite, lower emissions and health benefits as “active transportation.” While there can be user conflict between pedestrians and users of e-vehicles, Parks Canada is interested in working with the community to promote safe use of these vehicles while still adhering to PCA regulations and policy. The current rules for electric personal transportation are:

- Electrical bikes (e-bikes) on Parks Canada’s trails must respect the following definition:
 - have one or more electric motors which have, singly or in combination, a total continuous power output rating, measured at the shaft of each motor, of 500 W or less

Please note there are no posted speed limits on trails.

- All other motorized (electrical/gas) bikes, scooters, etc. are only permitted on roads and highways and must adhere to traffic rules such as provincial licensing requirements and wear the necessary safety equipment (helmets, etc.)

6) Infrastructure Maintenance and Repairs -Main Beach Breakwater

- **The main beach is the major attraction when you first arrive in Waskesiu. As you take a closer look at the area, it is dire need of trees and garbage cleaned up, the breakwater surface restored, and the steps are in need of replacement. (As an aside, the breakwater was built by prisoners in the 1940s and there should be a plaque for tourists regarding the history)**
- **The main beach breakwater is crumbling and dangerous to walk on. What is the plan and timeline for its repair?**

Engineers have assessed the structural components of the breakwater and found that the structure is in fair condition. Now understanding its condition, Parks Canada sees an opportunity to work with community partners to envision the future experience of the breakwater in Waskesiu.

7) Infrastructure Maintenance and Repairs – Other Major Assets

- **Is there a long-term plan and strategy to upgrade, maintain and replace other aging infrastructure and what is the timing? (for example: sewer pipes, fire hall, water tower, visitor centre)**

Parks Canada's long-term capital plan has a place holder in future years for major capital upgrades. However, that plan is evergreen, prioritized upon need, and largely dependent on supplemental funding, and therefore timing of projects is not confirmed. Elevating the management of our asset portfolio is a priority for the Agency and for Prince Albert National Park. Investments over the next few years include sanitary sewer and upgrades to the water treatment plant, just to name a couple.

8) 4 Way Stop – Cross Walk

- **Will Parks Canada put in a fourth marked crosswalk at the NE corner of the 4 way stop of the intersection of Lakeview and Waskesiu Drive?**

The creation of a new “north” crosswalk would require redesign and investment of the curbs and gutters to meet accessibility standards. This level of investment is not warranted at this time in consideration of other asset investment priorities when combined the three existing crosswalks adequately serve pedestrians in the area.

9) Waste Management

- **We would like to congratulate Parks Canada for establishing a compost container (for kitchen waste). However, it took us some time exploring to find the receptacle. Could there be signs placed at the neighborhood garbage containers which would alert residents to the fact that container exists and where it is located?**

Signs on and around neighborhood garbage bins were upgraded within the last few years, so there are currently no plans to replace or update these signs. The compost bin is currently located at the recycling depot near the Canada Post mailboxes. We are working with the composting service provider to place signage at the recycling depot to more clearly mark the compost bin.

10) Cabin/Cottage Owners

- **Can you provide clarity on the Park's policy regarding cabin/cottage owners renting out their property?**

The private rental of residential cottage and cabins is not permitted in Prince Albert National Park. Federal legislation, the Waskesiu community plan and land use directive all provide direction on the regulation of commercial businesses and zoning within the community. Anyone renting their residential cabin or cottage is in violation of regulations pursuant to the Canada National Parks Act and their land use agreement with Parks Canada. They may be subject to a court appearance, fines, temporary access restrictions or termination of their lease agreement.

Parks Canada is aware that, on occasion, cabins and cottages are being rented out in contravention of the identified regulations and individual lease clauses. Parks Canada contacts lessees who engage in this activity when we are aware of it and regularly monitors short-term rental sites, like Airbnb and VRBO.

- **Is there any plan to change the terms of the executed leases for cottage/cabin owners to provide support services for year-round access?**

No, there are currently no plans or discussions with regards to changing the 7-month seasonal (April 1 – Oct. 31) leases for residential property in Waskesiu. Currently, only commercial leases in Waskesiu extend beyond the 7-month period. These leases are intended for businesses that offer seasonal or year-round services to the public. Some of these properties also include year-round staff accommodation that is used by staff who provide services during shoulder or winter seasons.

- **Could Parks Canada send out a reminder about where, when, how residents could source and replant trees on their residence, or elsewhere if appropriate?**

Parks Canada recognizes that many of the trees within the Waskesiu community may be nearing the end of their natural life cycle or may have sustained damage that requires them to be removed. In addition, we also recognize that vegetation may be disturbed, and landscaping is required when a property is renovated or redeveloped.

Parks Canada has a list of approved native trees, shrubs, and grasses for use in landscaping your property. This list also includes information about regional suppliers who can provide this native vegetation. In some cases, tree nurseries will include warranties on the health of the trees they provide. Alternatively, upon application, we will consider transplanting trees from the Waskesiu Community Fuel Break.

Parks Canada can work with partnering organizations to ensure the messages reach residents.

11) Land Use Regulations

- **Can you provide an update on the New Land Use Regulations and when they will come through?**

The anticipated effective date for the new National Parks of Canada Land Use Planning Regulations is October 31, 2024. These regulations combine 4 current regulations (building, cottage, signs, and Jasper Zoning) into one and provide for more local autonomy in development rules and requirements.

Parks Canada is developing a Regulatory Guideline document in conjunction with the new regulations. These national guidelines will establish the standard for the permitting processes. The information required for applications is based on the development activity, change in land use (rezoning), variance to policy, etc. There is also a parallel establishment of new fees and service standards for application review.

The new regulation requires local policies be developed for the building requirements identified within the current regulations. Parks Canada, the Waskesiu Community Council, and the Waskesiu Seasonal Residents Association have a working group that will support the development of “Cottage Development Guidelines,” similar to the current cabin development guidelines. These guidelines lay out the local building requirements like site planning, building height, parking, and other building features.

We expect more information about the new Land Use Planning Regulations, the Land Use Planning Guidelines, and the Prince Albert National Park’s new Cottage Development Guidelines soon. Parks Canada will be working with the Waskesiu working group to plan information sessions specific to the local cottage development guidelines and new regulations soon.

We want to thank the local working group members for their contribution to the development of a local set of Cottage Development Guidelines. Because of your efforts, we are ahead of other Parks Canada communities in this regard and well positioned to have a functioning set of guidelines ready for when the new regulations take effect.

Update as of November 19, 2024 – Regulations expected to be in effect sometime in December 2024.

12) Trails

- **Could you provide an update on any planned closures of familiar trails within the Park?**

There are no planned trail closures but, from time to time, public safety, or resource protection (e.g., poor trail condition, wildlife in area) require unplanned closures.

Prince Albert National Park also maintains a trail plan for the trails and facilities within the park. The recent Boundary Bog Trail renewal was identified and completed as part of this plan. In this case, the renewal projects required the temporary closure of the trail for public safety. The Waskesiu River is identified as the next trail for renewal in this plan, but there are no identified funds for this project nor a timeline for when it might occur.

13) How can the Park help the community raise awareness about the dangers of over consumption of alcohol, sexual assault, and informed consent?

Parks Canada is happy to work with the community and RCMP to promote messages related to community safety and wellbeing. Safety is a shared responsibility, and it's important for the community of Waskesiu to take an active, leading role in promoting a culture of safety in Waskesiu.

14) Resource Conservation

- a. What are the risks affecting the conservation and preservation of the PANP and what are the focus areas, mitigation, and elimination of the risks and how can the stewards of PANP support the Parks most pressing efforts financially and in other ways?**

- Human wildlife conflict (bison & bears)
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Vegetation program
 1. Prescribed fire
 2. Invasive plant management
 3. Wildfire Risk Reduction
- Emergency management

- b. How do we protect our park's waters / lakes from Aquatic Invasive Species?**

- Parks Canada has ramped up its communication efforts around aquatic invasive prevention within PANP this season and is working with partners and stakeholders towards a prevention strategy that will be implemented beginning in 2025.

15) Is the quality of water leaving the water treatment plant the same as the water quality coming out of the tap?

Yes, Parks Canada is required to conduct sampling of water at both the source (at the water plant) as well as numerous samples from locations throughout the distribution system. Based on the samples collected throughout the community, water quality in Waskesiu meets all regulatory requirements.

There are a few potential causes for “cloudiness” in water at your tap, including aeration of the water (very tiny air bubbles that disappear in a short time) or sedimentation from lack of use. When you return to your cabin or cottage after being away for more than a day or two, we recommend that you flush your water lines by running a tap for few minutes. If you have been away for a prolonged period, we recommend you flush your taps for 10 to 15 minutes.

16) PANP and Truth and Reconciliation

a. Where is PANP in its journey on Truth and Reconciliation and how can we help?

Parks Canada recognizes truth as the first step on a larger journey. We have been working with Indigenous partners on a project to better understand the impacts on the history of this area through an Indigenous lens and the impact of the establishment of the park on traditional ways of life and culture. Once these stories are gathered, we will work with partners to share these stories with Indigenous communities impacts and all Canadians who visit Prince Albert National Park.

We are also acknowledging truth by visibly recognizing that the lands of Prince Albert National Park are the traditional and ancestral territories of diverse Indigenous peoples. There will be new signs at park entrances, and you will begin to see additional visual representation in other places around the park as we update, refresh, and renew infrastructure.

While we recognize that truth is first, we also recognize the importance of reconciling with these truths. True Reconciliation requires building strong relationships with Indigenous partners. Last year we hosted an Indigenous Forum where we discussed important issues of mutual interest. Through this forum and other engagements, we know Indigenous partners are asking to be better informed of and involved in park decision making, conservation and cultural sharing.

We will continue to work alongside Indigenous partners to identify meaningful actions that help move Parks Canada toward Reconciliation. We are looking to the 100th year commemoration of Prince Albert National Park’s founding as an opportunity to showcase these successes.

Safer Streets – Cabin Area

- **Could more effective speed bumps or rumble strips in the cabin area (Bluebird to Pelican), like those in the seasonal staff trailer park? The existing bumps are not effective and there is too much fast traffic on these streets.**

There are no plans to change the speed mitigation devices in the bird streets. The current speed bumps were engineered and installed when the roads were re-paved. The design and construction of these speed mitigation devices is based on best practices for residential areas.