

Stakeholder Groups of the Kawartha Highlands

General Areas of Concern re the Preliminary Park Management Plan

Members of the Stakeholder Groups of the Kawartha Highlands (SGKH) and the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (OFAH) have expressed many concerns with the Preliminary Park Management Plan (PPMP). The SGKH and OFAH (Charter Signatories) believe the PPMP contravenes the Charter and KHSSP Act (Bill 100) in many places. The following outline some of the major concerns.

1. **Retain the Charter:** The Charter is the most complete statement of the agreement of the Signatories and must be retained for the protection of stakeholders' rights, now and in the future. The Charter contains background information and direction not included in the KHSSP Act.
2. **Respect the Charter:** Stakeholders were promised a "Made in the Kawarthas" plan based on the Charter, but much of the PPMP is a template commonly used for all parks with minimal direction from the Charter.
3. **Include Cottaging:** The KHSS is a unique Park superimposed on over 500 cottages and 50 recreation camps. An additional 1500 homes and cottages are adjacent to the Park. The Charter and the KHSS Park Act were developed, in part, to protect traditional activities and rights of these local stakeholders. There is nothing in the PPMP to define "cottaging" or the traditional cottage activities that are being protected – only what is banned and restricted. Cottaging is not just what one does on private land; it includes the traditional activities one does off the dock and on the land around. PPMP silence on cottaging combined with various bans and restrictions in the PPMP and Provincial parks Act will diminish the enjoyment of cottage life and traditional activities.
4. **Acknowledge Local Stakeholders:** Local stakeholders have been stewards of the land for over 100 years during which time there has been significant improvement in the environmental and ecological integrity. Major ecological threats to the Park today are abusive camping, Jeep and ATV rallies. There is no scientific evidence that our traditional activities have a negative affect. In fact we have had a positive influence.
5. **Improve Funding:** The Charter Signatories agreed to a Park based on "substantial funding". (Charter page 17) Every year the park budget has been cut back and it appears that under funding will continue.
6. **Park Access Roads:** To date the statement promising two new access roads is not a reality. Regardless whether new roads or existing roads are used as access roads, it is imperative that sufficient funding is allocated to provide the necessary costs to upgrade the infrastructure to handle the increased traffic for park use as well as the sustainable funds for control and supervision of park users.
7. **Protect Traditional Activities:** Under funding and staff shortages may require cottagers, anglers, hunters, and trappers to continue to act as stewards. Our stewardship including assisting with search and rescue, reporting abusive users, assisting with threats of fire etc. will be marginalized by PPMP restrictions and/or bans on cached boats, use of small motors on back lakes, ATVs and snowmobiles. Further more these should be protected as traditional activities.
8. **Internal Roads and Trails:** The Charter and the Kawartha Highlands Signature Park Act, 2003, are clear that the approved roads and trails network consists of those roads and trails existing prior to 1999. The closure, abandonment or restrictions on these approved roads or trails would be in contravention to the Charter and the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act, 2003.

Specific Examples of contraventions to the Charter and Bill 100

1. **Snowmobile & ATV Use:** The PPMP states: "**Private and tenured landowners are able to access their properties and enjoy activities on these lands as they had prior to the establishment of the park.**" (p. 14) Traditionally we have also used snowmobiles and ATVs to visit back lakes and other cottagers and recreational camps. These activities could be banned with the current wording.

- It is recommended to continuing these traditional activities with a free permit on approved trails as outlined in the Charter and in the Act as outlined in sections 13 to 15.
2. **Boat Caches:** Boat caches have been enjoyed for generations for the pursuit of fishing and hunting on back lakes. Boat caching has been a permitted use under the Freedom of Use policy for Crown Land. Previous discussions and the Management Options document suggest boat caching continue but be regulated by permit. The PPMP restricts boat caching to trappers, bait-fish harvesters, commercial out-post operators and those who require it to access private property or tenured land.
 - It is recommended continuing this traditional activity via a free permit system, for the purpose of angling, hunting, safety and stewardship. Cottage associations and the SGKH have offered to assist with: establishing appropriate caching locations, identifying active cached boats, removing old boats, reducing the number of cached boats and the construction of storage racks.
 3. **Hunting:** The charter clearly states: **“11[1] For greater certainty, a person may hunt, fish and trap in the park in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997. [2] Section 4 of the Provincial Parks Act does not apply to the Park.”** (p. 12) By mistake the KHSS was grouped with a number of other parks being regulated and hunting was mistakenly put under the Provincial Parks Act. This has lead to significant restrictions.
 - It is recommended that this mistake be corrected immediately as it places the park in contravention of the Charter and KHSSP Act.
 4. **Recreational Fishing:** The Charter clearly states: **“fishing in the Park is in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997”**. Existing commercial bait-fishing may continue in the KHSS yet the PPMP suggests that anglers are not allowed to put them on their hooks.
 - It is recommended that bait-fishing in the KHSS should continue if it is commercially or personally harvested within the KHSS.
 5. **Outboard Motor Restrictions:** The Charter clearly states: **“Ontario Parks does not intend to apply for any Federal restrictions on boating where there is private property.”** (page 10) The only reference to motor boat controls in the Charter is: **“Motor boat controls, including possible horsepower limits, on lakes that are entirely surrounded by Park land”**.
 - It is recommended that small motors be a permitted use on all backcountry lakes within the KHSS for the purpose of angling, hunting, and to assist with fire, stewardship and rescue
 6. **Camping:** The PPMP defines backcountry as **“A term applied to areas where there are no permanent access roads, developments or settlements. Camping facilities are generally primitive [fire pit, tent pads, pit privy] and a few other facilities exist.”** (p. 41) By definition backcountry camping should not take place on direct access lakes..
 - It is recommended closing all campsites on all direct access lakes.
 7. **Cottaging:** In the Vision Statement for the KHSS in the Charter clearly states: **“Traditional activities including cottaging will continue to be an integral component of the area and diverse low-density recreational opportunities will continue to be available.”** (p. 5) Yet the Plan is virtually silent on the topic of cottaging and every reference to access limits the use of ATVs, snowmobiles and motorboats to going to the cottage – with no guarantee of the enjoyment of those recreational vehicles on the surrounding trails and lakes. Obviously cottaging has not been included as an “integral component” of the KHSS.
 - It is recommend working with cottage associations to develop a definition of “cottaging” and a sampling of typical “traditional cottage activities” that can be acknowledged in the PPMP.
 8. **Partnerships:** The Charter clearly states: **“The park will also seek to develop a range of other types of partnerships in order to ensure effective management and involvement of the stakeholders.”** (p. 10) Yet the PPMP provides no firm guidance on partnerships.

- It is recommend that the PPMP includes partnerships with local stakeholder groups such as the two townships, SGKH, OFAH and local cottage associations and include them in future stewardship and management planning.

9. **Mountain Biking:** The PPMP proposes that mountain biking be “ **prohibited within the Kawartha Highlands.**” Individual property owners and recreationalists have traditionally used mountain bikes for transportation and fitness.

- It is recommended that this traditional activity be continued in the KHSS on pre-existing roads and trails.