

2021-2026

Visitor Use Management

FLOWERPOT ISLAND



Fathom Five National Marine Park
Georgian Bay and Ontario East Field Unit
Parks Canada Agency

Contents

- Executive Summary.....1
- Chapter 1: Introduction4
 - 1.1 Area Description.....4
 - 1.2 Resources5
 - 1.3 Visitor Use.....5
 - 1.4 Changes in Visitor Use.....5
- Chapter 2: About the Plan6
 - 2.1 Authority6
 - 2.2 Purpose6
 - 2.3 Goals.....6
 - 2.4 Scope.....6
 - 2.5 Guiding Documents6
 - 2.6 Planning Process8
- Chapter 3: Management Direction9
 - 3.1 Area Vision.....9
 - 3.2 Desired Conditions9
 - 3.3 Appropriate Visitor Activities, Facilities and Services.....10
 - 3.4 Measuring Success: Indicators and Thresholds10
- Chapter 4: Current Conditions11
 - 4.1 Experiential Conditions11
 - 4.2 Resource Conditions13
 - 4.3 Sustainable Tourism Conditions.....13
- Chapter 5: Management Strategies.....15
 - 5.1 Strategies, Actions and Rationale15
 - 5.2 Monitoring22
 - 5.3 Implementation.....22
- Appendix A: Determination of Visitor Capacities and Schedules.....23
- Appendix B: Draft Indicators and Thresholds.....25
- References.....27

List of Figures

FIGURE 1: A Day in the Life of Flowerpot Island	3
FIGURE 2: Map of Fathom Five National Marine Park.....	4
FIGURE 3. Schedule of Commercial Activities for Flowerpot Island	24

Executive Summary

Flowerpot Island is the premier destination for visitors to Fathom Five National Marine Park (FFNMP), located off the northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula in the traditional territory of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. The last area management plan for Flowerpot Island was written over twenty years ago, in 1998. Since then, FFNMP and the Bruce Peninsula region have experienced major changes to visitation, bringing about the need for a new Visitor Use Management Plan. This new plan, in its essence, describes the current conditions on the island, the desired future conditions, and lays out a roadmap to bridge the gap between the two.

Between 2010 and 2017, the number of annual visitors landing on Flowerpot Island increased from 24,432 to 123,849, a five-fold (407%) increase in just seven years. Growth in visitation to the island, and indeed in the whole region, happened so fast that Parks Canada's local human resource and strategic capacity struggled to keep pace. Instead, like many partners in the region, we responded reactively during this time of significant change. This is contrary to the precautionary approach required by the Parks Canada mandate for protection; that is, to proceed slowly and carefully and to manage growth and associated impacts before important thresholds or tipping points are reached.

In 2017, Parks Canada placed an interim limit on the number of visitors allowed at one time on Flowerpot Island. That number, 1000, was based on the maximum average number of visitors on the island at one time in the previous year and was chosen, in part, to avoid sudden and unexpected impacts to existing tour boat businesses. Pausing the growth allowed Parks Canada to study the situation, consult with partners and stakeholders, and to develop appropriate processes, tools, and limits to responsibly manage visitation in support of our mandate for protection and presentation. This Visitor Use Management Plan is the result of much of that work.

To address growth in visitation across the region, the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, Regional Tourism Organization 7, Bruce County, and Parks Canada partnered in 2018 to co-fund the development of a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan. Many of the proposed actions in this Visitor Use Management plan for Flowerpot Island support key

recommendations in the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan, including: developing high-quality and sustainable visitor experiences; spreading visitation into the spring and fall 'shoulder' seasons; and, establishing manageable visitor capacities for popular destinations.

As visitation to Flowerpot island approached or exceeded important thresholds or tipping points, a number of concerning trends began to emerge, many of which are described in the 'Current Conditions' section of this plan:

- Trail braiding or widening occurs as visitors attempt to move past one another on congested trails.
- Unofficial or 'social' trails are developed and trampling of sensitive vegetation occurs.
- Visitors report being crowded during their experience on Flowerpot Island.
- Litter and waste increases.
- Composting toilets are unable to keep up with demand.
- Human waste is found along trails and near popular destinations.
- Damage and graffiti, including at sensitive caves and cultural sites, increases.
- Visitor demographics change, and experiences exclude those seeking learning opportunities and a connection to place.

To address these challenges, a series of measures are proposed in this Visitor Use Management Plan, some of which have already been put in place:

- Introduce an at-one-time visitor capacity limit of 650 people on Flowerpot Island.
- Improve island infrastructure for arriving and departing visitors.
- Increase composting toilet capacity.
- Create a diversified 'menu' of visitor experiences including smaller-group, close-to-nature offerings.
- Introduce a competitive solicitation process for business in Fathom Five that allows fair and equal access to business opportunities for new entrants; establishes formal business agreements with third parties; and, ensures a fair return to the Crown for business occurring on Parks Canada lands.

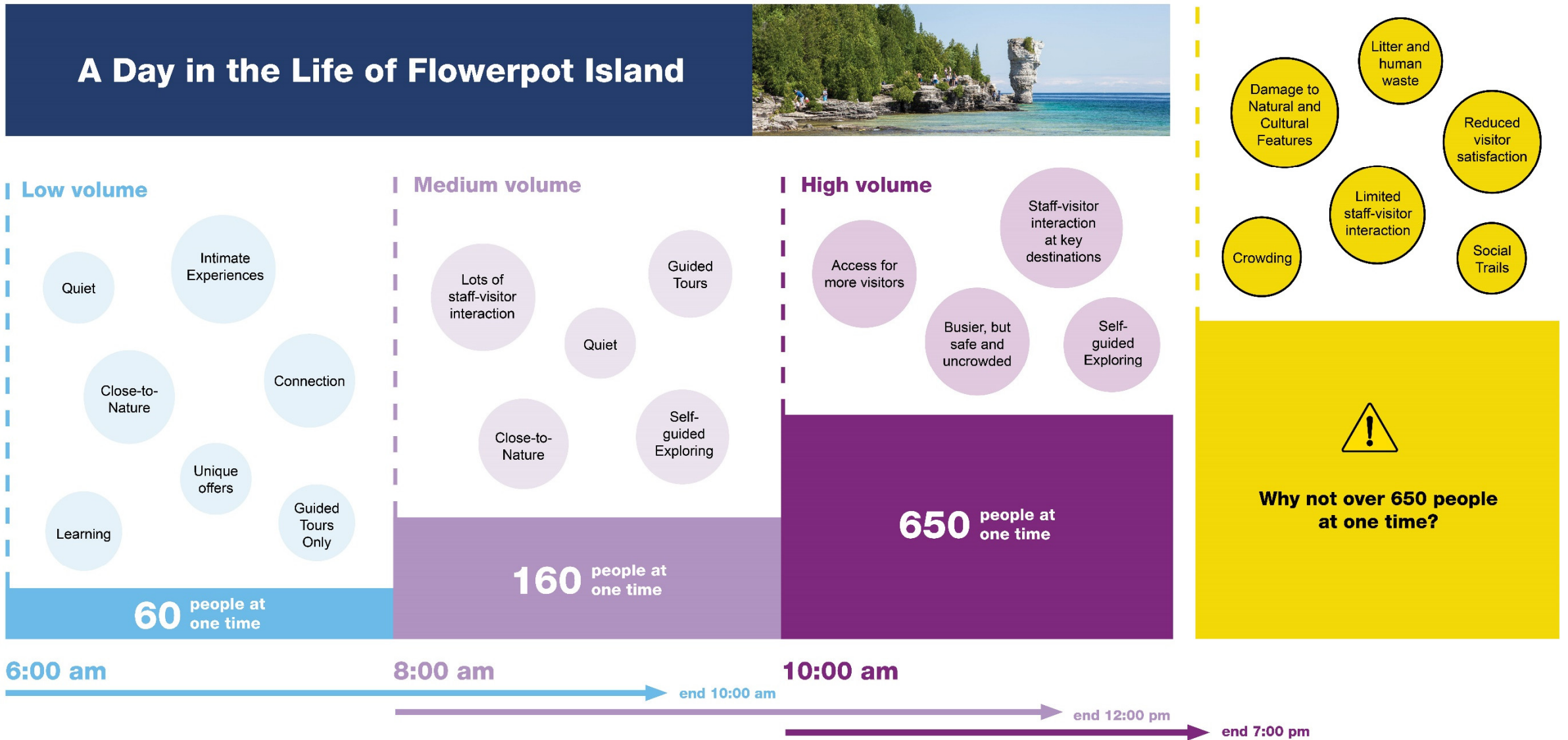
- Structure a new schedule for activities and vessel landings that reduces visitor pulsing and crowding on docks and trails.

The new limit of 650 visitors on the island at-one-time is an important policy change recommended in this plan. The number derives from two separate analyses of visitor behaviour. The first used photo-monitoring to determine the point at which the crowding at the Flowerpots led visitors to disperse into other areas of the island, off trails and into sensitive cultural and ecological zones. The second used a spatial analysis to determine the number of visitors that could be accommodated, with comfortable spacing, in desirable shoreline areas of the island. In addition to these numerical approaches, an at-one-time limit of 650 is also supported by qualitative data and anecdotal information from front-line Parks Canada staff with extensive experience on Flowerpot Island. As the number of visitors climbs beyond 650, it becomes difficult or impossible to manage for a safe, uncrowded experience, and to monitor visitor behaviour for compliance with rules and regulations. As a result, destruction of natural features, trampling of sensitive vegetation, incidents of graffiti, depositing of human waste along trails, and disturbance of cultural sites, all rise to unacceptable levels. It is the sum total of all of these pressures and factors that necessitates the 650 at-one-time limit.

It is theoretically possible to increase the visitor capacity on Flowerpot Island by building new infrastructure: wider trails, more toilets, a large viewing platform at the Flowerpots and so on. However, one of the important principles guiding this plan, and all recent infrastructure investment in Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park, is to not expand the developed footprint within these parks. Although doing so could create some new capacity, all of this new capacity is quickly taken-up by existing demand. This demand will only continue to grow with the growing population of southern Ontario, and as new segments of the population begin taking up outdoor recreation at an increasing rate. These two parks protect the last large contiguous tract of undeveloped lands in southern Ontario. They are both precious... and imperilled. In the face of this relentless demand, allowing continuous small incursions or increases to the existing footprint would eventually lead to death by a thousand cuts.

This plan paints a picture of how a renewed visitor offer on Flowerpot Island can be managed to protect and respect the natural and cultural environment on the island, while promoting new learning opportunities and sustainable visitor experiences. Figure 1. summarizes the proposed approach by depicting a future 'Day In The Life' of Flowerpot Island. (Fig. 1.)

FIGURE 1: A Day in the Life of Flowerpot Island



Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Area Description

As part of a national network of protected areas, Parks Canada protects and presents Fathom Five National Marine Park (FFNMP) (Fig.2) for the benefit, education and enjoyment of all Canadians. Located in the heart of the Great Lakes, the 114km² marine park protects a significant portion of the main channel connecting Georgian Bay to Lake Huron, and includes important coastal, island and freshwater ecosystems as well as the rich cultural heritage of the Great Lakes.

FFNMP is within the traditional territory of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) and the village of Tobermory serves as the primary gateway to the national marine park. FFNMP is also recognized as a

Parks Canada - National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA).

Flowerpot Island (45.3007°N 81.62444°W) is located within FFNMP and is approximately seven kilometres offshore from the town of Tobermory. Flowerpot Island has a long history as a protected area having been added to Georgian Bay Islands National Park (located in southern Georgian Bay) in 1928.

The 250 ha Flowerpot Island has become an increasingly popular visitor destination due to its iconic flowerpot rock formations. It remains the primary attraction in FFNMP, with visitor day-access provided by commercial tour boats from May-October, six primitive overnight campsites operated by Parks Canada, and a historic lightstation which has been under the stewardship of a volunteer association.

FIGURE 2: Map of Fathom Five National Marine Park



1.2 Resources

1.2.1 CULTURAL HERITAGE

Flowerpot Island is of high cultural value and reveals stories of Indigenous people inhabiting the Great Lakes for millennia. A number of archaeological sites on Flowerpot Island demonstrate culturally significant evidence of longstanding human occupation, and strengthen a deep spiritual connection to place for the SON.

With increased European colonization in the Great Lakes region during the nineteenth century, the mouth of Georgian Bay became an important crossroads for shipping. Despite the construction of several lighthouses, including one structure on Flowerpot Island, many vessels were wrecked in the area. Flowerpot Island Lighthouse is a designated Heritage Lighthouse; constructed in 1969 to replace the original built in 1897. A Federal 'Statement of Significance' refers to four related buildings on the lightstation site that contribute to the heritage character of the lighthouse: (1) the 1963 Boathouse, (2) the 1901 Lightkeeper's Dwelling, (3) the 1959 Assistant Lightkeeper's Dwelling, and (4) the Observation Deck Building (Henderson, 2019).

1.2.2 NATURAL HERITAGE

Flowerpot Island is recognised as a Life Science and an Earth Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest by the Province of Ontario (Cuddy et. al. 1976), for its unique geological, ecological, and cultural features. Flowerpot Island has a range of geological features including cliffs, two limestone erosive formations, or 'flowerpots', and many caves. Together, Bruce Peninsula National Park and FFNMP have the largest collection of lacustrine wave-cut caves in Canada.

Flowerpot Island is recognized as a hotspot for biodiversity in the Great Lakes due to the diverse habitat it protects, including escarpment cliff and talus slopes, cobble shorelines and marl bed wetland, which support many important species of plants and animals.

1.3 Visitor Use

1.3.1 VISITATION

Dating back to the 1960s, visitation to Flowerpot Island has largely relied on tour boat excursions launching from Little Tub Harbour in Tobermory. Today, two tour boat companies offer tours to Flowerpot Island from May to October. Typically beginning with a visit to view the two historic shipwrecks in Big Tub Harbour, the

tours circle the island to view the "flowerpot" rock formations before docking at Beachy Cove where visitors disembark. There are six campsites west of the tour boat dock area situated around the perimeter of Beachy Cove. They can be reserved in advance and typically fill for the summer season and early fall. Campers primarily access these sites by commercial tour boat.

Visitation is concentrated in July and August with an attendance of 131,485 in 2019. Based on a market analysis (Parks Canada, 2018), 66% of visitors come from areas within a 2-3hr drive to the park, and 83% travelled in groups of adults and/or seniors only.

Parks Canada staff are on the island daily throughout the season to provide visitor information, maintain facilities, lead interpretive hikes and monitor visitor behaviour. A volunteer host program coordinated by the Friends of Bruce District Parks provides presence and education at the historic lightstation.

1.4 Changes in Visitor Use

FFNMP and the surrounding region have experienced significant growth in tourism over the past decade. The importance of managing visitor use on Flowerpot Island has been driven by an over five-fold (407%) increase in visitation between 2010-2017 (24,432 – 123,849 visitors per year). This increasing demand has resulted in the growth of existing commercial tour operations and the emergence of new enterprises seeking commercial opportunities within FFNMP.

Concerns about real and potential ecological, cultural and social impacts have emerged over the past decade, including:

- increased risk to public health and safety;
- diminished quality of visitor experiences from crowding, congestion, user conflicts and impacts to aesthetic values;
- impacts to natural and cultural resources including emergence of social trails, vegetation trampling, picking of orchids;
- increased pressure on the physical and human infrastructure (i.e., human waste, litter); and,
- impacts to adjacent communities including traffic and visitor congestion, loss of enjoyment by local residents, and public health and safety concerns.

Parks Canada has implemented several initiatives to manage increased demand in recent years including:

setting interim visitor capacity limits on Flowerpot Island, improving business licensing processes, developing and upgrading infrastructure to manage visitation levels, and promoting pre-trip planning to better align visitor experiences and expectations. This Visitor Use Management Plan is part of an adaptive

management framework that will be used to manage changes in visitor use on Flowerpot Island in ways that protect the park's natural and cultural resources while offering safe, enjoyable visitor experiences, and, contributing to a sustainable tourism industry throughout the region.

Chapter 2: About the Plan

2.1 Authority

The Visitor Use Management Plan for Flowerpot Island is approved by the Field Unit Superintendent of Georgian Bay and Ontario East Field Unit under the jurisdiction of the Canada National Parks Act. Nothing in this document shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for existing aboriginal or treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada by the recognition and affirmation of those rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of the plan is to provide an adaptive framework for managing visitor use in ways that ensure the protection of natural and cultural resources while providing safe, enjoyable experiences for visitors. The plan will provide cohesive guidance for analyzing and managing visitor use on Flowerpot Island. It is intended to provide a transparent decision-making process, ensure agency accountability and provide sound rationale for management decisions.

The plan will lead to the development of tools that will support visitor use management including: (1) *Management Direction*: to articulate desired conditions and clear management objectives for the area; (2) *Policy Framework*: to establish regulatory visitor use policies associated with location, type, amount and timing of visitor use and visitor behaviour; (3) *Management Framework*: to develop strategies and actions related to infrastructure and site design, restoration, education, enforcement; and, (4) *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*: to establish a long-term monitoring program and adaptive management framework.

2.3 Goals

The goals of the plan align with the policy objectives for National Parks and National Marine Conservation Areas, including:

- (a) ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem processes are protected, resilient and capable of supporting a range of sustainable uses;
- (b) protect cultural resources and intangible heritage values of the area;
- (c) provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy, appreciate and understand the natural and cultural heritage; and,
- (d) contribute to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of people living in adjacent communities.

2.4 Scope

The geographic scope of this plan focuses on the whole of Flowerpot Island. A five-year planning period has been adopted for the implementation of the Visitor Use Management Plan extending from 2021-2026.

2.5 Guiding Documents

2.5.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In 1930 Flowerpot Island was registered as part of Georgian Bay Islands National Park under Schedule 1 of the Canada National Parks Act (CNPA). Therefore, the CNPA and subsequent regulations apply to Flowerpot Island, including the legislative focus on protecting ecological integrity.

FFNMP was established in 1987 through an establishment agreement with the Province of Ontario. Despite being the first NMCA in Canada, FFNMP is not yet scheduled under the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act (CNMCAA) because the

lakebed and water column have not been transferred from the Province to Parks Canada. Cooperation with other government partners has been critical for managing FFNMP in the 'spirit' of the CNMCA Act using integrated federal and provincial legislation to achieve its mandate.

2.5.2 POLICIES

Visitation to Flowerpot Island is currently facilitated by two commercial tour boat companies operating under business licenses and Licenses of Occupation permitting them to land on the island, disembark and embark passengers. In addition, existing policies include:

- an interim limit of maximum 1,000 visitors on the island at one time (established in 2017)
- 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. use period

Use of the island by the two commercial tour boat companies has evolved informally over the years. In December, 2020, a request for proposal process will commence and award business opportunities for visitor services beginning in the 2022 season.

The non-profit Friends of Bruce District Parks Association has a License of Occupation permitting the group to run a small museum and confectionary, and a 'light-keepers' residential program at the light station property. A license for this continued use will be in place until fall of 2021.

2.5.3 PLANS

The Flowerpot Island Visitor Use Management Plan is proceeding in tandem with other planning efforts including:

Bruce Peninsula National Park/Fathom Five National Marine Park Management Plan

- The Flowerpot Island Visitor Use Management Plan will support the park management plan as an area management plan and help to guide decisions for updating park zoning. The most recent area management plan for Flowerpot Island was completed in 1998.

2018 Northern Bruce Peninsula Sustainable Tourism Plan

- This plan makes recommendations for sustainable tourism management throughout

the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula. Parks Canada addresses these issues and opportunities in partnership with the municipality and other regional tourism organizations.

2020 Fathom Five National Marine Park Visitor Experience Strategy

- Parks Canada's Visitor Experience Strategy serves as a five-year plan to develop and evolve appropriate visitor experiences that connect with visitors and achieve park objectives.

2.5.4 PROGRAMS

Parks Canada staff are on Flowerpot Island daily, (May through October from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.), greeting visitors, maintaining washrooms and managing visitor use.

From 2016-2020, Parks Canada made significant improvements on the island through the Federal Infrastructure Program including:

- new arrival and departure areas at Beachy Cove;
- new composting toilets at Beachy Cove and near the light station;
- replacement of the stairway structure to the cave;
- replacement of the raised boardwalk from the light station boat house to the light station;
- resurfacing of the trail from Beachy Cove to the light station; and,
- installation of the first Anishnaabemowin language interpretive sign in August 2020.

Additional improvements under consideration for 2021-2022:

- renovate the Warden cabin to serve as an emergency station;
- formalize visitor access trails to the flowerpots;
- remove the boardwalk between Beachy Cove and the picnic shelter and improve the adjacent trail;
- create dedicated rest and lounge spots for visitors between Beachy Cove and the flowerpots to better manage use of this area; and,
- develop interpretive trail panels and signage to increase education opportunities for visitors.

2.6 Planning Process

2.6.1 MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Parks Canada adopted the planning framework created by the [Interagency Visitor Use Management Council \(2016\)](#) for the development of this plan. This planning process has been widely used by the U.S. National Parks Service and other agencies at high-traffic destinations such as Zion National Park and Acadia National Park, among others. The framework is an adaptive process that includes 14 planning steps outlined below:

(a) Build the Foundation

1. Clarify project purpose and need.
2. Review the area's purpose and applicable legislation, agency policies, and other management direction.
3. Assess and summarize existing information and current conditions.
4. Develop a project action plan.

(b) Define Visitor Use Management Direction

5. Define desired conditions for the project area.
6. Define appropriate visitor activities, facilities, and services.
7. Select indicators and establish thresholds.

(c) Identify Management Strategies

8. Compare and document the differences between existing and desired conditions, and, for visitor use-related impacts, clarify the specific links to visitor use characteristics.
9. Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.
10. Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and additional strategies to manage use levels within capacities.
11. Develop a monitoring strategy.

(d) Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust

12. Implement management actions.
13. Conduct and document ongoing monitoring, and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions in achieving desired conditions.
14. Adjust management actions if needed to achieve desired conditions, and document rationale.

2.6.2 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder consultation on the Flowerpot Island Visitor Use Management Plan occurred with the 17-member Parks Advisory Committee. The committee includes representatives from the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, Saugeen Ojibway Nation, Tobermory Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Parks, local, provincial and national non-government organisations, local citizens and community associations.

Discussions also occurred with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation Technical Team.

Workshops were held with local commercial tour boat businesses on December 13, 2019 and February 14, 2020 to gain feedback on the request for proposal process and proposed operational policies derived from this plan (see [Fathom Five National Marine Park website](#) for more information on business licensing and meeting summaries).

2.6.3 PLAN REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

As an adaptive planning framework, Parks Canada will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions and work with partners and stakeholders to achieve desired conditions by adapting accordingly. A 5-year plan review will include a comprehensive consultation process with partners and stakeholders prior to making any substantial changes for the subsequent five year planning cycle. All changes will be communicated to affected stakeholders with advance notice.

Chapter 3: Management Direction

3.1 Area Vision

The Saugeen Ojibway Nation and Parks Canada welcome visitors to enjoy, understand and connect with the natural, cultural and spiritual values of Fathom Five National Marine Park. Environmentally-sustainable practices will ensure that the increasing popularity of FFNMP is managed in a responsible way, respecting the capacity of the lands and waters of the Peninsula. Whether exploring the shipwrecks and islands of FFNMP or the popular day-use areas, we invite visitors to connect to this special place and to share responsibility for it, embodying the same deep respect and stewardship ethic that guide Parks Canada's management and the traditional practices and way of life of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation today. **Note: The Area Vision is a 'draft' statement from the Bruce Peninsula and Fathom Five Management Plan that is currently under development.*

3.2 Desired Conditions

Desired condition statements provide high-level descriptions of attributes the plan will attain related to natural and cultural resources and visitor experiences. Desired conditions reflect the purpose and goals of a particular area, as outlined in guiding legislation and documents, and provide an important foundation for determining a general management approach. For Flowerpot Island, the desired conditions are grounded in the CNPA, emphasizing the protection of ecological integrity and ensuring high quality visitor experiences.

3.2.1 RESOURCE CONDITIONS

- Parks Canada protects ecological and cultural integrity by using visitor use management best practices, including an adaptive management framework, leaving the treasured resources unimpaired for future generations.
- No signs of damage and misuse are visible i.e. free from litter, graffiti, obvious destruction to flora.
- Visitors stay on trails, do not climb on the flowerpot formations, and refrain from activities that damage natural and cultural resources; and,

- Parks Canada works towards 'greening' visitor experiences on Flowerpot Island and influences pre and post trip impacts of delivering the experience (i.e. garbage and transit choices for whole trip cycle).
- Through experiencing natural and cultural resources, unimpaired, visitors are inspired to make different personal choices related to natural and cultural heritage protection and appreciation, during and after their trips.

3.2.2 EXPERIENTIAL CONDITIONS

- All visitors to Flowerpot Island are aware of the natural and cultural environment, both recent and ancient, they are entering into;
- All visitors experience safe, highly engaging, well-designed trails with stops and viewscapes; interpretive signage (or alternate delivery channels, such as phone apps) for self-guided learning, rest and reflection and immersion;
- All visitors experience less congestion and observations of poor behaviours are significantly reduced (i.e. partying, scaling walls at height, illegal cooking, dumping, vandalism, excessive noise and music from portable bluetooth speakers)
- Visitor expectations around other visitors on the island are in-line with the experience they have chosen (i.e. guided tour – 'deep dive' immersive and wild, versus short 'selfie at the Flowerpot' visit) ;
- Day-time visitors using the Mountain Trail experience a high level of solitude and tranquility;
- Over-night campers experience a natural dark sky and sense of wilderness solitude; and,
- Visitors have access to a variety of enriched, professionally guided activities that stimulate deeper learning about natural and cultural heritage, including the Saugeen Ojibway Nation culture and spirituality, fostering a sense of stewardship and respect.

3.2.3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CONDITIONS

- Parks Canada offers a range of sustainable visitor experiences on Flowerpot Island, working in close partnership with commercial tour operators, meeting or exceeding visitor expectations;
- Tourism to Flowerpot Island contributes to healthy local economies; and,
- Parks Canada works towards sustainable tourism goals with SON, the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula and other regional partners.

3.3 Appropriate Visitor Activities, Facilities and Services

Appropriate visitor activities, facilities and services are integral to achieving desired conditions. The following provides more specific direction on the types of visitor activities, services and facilities that are consistent with the desired conditions for Flowerpot Island.

3.3.1 ACTIVITIES

Visitor activities on Flowerpot Island will continue to take place from May to October primarily using the existing recreational footprint. Commercial activities are consistent with the Zoning plan for Flowerpot Island (Parks Canada, 1998) including: self-guided walking and hiking experiences, future guided programming and camping.

3.3.2 SERVICES

In cooperation with tourism operators and other partners, the following services will be available for visitors, when applicable: pre-trip planning, registration, orientation, interpretation and education, and safety and security services. Parks Canada will endeavour to have Visitor Services staff present on the island during high volume visitation periods between 10am – 7pm daily. Future early morning small group offers will be accompanied by a professional, Parks Canada approved guide. Additionally, Parks Canada staff will continue to visit the island to conduct routine monitoring, ecological restoration and maintenance activities as required.

3.3.3 FACILITIES

Facilities on Flowerpot Island will remain in accordance with the present zoning plan established in 1998, or until a new zoning plan is completed, including:

- the arrival / departure docking area at Beachy Cove;
- six primitive campsites surrounding Beachy Cove and the camper dock;
- the Flowerpot Trail and Mountain Trail;
- the interpretive Cave experience; and,
- the light station property.

Upgraded Flowerpot Island facilities and future upgrades or enhancements under consideration are discussed in greater detail in Section 2.5.4.

3.4 Measuring Success: Indicators and Thresholds

Indicators translate the broad description of desired conditions into measurable attributes that can be monitored over time to evaluate change. Thresholds that represent the minimum acceptable condition for each indicator will be established, taking into consideration the qualitative descriptions of the desired conditions, data on existing conditions, relevant research studies and Parks Canada staff management experience. One goal of visitor use management is to strive to make progress toward desired conditions. Thresholds identify the point at which the effects of visitor use on desired conditions are anticipated to become enough of a concern that a management action is needed to achieve and / or maintain desired conditions.

A detailed monitoring strategy is being prepared for Flowerpot Island that will outline the indicators and thresholds selected to measure and assess conditions, and the methodologies for collecting data. Appendix B provides preliminary examples of indicators and thresholds, however, these are meant only to illustrate how progress towards achieving desired conditions will be measured.

Chapter 4: Current Conditions

This chapter describes the current conditions on Flowerpot Island based on a large body of knowledge that includes qualitative, quantitative and anecdotal information. It also reflects synthesis of discussions and inputs from visitors, staff and partners with direct observation of trends and conditions. It focuses on important attributes of desired experiential conditions, resource conditions, and sustainable tourism conditions on the island, and, identifies key issues that may be impacting these attributes. Experiential conditions include social interactions, aesthetics, recreation and safety. Resource conditions include species and habitats, and cultural resources. Sustainable tourism conditions include visitation levels and island services.

4.1 Experiential Conditions

4.1.1 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Crowding – 131,485 visitors experienced Flowerpot Island in 2019, with visitation most concentrated on weekends and holidays in July and August. Visitor crowding and congestion on the island occurs mainly due to the surge and pulsing of visitors arriving in frequent intervals from commercial tour boats landing at the Beachy Cove dock. Visitors disembark, use washrooms, orient themselves for their visit, and most proceed along the Flowerpot Trail to the iconic flowerpot formations. The pulsing flow of visitors results in congestion at popular destinations and at or on park infrastructure (i.e. trails, docks and washrooms). While visitors have varied levels of tolerance for crowding, feeling crowded may be more pronounced among visitors that have preferences for higher levels of solitude or expectations based on past experiences. In the most recent Visitor Information Program (Parks Canada, 2014), 33% of visitors reported feeling crowded or very crowded with their overall visit to Flowerpot Island, detracting from the enjoyment of their experience. Recent photo monitoring (Parks Canada, 2019) revealed when popular destinations such as the flowerpots become crowded, (less than 9m² per person) visitors began spreading into other areas on the island that are not desirable from either a resource protection or visitor experience perspective.

Conflict – Conflict relates to the types of interactions with other visitors and often occurs when these interactions interfere with achieving an individual's travel goals or motivations. Crowding contributes to conflict on Flowerpot Island as it can interfere with a visitor's opportunity to experience the sought-after destination. Select visitor comments from the most recent Visitor Information Program (Parks Canada, 2014) indicate people “*Yelling on trail, people not moving over to let you pass*” and “*Lots of bodies trying to see / photograph the (flower) Pots*”. A less direct form of conflict is the interaction between dissimilar activity types. Flowerpot Island provides six backcountry camping platforms for overnight campers located around the Beachy Cove area. High volumes of visitors on the island from 9am – 8pm reduces the sense of wilderness solitude typically expected from a backcountry camping experience. Yet, further forms of conflict may arise from visitors demonstrating disrespectful behaviours, such as travelling off-trail, creating excessive noise, littering and vandalism (i.e. graffiti on the flowerpots).

4.1.2 AESTHETICS

Viewscapes – A viewscape is a visual connection that occurs between a person and the arrangement of landscape features. Ninety-nine % of visitors to FFNMP report that beautiful scenery is either important or very important, and ninety-seven% responded similarly for a pristine environment (Parks Canada, 2014). In recent years there has been a significant increase in graffiti on Flowerpot Island, notably on the flowerpots themselves. In addition, reports of litter and waste materials are increasing, negatively affecting visitor's perspective of place.

Soundscales – similar to *Viewscapes*, a soundscape is the audible connection a person makes with their surroundings. Although a soundscape may be of less importance to some visitors, noise is increasingly problematic on Flowerpot Island. The popularity of wireless devices (i.e. Bluetooth speakers) are more frequently dominating once quiet places. Ninety-three % of respondents stated that a ‘quiet and peaceful setting’ was either important or very important to them while visiting FFNMP (Parks Canada, 2014). The loss tranquility and privacy is closely related to other

social interactions, including crowding and conflict. Parks Canada does not presently regulate noise levels on Flowerpot Island, nor has it designated 'quiet areas' or 'quiet times'. Beyond impacting visitor experiences, noise can also disturb wildlife and reduce habitat quality, such as that along the Mountain Trail interior forest area.

4.1.3 RECREATION

Activities – The visitor offer on Flowerpot Island includes two primary activity types: self-guided tours following drop-offs by commercial tour operators and overnight camping. The tour boat offer primarily focuses on shipwreck tours coupled with shuttles to Flowerpot Island. This iconic tour is often at full occupancy during peak periods, making it unavailable for many visitors. With a total of 69% first-time visitors (Parks Canada, 2014), the offer provides opportunities to experience the iconic attractions of FFNMP; however, the menu of options is limited and the variety or promise of 'more to discover' does not support repeat visitation. There has also been a shift to larger, high-volume tour boats, and, while some smaller vessels are still in operation, these tours may not align with the preferences of some visitor segments.

Learning Opportunities – Learning opportunities were reported as being important for 81% visitors to FFNMP (Parks Canada, 2014). However, market analyses in 2010 and 2018 indicated that there has been a significant reduction in visitor types motivated by learning about natural and cultural heritage from 21% to 2%. This shift in market attendance may be due to limited availability and/or quality of learning opportunities. Interpretation en route to Flowerpot Island is generally limited, and no comprehensive or coordinated interpretive planning has been completed for the area to guide development and delivery of riveting, engaging segment-appropriate content. Tour boat interpretation has been limited to on-board commentaries, though restrictions on the use of loudspeakers in 2014, in certain areas, have made it difficult to engage large groups and no other delivery mechanisms have been implemented. Although interpretive hikes are offered several times per week during the peak season by Parks Canada staff, guided hikes are not currently offered by third-party operators. In addition, no formal interpretive approach is shared between Parks Canada and the non-profit Friends of Bruce District Parks group who operate the

lightstation. Parks Canada staff on Flowerpot Island are generally required to manage the volume of visitors at the arrival and departure dock, limiting their available time on trails and around the flowerpots. Lastly, there is sparse contemporary interpretive signage available on Flowerpot Island, leaving self-guided visitors challenged to self-educate.

4.1.4 SAFETY

Boat Tours – The primary safety concern for tour boats is risk of collision due to the narrow waterway configuration combined with the high frequency of vessels entering the Beachy Cove docking area. High wind and waves, especially during periods of lower lake levels, can reduce steering capabilities and increase risk of striking the lakebed. There is also concern of collision due to high congestion at the docking area as tour boats wait for access, or multiple vessels dock simultaneously. Other motorized vessel risks such as fire, explosion, and onboard safety are regulated by Transport Canada.

Visitor Preparedness – Although Flowerpot Island is host to more than 130,000 visitors annually, it remains a rugged and adventurous experience. In recent years the number of urban day-tripper visitors has significantly increased, and includes challenges associated with a lack of pre-trip planning. Parks Canada has made considerable investments to modernize the main Flowerpot Trail from Beachy Cove to the flowerpots and beyond to the lightstation; yet, visitors are often unprepared for the craggy shoreline and cobble beaches that rim the island and its premier destinations. Further, many visitors are not self-sufficient for the period of their island stay, given the limited services. Although Parks Canada has prioritized pre-trip planning and visitor preparedness materials on its website and with 3rd party tour boat operators, many visitors continue to arrive unprepared for the challenges of the island terrain, climate and the few available services. Since 2010, there have been at least 82 recorded incidents (and an unknown number of unreported incidents) of injuries on Flowerpot Island related to slipping and falling on the rugged terrain, or, being exposed to and unprepared for the elements (Parks Canada, 2018). Part of this situation may be related to the lack of formalized entry points to popular destinations such as the flowerpots, and the many of socially developed trails that have emerged. These trails are often poorly formed and ripe with ankle twisting obstacles.

However, Parks Canada and 3rd party operators can commit to improve pre-trip messaging and planning information so visitors arrive better prepared for the challenging terrain and climate, and establish realistic expectations.

4.2 Resource Conditions

4.2.1 SPECIES AND HABITATS

Vegetation trampling – Vegetation trampling is the act of stepping on and causing permanent harm to native vegetation. Trampling occurs when visitors walk and explore in areas where they are not meant to be (i.e. away from a designated or purpose designed trail). In the context of Flowerpot Island, there are several factors that lead to vegetation trampling, including: crowding along trails and at popular destinations; inadequate informational and directional signage; and, poorly designed trails or access points to destinations such as the flowerpots. Combined, some factors encourage the persistence and growth of others. There is significant evidence of vegetation trampling on Flowerpot Island, and in some instances it is the cause of localized harm to native and sensitive plant species and habitats (i.e. Marr Lake Trail and Marr Lake area). In other areas, such as the main Flowerpot Trail, there is evidence of trail widening caused by crowding; too many people on the trail simultaneously causes visitors to step outside the trail, trampling the vegetation, and therefore making the trail wider. Further, some visitors will purposefully leave a trail and create a ‘short cut’ through vegetation towards their destination. This often results in the development of a social trail, perpetuating the cycle and contributing to other undesirable conditions.

Invasive species – Non-native species are those which are not a native part of a local habitat or ecosystem. Invasive species are non-native species that actively invade and displace native species from their habitats. Introductions of invasive plants are evident at Beachy Cove and along trails. Island visitors who feel crowded on trails tend to seek off-trail adventures, often into very sensitive places that cannot be adequately protected and are difficult to restore. Non-native species are easily transported by visitors as ‘vectors’, where a seed or plant matter may be attached to clothing, a bag or footwear. Combined with vegetation trampling, visitors inadvertently introduce and spread invasive species, putting native species and habitats at risk. Parks Canada actively

manages invasive species on Flowerpot Island as part of a broader invasive species management program.

Disturbance – Vegetation trampling and invasive species are both disturbances to native plants and their habitats. However, other less obvious forms of disturbance are taking place on Flowerpot Island, as discussed in section, 4.1.2, including litter, waste and ‘noise pollution’. In addition, there is evidence that rocks and boulders adjacent to trails and popular destinations are becoming devoid of lichen and moss species as people climb and scramble on them, or simply pick off a piece out of curiosity as they walk by.

4.2.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Archaeological Sites – Flowerpot Island has been used for thousands of years by Indigenous Peoples and has numerous archaeological sites of cultural and spiritual significance. Parks Canada has worked closely with the Saugeen Ojibway nation to assess and inventory some locations, and to develop management and monitoring strategies for their protection. In recent years there is evidence that some sites have been subject to disturbance. This is likely caused by their proximity to areas of high visitation, and these sites may not be clearly distinguishable to the untrained person. The risks of identifying and marking locations of such resources can outweigh the benefits, by attracting more activity or attention.

4.3 Sustainable Tourism Conditions

4.3.1 VISITATION LEVELS

Visitation to FFNMP, Bruce Peninsula National Park, and other regional attractions has grown exponentially in recent years. Impacts of over tourism are being felt in the local communities (e.g. spillover and dispersal of visitors, litter, illegal activities, etc.) and are beginning to be addressed at a regional level through collaborations of key partners. A sustainable tourism plan for the Northern Bruce Peninsula was commissioned in 2018 through a collaboration of stakeholders and partners, providing many strategies and actions

to address these issues. One specific strategy that aligns with ongoing Parks Canada activities is to better prepare visitors in advance with pre-trip planning information. Improved collaboration with regional tourism partners will help ensure consistent messaging is being delivered to potential visitors, allowing them to be more prepared for their visit and better aligning experiences with expectations.

4.3.2 ISLAND SERVICES

An important dimension of sustainable tourism experiences is the 'greenness' of the service. This can relate to many things, including the energy required to provide a service, the origin and efficiency of products delivered through a supply chain, or the consumables and byproducts generated throughout a product cycle. Services on Flowerpot Island are limited, therefore, visitors need to be prepared in advance for their experiences.

Water supply – Presently, there is not a potable water supply available to visitors on Flowerpot Island. Some visitors bring beverages with them on their journey, but many arrive unprepared and have nothing to drink to stay hydrated during the hot summer months. Although the Friends of Bruce District Parks operates a small confectionary at the lightstation, this is at the far end of the visitor 'footprint' at the opposite end of the landing docks. Beverages are provided in plastic bottles that are often not reused, nor can they be refilled.

Recycling - Parks Canada does not presently operate a recycling program on Flowerpot Island. Many visitors purchase beverages in disposable or single use containers prior to their visit, which ultimately end up as waste and litter that requires management on the island.

Waste and Litter - Parks Canada actively manages waste and litter on Flowerpot Island by providing waste receptacles at the docking facilities near Beachy Cove, and the washroom areas at the Beachy Cove staging area. Parks Canada has contractual agreements with 3rd party tour operators to assist in collecting and transporting waste from the Beachy Cove docking area back to the mainland for processing. However, waste and litter continue to be a mounting challenge as a result of the volume of visitors to the island; a lack of preparedness by visitors; and, in some cases, overpreparedness

by visitors who arrive with large picnics including many disposable items. Unfortunately, waste and litter is commonly found along trailsides, shorelines and other areas, contributing to a range of undesirable and unsustainable conditions.

Chapter 5: Management Strategies

This chapter provides a summary and rationale of proposed management strategies and actions that will be considered over the term of this plan. Strategies and associated actions close the gap between desired conditions from Chapter 3 and current conditions from Chapter 4. They also address key issues that have been impacting the condition of natural and cultural resources. As previously discussed, these actions are based upon a large body of knowledge that includes qualitative, quantitative and anecdotal information. They were developed through many discussions, other planning processes, third party expertise, public consultation, and inputs from many groups. Finally, they were evaluated

through the lens of Parks Canada’s mandate and obligations, precautionary principles, and local park approaches. Namely, that the outcomes of park management decisions will stay as close as possible to existing footprints; and, while managing excess demand and visitation pressures in the urban shadow, park management will not try to ‘grow their way’ out of challenges.

Recommended strategies and associated actions are categorized into: (1) Visitor Management; (2) Vessel Management; (3) Site Management, and, (4) Regulatory Authority.

5.1 Strategies, Actions and Rationale

Visitor Management

STRATEGY 1.1 – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Diversify the visitor experience offer on Flowerpot Island

ACTIONS:

- 1.1.1 Diversify visitor experiences and opportunities for new commercial operators using the Visitor Experience Strategy to guide the development of products that align with Northern Bruce Peninsula Sustainable Tourism Action Plan recommendations.
- 1.1.2 Encourage the redesign of existing boat tour experiences to increase opportunities for learning and connections to place.
- 1.1.3 Support commercial operators and outfitters in the development and delivery of enhanced interpretation by providing interpretation toolkits, training (and possibly partnering on platforms or channels for delivery), emphasizing natural and cultural themes.
- 1.1.4 Incentivize innovation in personal and non-personal interpretation by providing opportunities for commercial operators to submit proposals as part of competitive business processes.
- 1.1.5 Increase visitor awareness and understanding of Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) values and culture through a variety of delivery channels (interpretive materials, programming, media) and by showcasing collaborative work between SON and Parks Canada,

RATIONALE:

- ▶ New experiences serve the needs of other visitor segments and foster deeper hearts and minds connections. Only 35% are repeat visitors. Repeat visitation supports stronger connections to place and stewardship ethics.
- ▶ There has been a significant decline in visitor numbers in segments with strong motivations for learning from 21% of visitation, to 2% over the past 10 years. Providing enhanced learning opportunities will attract these segments who have higher tendency for environmental and social responsibility.
- ▶ Solicitation process provides an opportunity for vessel operators to demonstrate leadership and innovation and a competitive advantage for interpretation and education
- ▶ The SON had occupied Flowerpot Island and their surrounding territory for millennia and have many cultural learnings and values to share.

including expanding the use of *Anishinaabemowin* on signage.

STRATEGY 1.2 – ACCESS SCHEDULE

Modify timing of access for commercial visitor activities

ACTIONS:

- 1.2.1 A schedule of access (Fig. 3.) will establish time periods in which different types of commercial use can take place on Flowerpot Island as follows:
- (a) *No Commercial Access*: From 7:00pm-6:00am, no commercial activities will be permitted on Flowerpot Island
 - (b) *Low Volume Access*: From 6:00am-8:00am low volume, guided activities will be permitted on Flowerpot Island
 - (c) *Medium Volume Access*: From 8:00am-10:00pm low volume guided activities will continue and medium volume self-guided activities will be permitted on Flowerpot Island
 - (d) *High Volume Access*: From 10:00am-7:00pm: high-volume self-guided will be permitted on Flowerpot Island

**Note that this access schedule does not preclude Parks Canada from authorizing special events outside of this commercial schedule of access*

RATIONALE:

- ▶ A No Commercial Access period (a) provides a quiet time on the island for overnight campers, with characteristic backcountry solitude.
- ▶ Low Volume Access (b) creates a distinct, exclusive wilderness setting, opportunity for unique, small group guided experiences focused on enhanced learning, deep connections and sense of place. This can be thought of as the 'Deep Dive' of Fathom Five experiences. This offer also provides an opportunity for new business entrants into Fathom Five.
- ▶ Medium Volume Access (c) creates a quiet recreational setting and opportunity for small group self-guided experiences for independent learners and the possibility of medium group size guided experiences for those preferring a less crowded experience but still desiring a light immersion into the sense of place. This offer also provides an opportunity for new business entrants into Fathom Five.
- ▶ High Volume Self-Guided Access (d) creates a busier recreational setting with increased visitors to participate in a self-guided experience, and allow for efficient 'short-stop' market demand to be accommodated. This offer could appeal to people just wanting the selfie; to 'dip the toe in' to the water or to some learning; perhaps who want to sleep in in the morning or who find this to be the best balance of value for money, time and their interest.
- ▶ Provides consistency throughout the week to simplify communications and also ensures a fair allocation of time available for different uses.

STRATEGY 1.3 – VISITATION LEVELS

Implement At-One-Time visitor limits for commercial visitor activities

ACTIONS:

- 1.3.1 Implement an At-One-Time limit of 60 visitors from 6:00am-8:00am during Low Volume period
- 1.3.2 Implement an At-One-Time limit of 160 visitors from 8:00am-10:00am during Medium Volume period
- 1.3.2 Implement an At-One-Time limit of 650 visitors

RATIONALE:

- ▶ A 60 visitor At-One-Time limit creates a distinct, quiet, close-to-wilderness setting and opportunity for up to three (3) simultaneous unique, **Small Group Guided Experiences** focused on enhanced learning opportunities.
- ▶ A 160 visitor At-One-Time limit creates a distinct, quiet recreational setting and opportunity for unique,

from 10:00am-7:00pm

Small Group Guided Experiences and **Medium Volume Self-Guided Experiences**. Up to three (3) simultaneous unique, small group guided experiences focused on enhanced learning opportunities may occur while an additional 100 visitors can participate in exclusive, quiet, close-to-nature self-guided learning experiences.

► A 650 visitor At-One-Time limit creates an opportunity for **High Volume Self-guided Experiences**, while limiting crowding and congestion issues at popular destinations and upon park infrastructure. Photographic monitoring reveals that risks and areas of concern increase once the Flowerpot area fill and visitors start to disperse away from the flowerpot formations. At the point where this begins to tip, which is more than 650 people on the island at one time, concerns start to materialize in a variety of ways and sensitive island features start to be impacted and damaged.

STRATEGY 1.4 – PROMOTIONS AND PRE-TRIP PLANNING **Setting expectations and promoting visitor preparedness**

ACTIONS:

- 1.4.1 Develop coordinated communications strategy to re-direct peak visitation to the shoulder season by:
 - (a) Ensuring coordinated messaging with regional promotions and pre-trip planning material;
 - (b) Encouraging commercial operators and outfitters to continue using differential pricing; and,
 - (c) Planning special events or programs in the shoulder season.
- 1.4.2 Develop coordinated communications strategy to set visitor expectations about the volume of visitors during peak periods and the importance of pre-trip planning and reservations.
- 1.4.3 Develop effective visitor pre-trip communications and messaging in cooperation with 3rd party service providers to ensure visitors are prepared for experiences and have realistic expectations.
- 1.4.4 Work with local service providers (i.e. hotels, tour operators, campgrounds) to promote new visitor experience offers that take place outside high volume and peak hours.

RATIONALE:

- Regional visitation is exceedingly high during peak season. Shoulder season promotions provides opportunity to redistribute visitation and aligns with regional tourism objectives.
- High percentage of day-trippers arrive without planning and/or reservations and have limited access to attractions, leading to visitor dissatisfaction and congestion issues in the region.
- Many visitors are unprepared or have unrealistic expectations for experiences, leading to discomfort and increased exposure to risks (e.g. rugged terrain; lack of food and water; and, inadequate clothing and footwear).

STRATEGY 1.5 – COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Increase visitor and operator compliance with rules and regulations

ACTIONS:

- 1.5.1 Ensure all commercial motorized vessels are equipped with Automated Information Systems (AIS) and provide Parks Canada with relevant data.
- 1.5.2 Increase periodic compliance patrols to increase Parks Canada presence at popular destinations and engage with non-compliant visitors.
- 1.5.3 Work with partners to improve public reporting system to document non-compliant behaviour when Parks Canada staff are not present.

RATIONALE:

- ▶ AIS provides opportunity to monitor vessel activity, allows accurate compliance monitoring and provides valuable data for future planning.
- ▶ Increasing staff presence at popular destinations on Flowerpot Island discourages non-compliant behaviour, and provides opportunity to collect data on visitor use and provide information to visitors.
- ▶ Partner reporting provides an opportunity to gather compliance information when staff is unavailable.

Vessel Management

STRATEGY 2.1 – TRAFFIC VOLUME

Limit the number of vessels at-one-time at the Beachy Cove commercial dock

ACTIONS:

- 2.1.1 The number of commercial vessels at the Beachy Cove docking area at-one-time will be limited as follows:
 - (a) *Tour Boats*: A maximum of one tour boat will be permitted to dock in Beachy Cove at-one-time.
 - (b) *Private Vessels*: Private vessels will continue to use the public 'camper' dock. The number of vessels permitted to dock simultaneously is a function of vessel size and dock capacity.
 - (c) *Non-motorized vessels*: Non-motorized vessels will continue to use the public 'camper' dock or beach landings. No limit on the number of vessels in the Beachy Cove area will be implemented for non-motorized vessels at this time.

RATIONALE:

- ▶ Tour boat limits will ensure that vessels have sufficient space to safely dock at Beachy Cove and avoid risks of collision with other vessels while manoeuvring. With more than one tour boat in the area, vessels require more sporadic manoeuvres to avoid other vessels. Tour boat limits will also reduce visitor congestion on docks and other park infrastructure, and help to minimize the pulsing and flux of crowds embarking and disembarking. Parks Canada vessels will continue to access the commercial dock for routine visits to Flowerpot Island as required.
- ▶ Private vessels will continue to access the public camper dock for day-use and overnight camping. The size of the dock will govern the number of vessels that able to safely occupy that space. This approach will help to separate the different user groups accessing the Beachy Cove area.
- ▶ Non-motorized vessels will continue to access the public camper dock or beach landings for day-use and overnight camping. This approach will help to separate the different user groups accessing the Beachy Cove area.

STRATEGY 2.2 – TRAFFIC FLOW

Manage frequency and duration of vessels at the Beachy Cove commercial dock

ACTIONS:

- 2.2.1 An operational schedule will be established to manage traffic flow, including the frequency and duration

RATIONALE:

- ▶ Docking schedule reduces vessel crowding and congestion at the Beachy Cove commercial docking

of vessels embarking and disembarking passengers at the Beachy Cove commercial dock.

- (a) *High Volume Tour Boats*: Will be permitted to dock at the Beachy Cove commercial dock at intervals of 20 minutes between vessels for a maximum duration of 10 minutes during the High Volume period.
- (b) *Low Volume Self-Guided and Guided Tour Boats*: Will be permitted to dock at the Beachy Cove commercial dock at intervals of 20 minutes between vessels for a maximum duration of 10 minutes during the Low Volume Self-Guided and Guided period.
- (c) *Non-Motorized Vessels*: Will not be permitted at the Beachy Cove commercial dock or immediate approach area

area by increasing separation time between vessels, thereby reducing risk of collision.

► Docking schedule, along with Traffic Volume and Vessel Occupancy limits, ensures that At-One-Time visitor limits to Flowerpot Island are not exceeded by reducing surge and pulsing of visitors arriving and departing simultaneously. Adherence to At-One-Time limits and docking schedule will reduce bi-directional visitor traffic on Flowerpot Island trails and subsequently reduce trail widening and associated undesirable conditions.

► No issues have been identified related to frequency and duration of non-motorized vessels.

STRATEGY 2.3 – VESSEL OCCUPANCY Limit group sizes for vessels and services

ACTIONS:

2.3.1 Group sizes will be limited for commercial trips to Flowerpot Island as follows:

- (a) *Low Volume Period*: A maximum of 20 people will be permitted per guided tour on Flowerpot Island. However, multiple guided groups may be transported simultaneously on a single vessel; therefore, a maximum of 60 people may disembark on Flowerpot Island at-one-time.
- (b) *Medium Volume Period*: A maximum of 50 people may be delivered at-one-time during the Medium Volume period.
- (c) *High Volume Period*: A maximum of 150 people will be permitted to disembark on Flowerpot Island at-one-time during the High Volume Self-Guided period.
- (d) *Non-Motorized Vessels*: No limit on group size will be implemented for non-motorized vessels at this time.

RATIONALE:

► During the Low Volume time period a maximum of 60 people are permitted to access Flowerpot Island simultaneously. This number can accommodate a maximum of three (3) simultaneous guided tours, each with a maximum capacity of 20 people.

► During the Medium Volume period, a maximum volume of 160 visitors are permitted to access Flowerpot Island. This ensures a distinct, quiet recreational setting and opportunity for unique, small group self-guided and guided experiences. For example, three (3) simultaneous guided tours, each with a maximum capacity of 20 people, may take place, while two (2) vessels may disembark up to 50 people per vessel, for self-guided experiences.

► During the High Volume period, vessels will be limited to disembark a maximum of 150 people at-one-time. This will increase the quality of the visitor experience by ensuring all visitors have access to ideal viewing positions within the vessel and information being provided. This limit also ensures adequate space and reduces congestion for visitors at the landing dock and facilities at Flowerpot Island. Along with other measures including the landing schedule, will ensure that the at-one-time visitor limit of 650 people for the island are not exceeded.

► No issues have been identified related to size of private or guided paddling excursions.

STRATEGY 2.4 – VESSEL SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Ensure that all commercial vessels are safe and efficient

ACTIONS:

- 2.4.1 Commercial vessels will be required to demonstrate compliance with regulations under the *Canada Shipping Act* (c. 2002) in order to obtain business licences and permits.
- 2.4.2 All operators will be encouraged to adopt best practices, standards and technologies used in the marine transportation industry through business solicitation processes.
- 2.4.3 In addition to regulatory requirements, commercial operators will be required to ensure the following:
 - (a) No vessel can use external radios or externally audible broadcast systems (versus a headphone/alternate delivery channel) to provide commentary while operating in proximity to residential areas or at the Beachy Cove docking area.
 - (b) All commercial motorized vessels must be equipped with a smart bilge pump switch with fuel and oil detection.

RATIONALE:

- ▶ Parks Canada has authority to manage vessel use of docking facilities on Flowerpot Island under the Canada National Parks Act. Transport Canada is responsible for ensuring compliance with the *Canada Shipping Act*. These Acts outline requirements for the safe operation of passenger vessels and risk mitigations when embarking and disembarking passengers at Flowerpot Island.
- ▶ A solicitation process provides opportunity for vessel operators to demonstrate leadership and innovation and have a competitive advantage for sustainable operations, such as low-impact vessel design and propulsion systems, fuel management, and emissions and noise reduction measures.
- ▶ Radios and broadcast systems will not be permitted in proximity to residential areas, or when docking at Beachy Cove to protect residential privacy and island soundscapes.
- ▶ While Transport Canada regulations and construction standards address fuel systems and management, new bilge pump technologies enable rapid detection of oil and fuel leaks.

Site Management

STRATEGY 3.1 – PROTECTING ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRITY

Limit ecological and cultural resource degradation through planning and best practices

ACTIONS:

- 3.1.1 Design formal visitor access points (i.e. stairs) to the flowerpot formations, update directional signage and re-naturalize informal or social access points.
- 3.1.2 Implement a ban on artificial noise from radios and devices and consider a noise-free zoning scheme for the Mountain Trail.
- 3.1.3 Collaborate with tour boat operators to install boot-cleaning stations and messaging on mainland docking areas for use prior to visitors boarding vessels.
- 3.1.4 The Marl Trail will be closed to visitors because of its ecological significance and sensitivity to trampling.
- 3.1.5 Conduct archeological assessments with SON to further identify, honour and protect culturally significant sites and values.

RATIONALE:

- ▶ Providing formal access points and directional signage will help to reduce the development of social trails, trail widening, and vegetation trampling along with other measures including setting visitation limits and vessel docking frequencies to reduce visitor crowding and pulsing.
- ▶ Banning artificial noise from portable devices will contribute to a more natural soundscape for visitor experiences and reduce disturbance to wildlife. A noise-free zone along the Mountain Trail will ensure sensitive interior forest species remain undisturbed and the forest setting retains a wilderness character.
- ▶ Installation of boot cleaning stations and invasive species messaging prior to tour boat departures will help to prevent the introduction and spread of non-native and invasive species to the island.

► Closing the Marl Trail will contribute to the protection of sensitive species and habitats on the western portion of Flowerpot Island.

► Continuing to identify, honour and protect culturally significant sites with SON will encourage continued respect and appreciation for SON history, culture and values.

STRATEGY 3.2 – WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM **Collaborating for a future of sustainable tourism**

ACTIONS:

- 3.2.1 Implement 'Leave No Trace' and 'Pack in Pack Out' programs encouraging visitors to attain a small ecological footprint on Flowerpot Island.
- 3.2.2 Develop a recycling and waste diversion program in partnership with commercial operators and license holders.
- 3.2.3 Work with partners to reduce the sale of disposable goods throughout Flowerpot Island visitor experiences.
- 3.2.4 Consider options for a potable water refilling station on Flowerpot Island.
- 3.2.5 Work towards sustainable tourism goals with SON, the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula and other regional partners.
- 3.2.6 Develop concepts for the broader use of FFNMP, by leveraging the knowledge and recommendations arising from various planning processes, strategies and consultations (i.e. Visitor Experience Strategy and stakeholder inputs)

RATIONALE:

► Implementing citizen, commercial and Parks Canada programs to reduce disposable products throughout Flowerpot Island experiences will improve the overall 'greenness' and sustainability of visitor offers.

► Introducing a potable water refilling station on Flowerpot Island will ensure that visitors have a reliable supply of fresh water, and promote the use of reusable beverage containers.

► Parks Canadas continued leadership in the promotion of sustainable tourism approaches with regional partners will benefit local communities by supporting sustainable visitor experiences that contribute to local economies and protect ecological and cultural integrity.

► Pursue concept development through product development channels, with the potential for further visitor experiences and/or through internal investment/project initiation standards for defining and requesting funding (when funding is available).

Regulatory Authority

STRATEGY 4.1 – AREA BOUNDARIES **Introduce restricted areas at Flowerpot Island**

ACTIONS:

- 4.1.1 Consult with Transport Canada, partners and other stakeholders regarding the creation of 2 new restricted areas at Flowerpot Island under the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations and Canada Shipping Act.
- 4.1.2 Restricted Areas will encompass the entirety of Beachy Cove, and, an area encompassing approximately 200m perpendicular to the high water mark of Flowerpot Island from 45°18'14.50"N and 81°36'43.35"W to 45°18'1.63"N and 81°36'48.72"W adjacent to the Flowerpot formations.

RATIONALE:

► Introduction of new restricted areas ensures that Parks Canada has the authority to safeguard visitors to Flowerpot Island by regulating vessel access to areas of mixed visitor uses.

5.2 Monitoring

Visitor use management is an on-going process where continual adaptations and improvements are made when monitoring indicates a management action is required, thus helping Parks Canada achieve visitor use management goals

5.2.1 Social Science Monitoring

Every five years, Parks Canada conducts a social science survey called the the Visitor Information Program (VIP) to collect visitor demographic information and assess different aspects of visitor satisfaction. For example, the Fathom Five National Marine Park Visitor Information Program (2014) recorded the following visitor attitudes towards Flowerpot Island:

- 37% of visitors felt crowded at the Beachy Cove dock
- 35% of visitors felt crowded and 14% felt very crowded while on trails
- 33% felt crowded around the flowerpot formations

Indicators identified in this plan will help shape targeted questions in future Fathom Five National Marine Park VIPs.

5.2.2 Visitor Experience Monitoring

Parks Canada and commercial business operators will be guided by a detailed compliance plan to standardize the observation, reporting and recording of visitor incidents into a centralized database. Annual reviews of visitor incidents will inform Parks Canada of management actions that may be taken to improve visitor safety, behaviours and experiences.

5.2.3 Resource Conservation Monitoring

Parks Canada's Ecological Integrity Monitoring Program measures change in ecosystems over time. Parks Canada reports the status of ecological integrity for each national protected area indicating where management actions are required to conserve or restore ecosystem processes, structures or functions. Parks Canada will update the ecological integrity monitoring program for Fathom Five National Marine Park to

include ecosystem measurements for Flowerpot Island to determine if management actions are achieving desired conditions.

5.3 Implementation

Parks Canada is taking many steps to improve Visitor Use Management on Flowerpot Island. The action items identified in this plan will be incorporated into future strategic and functional operational plans to guide the activities of Parks Canada staff, visitors and commercial business operators. The plan will also provide strategic guidance for visitor use management and national park zoning in the Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park Management Plan which is currently under development.

Appendix A: Determination of Visitor Capacities and Schedules

1. *Setting At-One-Time Visitor Capacity* *Limits: Low Volume Period*

Currently there are no special times reserved for small group tours, although this form of specialized tour is offered in many national parks. A new Parks Canada visitor schedule (Fig. 3.) proposes a Low Volume time period to enable small group tours:

- 60 visitors at-one-time from 6 - 8 a.m.

During the Low Volume time period a maximum of 60 people are permitted to access Flowerpot Island simultaneously. This number can accommodate a maximum of three (3) simultaneous guided tours, each with a maximum capacity of 20 people. A 60 visitor At-One-Time limit creates a distinct, quiet, close-to-wilderness setting for unique, small group guided experiences focused on enhanced learning opportunities.

2. *Setting At-One-Time Visitor Capacity* *Limits: Medium Volume Period*

Currently there are no special times reserved for small group tours, or small self-guided opportunities, although this form of specialized tour is offered in many national parks. A new Parks Canada visitor schedule (Fig. 3.) proposes a Medium Volume time period which will enable small group tours and small group self-guided opportunities:

- 160 visitors at-one-time from 8 - 10 a.m.

During the Medium Volume period, a maximum volume of 160 visitors are permitted to access Flowerpot Island. This ensures a distinct, quiet recreational setting and opportunity for unique, small group self-guided and guided experiences. For example, three (3) simultaneous guided tours, each with a maximum capacity of 20 people, may take place, while two (2) vessels may disembark up to 50 people per vessel, for self-guided experiences. These experiences will focus on enhanced learning opportunities in an exclusive, quiet, close-to-nature setting.

3. *Setting At-One-Time Visitor Capacity* *Limits: High Volume Period*

The limit of 650 visitors at one time derives from two separate analyses of visitor behaviour. The first used photo-monitoring to determine the point at which the crowding at the Flowerpots led visitors to disperse into other areas of the island, off trails and into sensitive cultural and ecological zones. The second used a spatial analysis to determine the number of visitors that could be accommodated, with comfortable spacing, in desirable shoreline areas of the island. In addition to these numerical approaches, an at-one-time limit of 650 is also supported by qualitative data and anecdotal information from front-line Parks Canada staff with extensive experience on Flowerpot Island. As the number of visitors climbs beyond 650, it becomes difficult or impossible to manage for a safe, uncrowded experience, and to monitor visitor behaviour for compliance with rules and regulations. As a result, destruction of natural features, trampling of sensitive vegetation, incidents of graffiti, depositing of human waste along trails, and disturbance of cultural sites, all rise to unacceptable levels. It is the sum total of all of these pressures and factors that necessitates the 650 at-one-time limit.

4. *Setting Time Intervals for Commercial Vessels landing at the Beachy Cove dock*

Noting the visitor surge that is caused by frequent drop-offs and pick-ups by tour boat companies, consideration was given to identifying a specific time interval that would effectively space vessel landings and departures so the Beachy Cove precinct, Flowerpot Trail and flowerpot formation area were not overwhelmed with visitors. An interval of 20 minutes between vessel departures and landings was chosen to permit adequate time for tour boats to drop-off and pick-up visitors, enabling one group of visitors enough time to visit toilets, fine-tune their plan, and embark on to the Flowerpot Trail before the next group of visitors arrive.

5. *Setting a Limit for the Number of Visitors Dropped off on the Beachy Cove Dock At-One-Time*

Currently the Beachy Cove dock, staging area, and washroom precinct does not experience

over-crowding when receiving tour boat drop-offs of 150 passengers in low-season times featuring infrequent tour boat visits. Dropping off a maximum of 150 visitors at-one-time is supportable in tandem with the 20 minute drop-off and pick-up schedule.

6. New Schedule for Flowerpot Island Drop-offs and Pick-ups

To ensure the at-one-time limits and time intervals for drop-offs and pick-ups are adhered to, Parks Canada has developed a new weekly schedule for Flowerpot Island. (Fig. 3.)

FIGURE 3. Schedule of Commercial Activities for Flowerpot Island

SCHEDULE	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
00:00 – 6:00			NO COMMERCIAL ACCESS				
6:00 – 8:00			LOW VOLUME-GUIDED OFFERS 60 PEOPLE AT-ONE-TIME				
8:00 – 10:00			LOW VOLUME GUIDED and MEDIUM VOLUME SELF-GUIDED 160 PEOPLE AT-ONE-TIME				
10:00 – 12:00			MEDIUM VOLUME SELF-GUIDED AND HIGH VOLUME SELF-GUIDED 650 PEOPLE AT-ONE-TIME				
12:00 – 19:00			HIGH VOLUME SELF-GUIDED 650 PEOPLE AT-ONE-TIME				
19:00 – 24:00			NO COMMERCIAL ACCESS				

Appendix B: Draft Indicators and Thresholds

An important part of developing a monitoring program is the careful selection of indicators and establishment of thresholds. Indicators translate the broad description of desired conditions into measurable attributes that can be tracked and compared over time to assess change. Thresholds ensure that conditions remain acceptable, within established parameters, for the selected indicators. When an indicator exceeds an established threshold, that is a trigger for managers to assess the situation and adapt following best practices.

Parks Canada will prepare a monitoring program for Flowerpot Island to measure and assess progress towards achieving some of the desired conditions described in this plan. The following suite of draft indicators and thresholds are provided as hypothetical examples only.

Indicator 1: Number of Visitor Use-related Incidents

Visitor-use related incidents such as traveling off-trail, creating new social trails, conflicts between visitors and physical damage (i.e. graffiti and vegetation removal) decrease over time with specific targets established for each occurrence.

Thresholds:

- Number of incidents over a season (i.e, presence of graffiti, loss of lichens on limestone rocks, climbing on flowerpots, staying on trails) tracked by Visitor Experience staff in a similar way to the Grotto prevention program.

Indicator 2: Capacity and Functioning of Composting Toilets

Composting toilets are designed with a 10,000 use per unit per season capacity. Overuse may contribute to fluctuations in the properties of soil and water quality.

Thresholds:

- Exceedance of nitrogen, phosphorus and e-coli standards in Beachy Cove
- Evidence of nitrification in area where compost is spread

Indicator 3: Extent of Visitor-Created Trails

Visitor-created trails tend to multiply if not restored, causing vegetation trampling, introduction of invasive species, and loss of soils.

Thresholds:

- Establish a target of 'no more than one metre of visitor-created trails per 100 m of official trail'

Indicator 4: Width of Main Trails

Congestion caused by the pulsing and surging of visitors along the three metre wide Flowerpot Trail has artificially widened the trail. Managing the visitor pulses and surges by limiting the number of visitors on the island at-one-time, and creating longer intervals between commercial vessels landing at the Beachy Cove dock, will result in the trail remaining at the designed width.

Thresholds:

- Trail remains three metres or less in width at widest point between Beachy Cove and flowerpot structures.

Indicator 5: Visitor Encounter Rate on Trails

Many visitors prefer to experience trails without feeling crowded.

Thresholds:

- 90% of hikers would encounter no more than ten other hiking groups per hour along the Flowerpot Trail.
- Establish a tighter metric for the more natural Mountain Trail.

Indicator 6: Maximum Sound Level

Some park visitors want to experience solitude and nature. Wildlife are negatively affected by anthropogenic sounds.

Thresholds (to be established following a baseline noise study):

- No more than 3 dBA increase over ambient natural sound level once per 12 hours daytime period (reference)
- Maximum 33 dBA daytime and 30 dBA over night (reference)
- Provide visitors with opportunities to learn about potential implications of noise, (e.i. shouting, loud conversations, playing music)

- Achievement of waste diversion targets
- Presence of litter along trails is reduced

Indicator 7: Waste Management

Parks Canada supports the 'greening' of visitor offers and improving sustainable tourism by reducing and managing waste, litter and improving recycling on the island.

Thresholds Following the establishment of a waste reduction target:

- Number of bags of waste / number of bags of recycling removed from island per season

References

- Cuddy, D. G., K. M. Lindsay and D. MacDonald. 1976. Significant Natural Areas along the Niagara Escarpment. Environment Planning Series VII. Life Sciences Report. OMNR, Parks Planning Branch. Toronto.
- Henderson, 2019. FFNMP Cultural Resource Management Strategy, 2018-2021. Version 1.7. April 17, 2019. Parks Canada Agency.
- Hughes, B.C. 2020. Fathom Five National Marine Park Visitor Experience Strategy.
- Kettle, A. 1998. Flowerpot Island Management Plan. Parks Canada Agency.
- Manning, Robert E. 2007. Parks and Carrying Capacity: Commons Without Tragedy. Island Press.
- Parks Canada 1998. Management Plan for Fathom Five National Marine Park. Parks Canada Agency.
- Parks Canada. 2014. Fathom Five National Marine Park: 2014 Visitor Information Program Final Report. Parks Canada Agency.
- Parks Canada. 2018. Visitor Safety Incidents on Flowerpot Island. Parks Canada Agency.
- Parks Canada. 2019. Draft Flowerpot Island Visitor Use Management Plan. Parks Canada Agency.
- U.S. Inter-Agency Visitor Use Management Council, 2016. Visitor Use Management Framework: A Guide to Providing Sustainable Outdoor Recreation. Edition One. July 2016.



Flowerpot Island Visitor Use Management Plan. Fathom Five National Marine Park. Parks Canada Agency. 2020.



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada