Algonquin Park: Environmental Assessment Policy Implementation in a Multi-Use Park

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Introduction
- Algonquin Park is host to many uses:
  - Specific areas for forestry and logging
  - Popular Tourism destination (canoe routes)
  - Areas of the park are reserves for endangered species
- All of these uses are managed through an integrated policy system
- The primary goal of park policy is to protect and minimize environmental degradation
- The MNR Class Environmental Assessment creates a planning and approval process for all activities within the park.
- There is a separate Class EA for forestry and logging within the park

Research Questions
- Is the policy effective in balancing environmental protection and managing the various uses of the park?
- Are the EA and policies of the park and of forestry integrated into policy that work well together?
- Do the various EA policies allow for strong responses to the long-term impacts of climate change and invasive species?

Research Objectives
- Identify gaps in the EA policy
- Create recommendations for policy integration and responses to long-term impacts of climate change.

Methods
- Policy and Document Analysis
- Key Informant Interviews
- Policy Scenario Building

Participants. Various professionals from Forestry, Parks Canada, Algonquin Park, MNR and Ontario Nature

Recruitment. Through partner Organizations.

Discussion
- The Class EA remains the most important document for everyday, implementable environmental protection
- Has practical and long-term implications
- Successful in addressing everyday situations, but not cumulative effects or issues requiring long-term planning
- Policy gaps in long-term vision addressing climate change and invasive species

Recommendations and Implications
- Longer-term vision to begin to identify an improved response to the effects of climate change and invasive species in the EA system
- More focus on cumulative environmental impacts and a greater focus on long-term planning
- Greater flexibility in response times within the EA depending on staffing and season

Contributions of this Research
- Academic. Limited research working to understand the EA process and its areas for improvement through policy scenario building
- Policy. May influence policy in creating greater awareness of gaps in EA policy and process
- Community. Research intended for use in the Algonquin Park Library

Results (Preliminary)
Current Issues in implementing the existing EA Process

Current Implementation
- Lack of staff and seasonal pressure preclude both preliminary studies and major project activities
- Need for greater awareness of the EA process by maintenance staff
- Need for faster response in EA related decisions

Long-term Vision
- EA’s for Forestry and Parks use different criteria
- Process is primarily reactive rather than proactive
- Lack of long-term vision of the EA process as result of gaps and omissions in the contributing policy framework.

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References
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