

PONDVILLE BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK

Management Statement



November 29, 2023
Department of Natural Resources and
Renewables
Parks and Outreach Division
PKS 2023-001

Department of Natural Resources and Renewables

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<https://parks.novascotia.ca/>

Invitation to Comment

The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, Parks and Outreach Division, is preparing a management statement for Pondville Beach Provincial Park as part of a multi-staged planning process.

After careful consideration of related planning information, a coastal engineering report, and feedback from the community engagement session, this document outlines management actions for Pondville Beach Provincial Park. For ease of review, this management statement is worded in the style of an approved management statement. Note however, that this document contains *proposed* site objectives, policies and actions related to managing the park's natural, cultural, and recreational values.

Publication of this management statement provides an opportunity for public engagement and will help form the final management statement. You can get involved and submit your comments:

- Submit a written comment via email to parkplanning@novascotia.ca
- Submit a written comment via regular mail to:

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The deadline for comment submissions is January 31st, 2024.

Thank you in advance for your interest and comments on the future management of Pondville Beach Provincial Park.

Table of Contents

Invitation to Comment.....	3
1.0 Introduction	5
2.0 Planning Context.....	5
2.1 Overarching guidance	5
2.2 Mi'kmaq Engagement	6
2.3 Public Engagement.....	6
3.0 Park Overview	6
3.1 Location and Boundary	6
3.2 Existing Infrastructure.....	6
4.0 Summary of Park Values	10
4.1 Natural Values.....	10
4.2 Cultural Heritage Values	11
4.3 Outdoor Recreation Values.....	11
4.4 Outdoor Education Values	11
4.5 Tourism Values.....	11
4.6 Other Values	11
5.0 Summary of Park Threats.....	12
5.1 Climate Change and Coastal Processes.....	12
5.2 Human Impacts	12
5.3 Other Threats	13
6.0 Park Classification	13
7.0 Vision Statement.....	14
8.0 Park Objectives	14
9.0 Zoning.....	15
10.0 Management.....	17
10.1 Wildlife	17
10.2 Vegetation.....	17
10.2.1 Disturbances	17
10.3 Cultural Heritage	17
10.4 Education and Interpretation	18
10.5 Outdoor Recreation & Coastal Access	18
10.5.1 Off-Season Access	18
10.5.2 Other Recreation Uses	18
10.6 Park Signage	18
10.7 Partnerships	19
10.8 Operations	19
10.9 Additions to the Park	19
11.0 Implementation Priorities.....	19
12.0 Review and Adjustment of the Management Statement.....	20
13.0 References	20

1.0 Introduction

Pondville Beach Provincial Park, a 3.35 hectare Wayside class park, is a small beach park on Isle Madame, Cape Breton's Atlantic Coast. The park includes a small parking lot, vault toilets, change houses, beach access, and a small portion of sandy beach and forested dune. The majority of the beach (south of the park property) is privately owned and is protected under the *Beaches Act*. An old wharf borders the northern boundary of the park, which has suffered the effects of storm damage and coastal processes in recent years.

Pondville Beach Provincial Park was formally designated under the *Provincial Parks Act* in 1984 (Nova Scotia Regulation 54/84) and was designated under the *Beaches Act* in 1980. The park is serviced by the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (hereinafter referred to as the "Department") district office in St. Peters (Eastern Region).

The purpose of this management statement is to define a vision and management philosophy that will guide park management decisions. The plan identifies the actions to support this vision.

2.0 Planning Context

2.1 Overarching guidance

The park management plan has been prepared consistent with direction contained in:

- The Nova Scotia [Provincial Parks Act](#);
- [The Path We Share: A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020](#); and
- [Our Parks and Protected Areas: A Plan for Nova Scotia \(2013\)](#).

In addition, the management plan reflects broader government policies, acts, regulations, and direction contained in:

- The Nova Scotia [Accessibility Act](#)
- [Nova Scotia Coastal Protection Act](#)
- [Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act](#)
- [Access By Design 2030: Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia \(2018\)](#)
- [Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan: 2018 – 2021](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)
- [Connecting Canadians with Nature \(2014\)](#)

2.2 Mi'kmaq Engagement

This management statement recognizes that Pondville Beach Provincial Park is in Mi'kma'ki territory, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. The Department will continue to support Mi'kmaq initiatives at provincial parks.

2.3 Public Engagement

The management planning process for Pondville Beach began in spring 2023. A public meeting was held on June 21, 2023, at the Rocky Bay Irish Club on Isle Madame, which was attended by approximately 85 people. Information related to park values, activities, visitor use, and ideas for improvement and future development was collected and considered in the development of this management statement.

3.0 Park Overview

3.1 Location and Boundary

Pondville Beach Provincial Park is located within Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. It is situated at Pondville, Richmond County, Nova Scotia, approximately 18 kilometres south of Highway 104 (Exit 46). Its civic address is 219 Pondville North Rd, Arichat (Map 1: Regional Context).

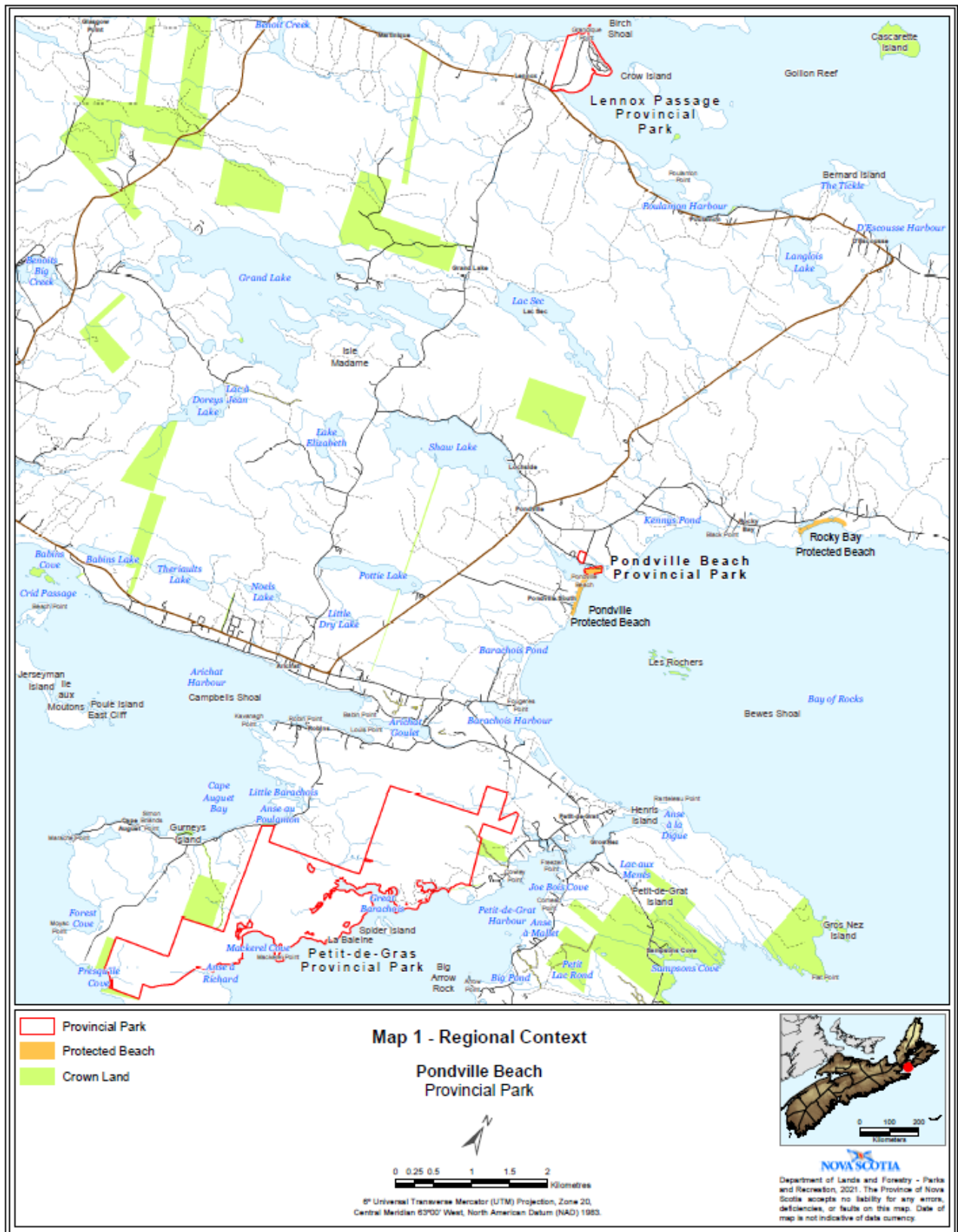
The planning area includes all lands within the existing park boundary and the beach area within the high-water mark to the low-water mark (Map 2: Park Boundary).

3.2 Existing Infrastructure

Pondville Beach currently provides basic visitor services including a small parking area, change house, vault toilets, and picnic tables. In recent years, coastal in-land migration has caused sand accumulation and dune grass establishment around park infrastructure. A wharf, acquired by the province from the federal government in 1991, borders the northern terminus of the beach. The wharf is deteriorating in sections, and in 2020 a barricade was placed to deter visitor access (Map 3: Park Infrastructure).




Figure 1: Comparison of aerial photos from 1936 image (left) to 2019 image (right).



Map 1: Regional Context



 Provincial Park

Map 2 - Park Boundary

Pondville Beach
Provincial Park



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Metres

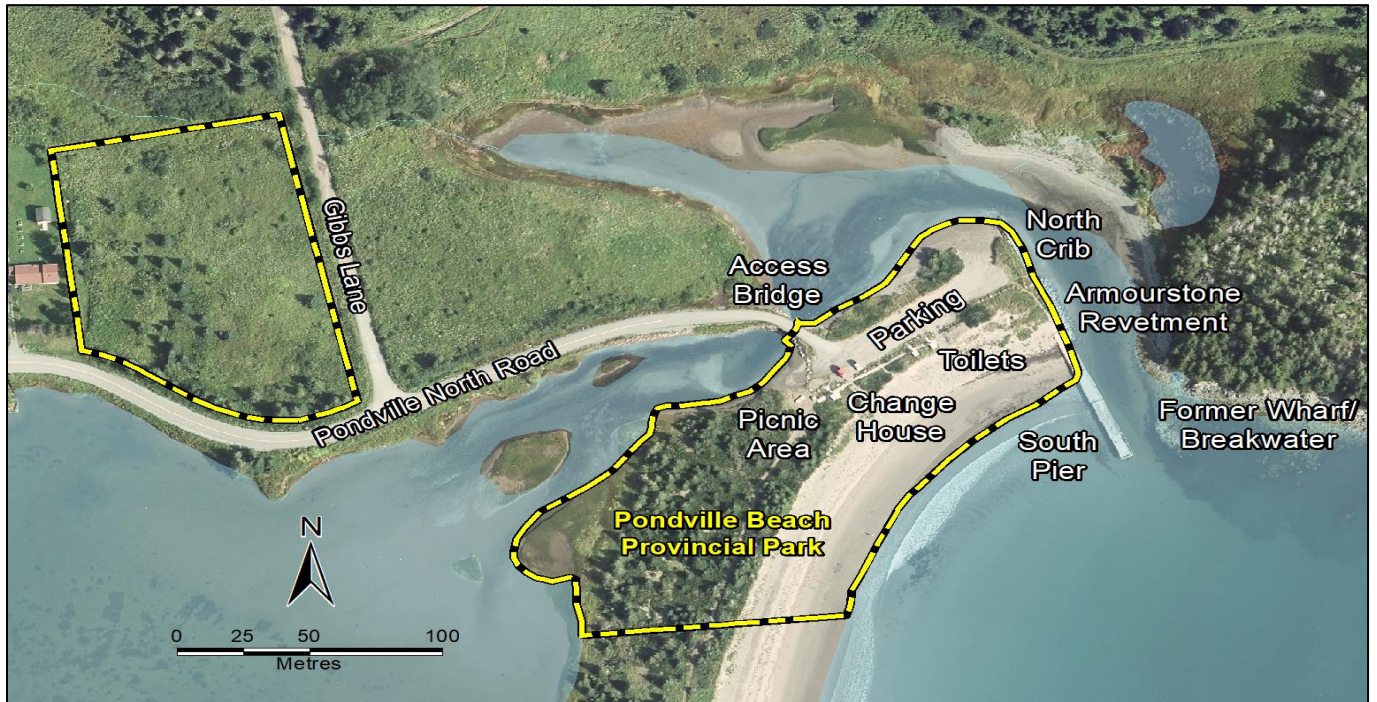
6° Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) Projection, Zone 20,
Central Meridian 63°00' West, North American Datum (NAD) 1983.



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Department of Lands and Forestry - Parks
and Recreation, 2021. The Province of Nova
Scotia accepts no liability for any errors,
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Map 2: Park Boundary



Map 3: Park Infrastructure



Figure 2: Dune grass colonizing sand deposits around the change house.

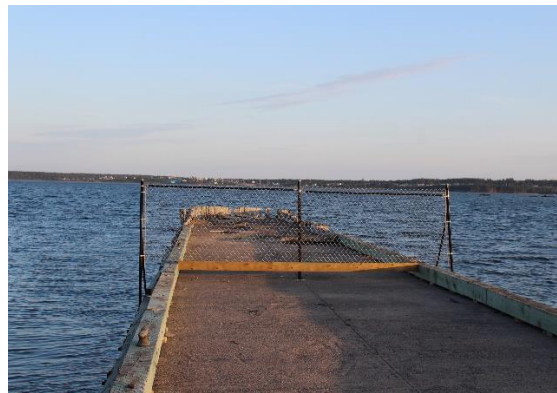


Figure 3: Fence barricade at the wharf.



Figure 4: Deteriorating sections of the wharf.



Figure 5: Existing park entrance with parking on backdune.

4.0 Summary of Park Values

Pondville Beach Provincial Park features a variety of values associated with its natural heritage, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, education, and tourism values, among others. These values are further discussed below.

4.1 Natural Values

Ecodistrict Overview

Pondville Beach Provincial Park is within the Atlantic Coastal Ecoregion and the [Cape Breton Coastal](#) Ecodistrict. The Province of Nova Scotia is divided into 39 ecodistricts, which describe landscapes based on enduring environmental components, such as bedrock geology, surficial materials, landforms and soils, vegetation, water, fauna, present-day climate, and topography. Together, these regulators-factors influence all terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.



Figure 6: Pondville Beach looking south.

The Cape Breton Coastal ecodistrict extends from the north shore of Chedabucto Bay to Scatarie Island, and includes a variety of coastal features and adjacent low lying inland areas. Strong winds, abundant fog and rain, and lower summer temperatures characterize the generally cool climate, usually making the Cape Breton Coastal ecodistrict the coldest part of Nova Scotia's entire coast.

Beach, dune and salt marsh values

Pondville Beach Provincial Park includes a portion of the beach, dune system, and salt marsh situated on the landward side of the beach. Dune ecosystems are among the most distinct and significant habitats in the province. Dunes are dynamic features that provide habitat for plants and wildlife as well as playing an integral role in beach protection and



Figure 7: Salt marsh at Pondville Beach Provincial Park.

stabilisation (Abbot, 2009). They contribute to natural buffering to mitigate predicted climate change impacts. The salt marsh at Pondville is small, but along with all salt marshes in Nova Scotia, is considered a Wetland of Special Significance. Salt marsh wetlands support significant species or species assemblages, support high wildlife biodiversity, have high hydrological value, and are of social and cultural importance.

Biodiversity values

Pondville Beach provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Overwintering records for Harlequin and Purple sandpiper, both species at risk, were identified. Birds Species of Conservation Concern identified includes Black-headed Gull, Common Eider, Common Tern, Great Cormorant, Greater Yellowlegs, Horned Grebe, Semipalmated Plover, and Willet. Of these species, Greater Yellowlegs and Willets are likely to nest in upland areas within park boundaries and along the protected beach.

4.2 Cultural Heritage Values

Pondville Beach Provincial Park has long been a favourite recreation site for residents of Isle Madame. It was an important fishing site and is still used as such by some visitors. It has been used for community events and celebrations.

4.3 Outdoor Recreation Values

As one of the few sandy beaches on Isle Madame, Pondville Beach offers locals and visitors opportunities for day-use recreation, including beach access, unsupervised swimming, picnicking, scenic viewing, nature appreciation, birdwatching, photography, kayaking, and beach exploration. It serves as a place to meet friends and family, socialize, connect with nature, and offers a sense of peace and serenity to visitors young and old.



Figure 8: Parking area near capacity on a warm summer day.



Figure 9: Pondville South Road and bridge.

4.4 Outdoor Education Values

Opportunities for education may include topics such as climate change, coastal processes, beach ecosystems and succession, salt marsh wetlands and species, and/or intertidal zone ecosystems. Cultural interpretive themes may include Mi'kmaq cultural history, Acadian settlement, and/or local fishing history.

4.5 Tourism Values

Pondville Beach is one of the only sandy beaches on Isle Madame, and presents a locally significant tourism value. Nova Scotia's system of Provincial Parks (totalling 201 parks) attracts more than 1.5 million visitors annually. At least 65 percent of Nova Scotians visit a park at least once a year, with many more returning to their favourite trail or beach several times a year (Province of Nova Scotia, 2011).

4.6 Other Values

A growing body of evidence illustrates various benefits of individuals connecting with nature, including viewing nature, being in natural settings, and interacting with nature through active or passive activities. These include benefits to the economy, our physical and mental health, our spiritual and cultural identity, our personal development, and the welfare of our communities (Parks Canada, 2014).

Pondville Beach and other provincial parks help contribute to the economy by anchoring the tourism industry, supporting the outdoor recreation industry, contributing to local and regional economies, employing people, and helping brand Nova Scotia as a clean, green place to live, work, and do business (Province of Nova Scotia, 2013).

Other values include improvement to air quality, supporting science and learning, and providing settings of breathtaking beauty.

5.0 Summary of Park Threats

Threats to the park environment are associated with processes and events that occur naturally. Many of the threats summarized below are a part of being outdoors and placing infrastructure in a natural environment. Some threats may be mitigated, as outlined below.

5.1 Climate Change and Coastal Processes

Pondville Beach is susceptible to coastal processes and weather events. While coastal migration is a natural process, it may be accelerated with the effects of climate change. As a result, the park infrastructure is at risk, presenting practical management challenges and concerns for long-term sustainability. Due to the dynamic fluctuations occurring on the beach, the toilets and change houses have become inundated with sand and subsequent rot.

Another threat which causes site erosion is hardening of landscapes through development and vegetation clearing. This decreases the lands' ability to absorb water and thereby increases water runoff causing surface erosion.

It is uncertain how climate change may impact natural heritage values and biodiversity associated with the park and salt marsh.

Storm Surge

Based on tidal water levels and total water level statistics including storm surge data from the Port Hawkesbury tide gauge, the local tidal range (the vertical difference between low tide and high tide) for Pondville Beach is 2.1 metres. Overwash channels through the dune to the picnic area are at elevation 1.2 metres, which is flooded by a static storm surge of 10% annual probability and likely gets overwashed regularly during large storms (CBCL, 2023). Figure 10 shows an aerial view of the park, where a line of seaweed is visible in the parking lot – indicating a past storm water or surge entering the overwash channels on the dune and entering the parking area.

The North Pondville Road, approaching the park, is similarly low-lying, with areas between 1 and 1.2 metres. Storm surge flooding likely occurs regularly, with annual probability close to 10%. This area, along with the beach and dune system will be increasingly vulnerable to flooding due to storm surges and sea level rise (CBCL, 2023).

5.2 Human Impacts

Dune ecosystems are highly sensitive to human impacts such as foot traffic, unauthorized trails, and off-highway vehicle use. There's evidence of off-highway vehicle trails over the dunes at Pondville Beach.

5.3 Other Threats

Natural disturbances which may pose threats to the park environment include invasive species, pests, and wildfire.

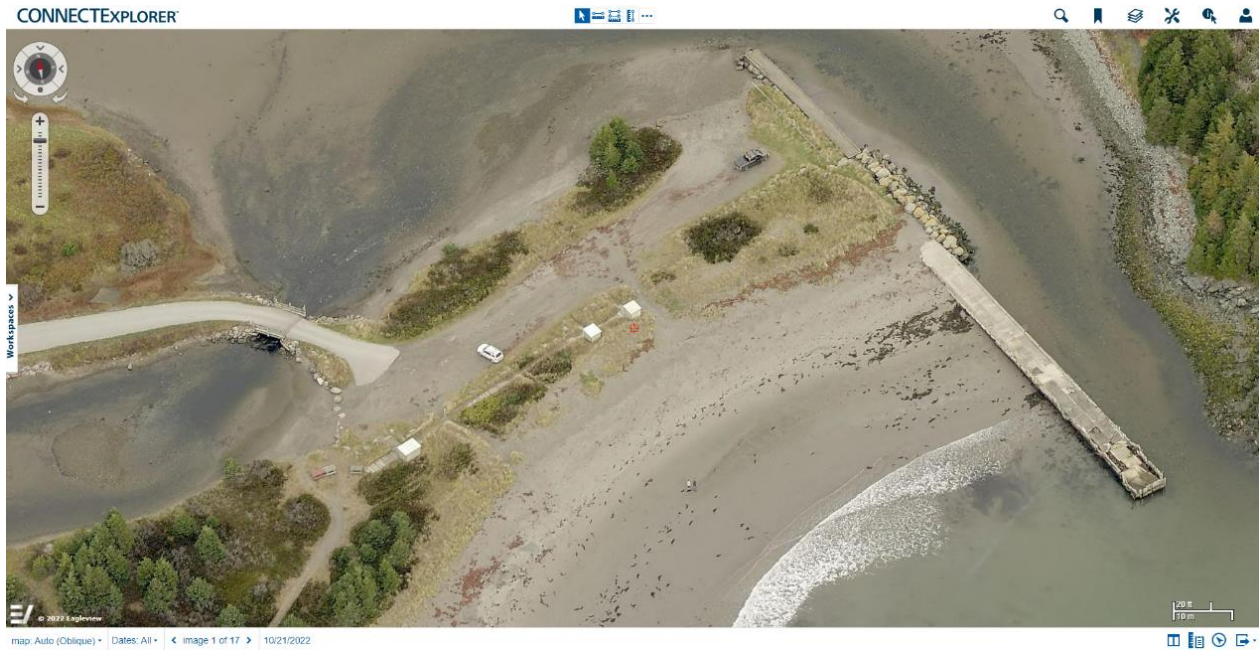


Figure 10: Aerial view of the park showing seaweed and marine debris in the parking area.



Figure 11: inundation of the toilets by sand and sediment.



Figure 12: Off-highway vehicle tracks through the dunes on the protected beach.

6.0 Park Classification

Classification organizes Nova Scotia’s Provincial Parks into broad categories, each of which has a particular purpose and characteristics that contribute to the overall provincial park system. Park classification defines individual park roles in providing opportunities for natural and cultural heritage

protection, outdoor recreation, education and/or tourism. Classification is a key element in determining the general policy basis for park management which in turn determines the type and extent of activities that may take place in a park.

Pondville Beach Provincial Park is classified as a Wayside park. The Provincial Parks Regulations defines a Wayside Park as a park that provides specific recreational facilities and services adjacent to travel corridors or local communities and may be a roadside picnic area, scenic viewpoint, access point, boat launch or small park area of local importance (*Provincial Parks Regulations, 1989*).

7.0 Vision Statement

The foundation of the park management statement is captured in the park vision statement. The vision statement describes the future state of Pondville Beach Provincial Park, and guides management actions and decisions:

Pondville Beach is enjoyed by residents of Isle Madame and visitors alike, who enjoy the high-quality, ecologically sustainable recreational opportunities for coastal access and exploration, picnicking, and nature and cultural appreciation.

8.0 Park Objectives

Management of Pondville Beach Provincial Park will be consistent with the Park Objectives of the mandate of Nova Scotia Provincial Parks, as outlined in the [Provincial Parks Act](#).

Table 1: Park Objectives

<i>Provincial Parks Act</i> objectives:	How Pondville Beach Provincial Park will be managed to be consistent with the <i>Provincial Parks Act</i> objectives:
Outdoor Recreation: provide opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities ranging from relatively high intensity near-urban facilities to low intensity wildland experiences.	Pondville Beach Provincial Park supports a variety of low-intensity outdoor recreation activities including coastal access and exploration, picnicking, and nature appreciation.
Protection: preserve unique, rare, representative or otherwise significant elements of the natural environment and historic resources of Nova Scotia.	Pondville Beach Provincial Park presents a locally significant opportunity to protect natural elements including salt marsh, sand dunes, and beach ecosystems. Species at risk include Harlequin and Purple Sandpiper. Greater Yellowlegs and Willets (both species of conservation concern) are likely to nest in upland areas within park boundaries and along the protected beach.
Education: provide opportunities for exploration, understanding and appreciation of Nova Scotia's natural and cultural heritage through interpretation, information and educational programs.	Pondville Beach Provincial Park provides visitors the opportunity for appreciation of nature through self-directed exploration of the park.

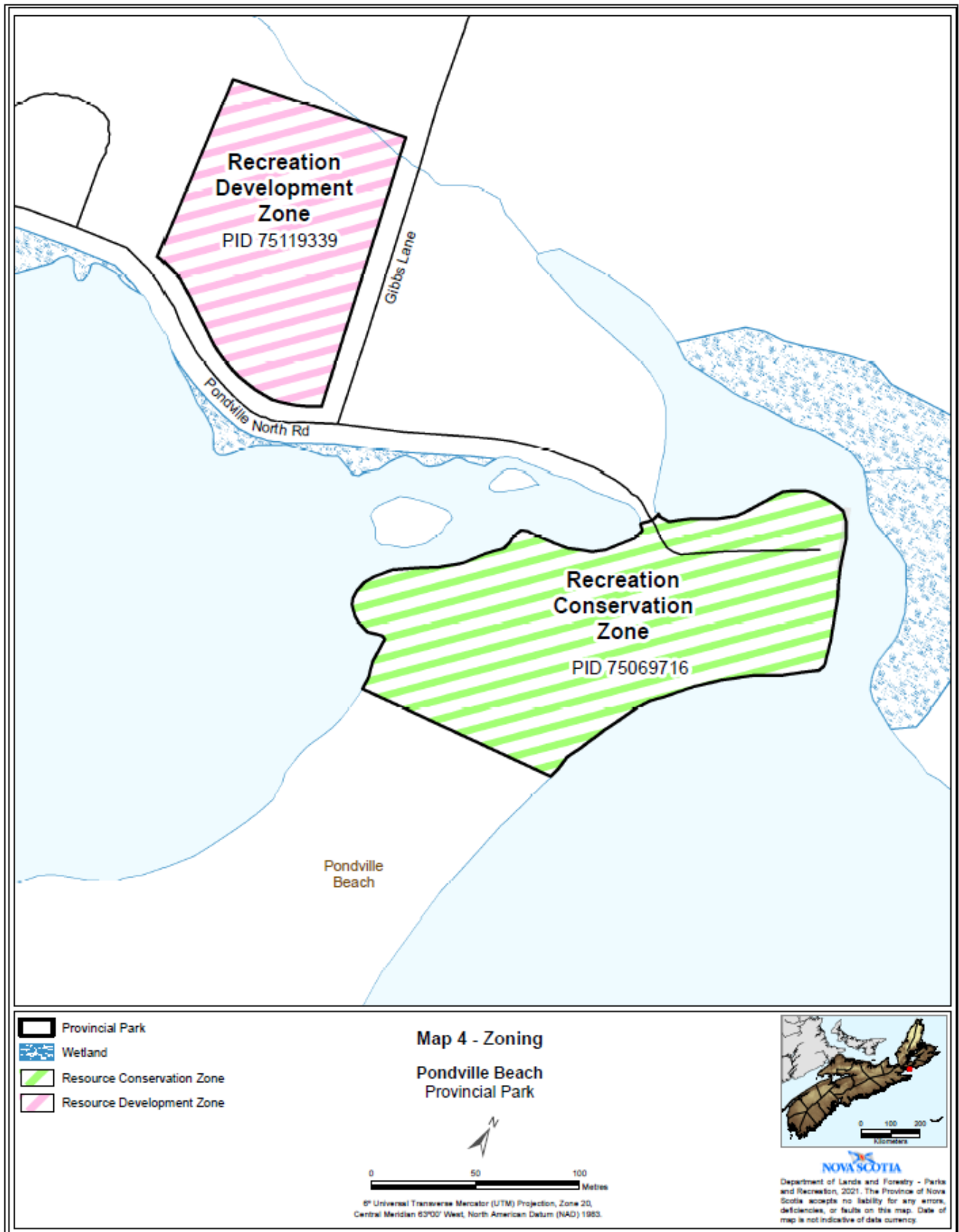
	<p>Natural and cultural heritage interpretative elements may be added to contribute to a better appreciation of the area’s natural and cultural heritage.</p> <p>Pondville Beach Provincial Park may support research projects that contribute to a better understanding of the natural environment and cultural heritage that do not compromise park values.</p>
<p>Tourism: provide resident travellers and out-of-Province visitors with opportunities to discover, experience and enjoy Nova Scotia’s distinctive outdoor recreational and heritage resources.</p>	<p>Pondville Beach Provincial Park provides a locally significant tourism opportunity and popular day-use park for both residents of Isle Madame and visitors.</p>
<p>Maintain the landbase of the park system: assemble and maintain, within a system of provincial parks and park reserves, a land base adequate to meet present and future needs of Nova Scotians for outdoor recreation and heritage resource protection.</p>	<p>The landbase of Pondville Beach Provincial Park is legally protected under the <i>Provincial Parks Act</i> for the enjoyment and appreciation of future generations.</p>

9.0 Zoning

Zoning is a tool that spatially delineates areas within a park that have common management objectives, intentions, values and/or uses.

All areas of the park containing dune, beach, or wetland (PID 75069716) ecosystem varieties fall within a resource conservation zone. Minimal infrastructure will be placed in the resource conservation zone, allowing for beach access only. Dune vegetation will be allowed to naturally restore, and activities will be limited to avoid unintended negative impacts. Interpretive signage may be permitted in this zone.

A recreation development zone is applied over the remainder of the park (PID 75119339) to allow for visitor services such as parking, toilets, change houses, and picnic tables. Refer to Map 4: Park Zoning.



Map 4: Park Zoning

10.0 Management

Pondville Beach Provincial Park will be managed in accordance with applicable legislation and policies as set out in the *Provincial Parks Act*. The objectives of the Provincial Parks' mandate to promote outdoor recreation, protection, education, tourism, and securement of a landbase are the mechanisms through which park management is based. The park management themes below reflect the values identified in the natural values, cultural heritage values, outdoor recreation, education, and tourism values (Section 4.0 Summary of Park Values).

10.1 Wildlife

There are no known human-wildlife conflicts or issues at Pondville Beach, including conflicts with eastern coyotes (*Canis latrans*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoildus virginianus*), red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), bobcat (*Felis rufus*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), or striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*) within the park.

Park visitors are encouraged to follow the Leave No Trace principles, which include “dispose of waste properly” (e.g. pack in, pack out), “leave what you find”, and “respect wildlife” (Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, 2020). This helps to avoid conflicts and harm to wildlife.

Other actions to support wildlife and biodiversity at Pondville Beach may include education, interpretation, and programming to increase awareness of wildlife values and foster connection to nature. Prior to any infrastructure development, a habitat survey will be conducted.

10.2 Vegetation

Vegetation will be managed according to the Guidelines for Vegetation Management in Provincial Parks, Park Reserves, Protected Beaches, and Trails (DNR, 2002). Any trees, limbs, or branches that pose a risk to public safety or park operations will be removed. Removed vegetation should remain on-site to provide wildlife habitat wherever possible. Planting of non-native species for aesthetic purposes is not permitted. Vegetation restoration projects may be permitted.

10.2.1 Disturbances

Any fire that may occur in the park will be actively suppressed. Insect, disease, or invasive species infestations will be managed on a case-by-case basis. Many disturbances are recognized as a component of the natural ecosystem and generally will be allowed to progress undisturbed. Where disturbances threaten natural values or human safety, a control program may be undertaken if appropriate. The Guidelines for Vegetation Management provides further direction on insect and disease management.

10.3 Cultural Heritage

Interpretative opportunities, including media and site resources may be developed. Partnerships may be encouraged to help develop interpretive content, including themes and implementation.

10.4 Education and Interpretation

The Department will continue to encourage and support research projects within Pondville Beach Provincial Park provided there are no adverse impacts to the park environment or visitor experience. Interpretive signage may include themes around coastal erosion, climate change, salt marshes, beach ecosystems, biodiversity, and local history.

10.5 Outdoor Recreation & Coastal Access

Pondville Beach will provide day-use recreation opportunities to promote public enjoyment and appreciation of the Parks' natural heritage.

To provide sustainable coastal access and accessible visitor services, the parking area and supporting facilities (new accessible change houses and toilets) will be relocated to the western parcel (PID 75119339). A small picnicking area may be provided in this area. A controlled access gate may be placed on the Pondville North Road allowing for safe pedestrian access to the beach. The Department will work with Public Works to manage this section of Pondville North Road (from PID 75119339 to PID 75069716) and the bridge. To encourage active transportation, bicycle racks may be installed near the parking lot. An access path will be maintained over the dune to the beach.

Existing infrastructure on the back dune will be removed, allowing for the barrier beach to naturally restore and colonize with dune grass. This will allow for better sustainability and adaptation in response to storm events and climate change. Additionally, moving infrastructure away from the beach will allow for better access management and deterring off-highway vehicles from illegally accessing the protected beach and dune habitat.

The wharf will not be removed. Instead, it will be capped with armour stone to help stabilize the beach and the tidal outflow channel (CBCL, 2023). Figure 13 shows a conceptual sketch showing proposed facilities and management actions.

10.5.1 Off-Season Access

Provincial parks are generally closed during the off-season from mid-October to mid-May. During this time, people are still welcome to use the park understanding that the park is not staffed nor maintained.

10.5.2 Other Recreation Uses

Other emerging recreation uses are permitted provided there are no conflicts with applicable legislation and policy. Third party park events are authorized on a case-by-case basis.

10.6 Park Signage

The Department is currently reviewing provincial park sign standards and may install new wayfinding signs to Pondville Beach Provincial Park and replace the park entry sign as resources become available.

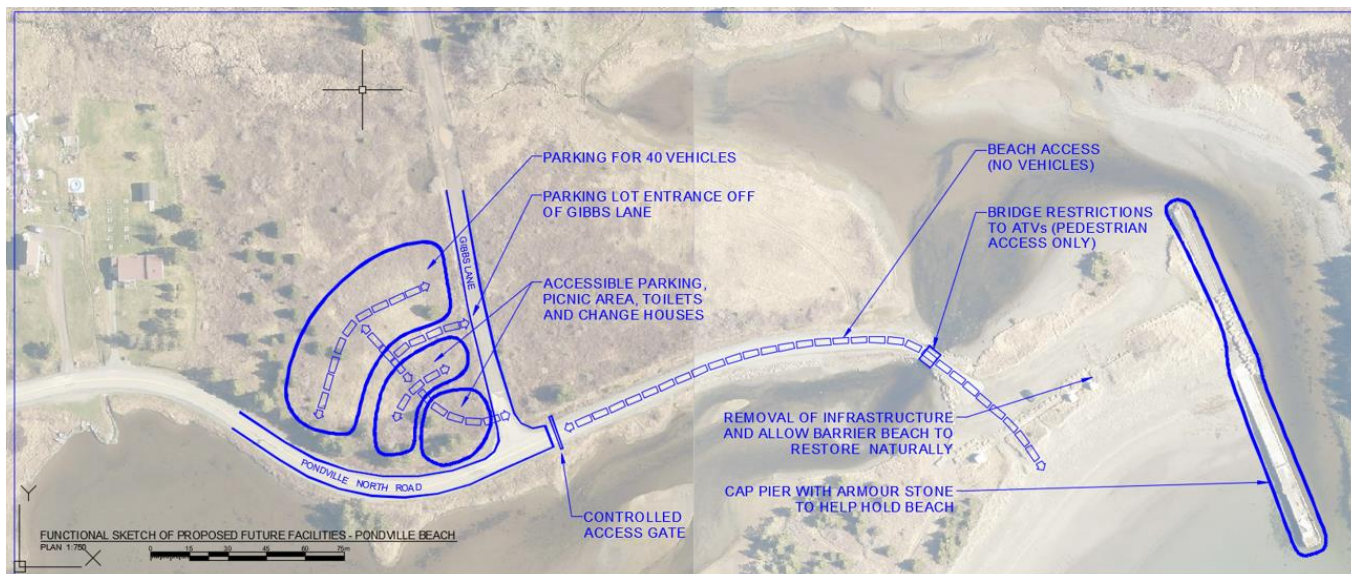


Figure 13: Conceptual sketch showing proposed facilities and management actions.

10.7 Partnerships

In the implementation of the approved park management statement, the Department may pursue opportunities for partnerships involving other agencies and groups through formal partnership agreements. Partners may work with the Department to assist with the implementation of the approved park management statement and will follow provincial park policies, standards, and regulations.

10.8 Operations

The Regional Services Branch of the Department is responsible for park operations. Park operations includes staffing, maintenance schedules, waste management, and coordination of enforcement activities. Park operations and maintenance will be consistent with the Nova Scotia Provincial Parks operating standards, policies, regulations, and the park management statement.

10.9 Additions to the Park

The Department would support, in principle, adding property to the park, provided the proposed addition will enhance park values. If suitable lands adjacent or near the park become available for addition, they will be evaluated based on contribution to park objectives, willing seller/willing buyer, and available funding.

11.0 Implementation Priorities

Implementation of this statement is subject to the availability of funding and resources. Unforeseeable changes in priorities may affect implementation. A conceptual drawing (Figure 13) provides a spatial depiction of where certain actions might occur within the park. During the implementation phases, more detailed site level plans will be created, and may differ slightly from the park concept, due to new information becoming available (e.g., biological inventories, site conditions, etc.).

12.0 Review and Adjustment of the Management Statement

The park management statement shall be reviewed within ten years to determine whether the park policies are still relevant and to consider any changes to the values, threats and emerging trends identified herein.

External requests for amendments to address specific needs may be considered.

13.0 References

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