IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
Finalised on 14 November 2014

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Gros Morne National Park. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Gros Morne National Park

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Canada
Inscribed in: 1987
Criteria:
(vii) (viii)

Site description:
Situated on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland, the park provides a rare example of the process of continental drift, where deep ocean crust and the rocks of the earth's mantle lie exposed. More recent glacial action has resulted in some spectacular scenery, with coastal lowland, alpine plateau, fjords, glacial valleys, sheer cliffs, waterfalls and many pristine lakes. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2014 Conservation Outlook

Good with some concerns

The outlook for Gros Morne National Park is good, with some concerns around the state of the native forest in Gros Morne National Park and some potential threats. The site’s protection and management system and its implementation are mostly effective. While the park’s geological World Heritage values and the majority of scenic values for which the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List are not being impacted, biodiversity values are significantly impacted.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Low Concern
Trend: Stable

Geological values and the majority of scenic values are well-preserved and not being impacted by any serious threats.

Overall THREATS

Low Threat

Threats to the geological values of the site are low. The landscape values of the park could in the future be affected by oil exploration. There is a serious concern for the state of the native forest in Gros Morne National Park. The hyperabundant moose is being harvested to resolve the problem but the level of harvest is insufficient to correct the problem.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Mostly Effective

The site’s protection and management system and its implementation are mostly effective. The legal protection framework is strong and the site is working well with neighbouring communities. However, concerns have been raised regarding

financial restraints.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

► **An area of exceptional natural beauty**
Criterion:(vii)

Gros Morne National Park, an outstanding wilderness environment of spectacular landlocked, freshwater fjords and glacier-scoured headlands in an ocean setting, is an area of exceptional natural beauty (Statement of Significance, 2006).

► **An internationally significant illustration of the process of continental drift**
Criterion:(viii)

The rocks of Gros Morne National Park collectively present an internationally significant illustration of the process of continental drift along the eastern coast of North America and contribute greatly to the body of knowledge and understanding of plate tectonics and the geological evolution of ancient mountain belts. In glacier-scoured highlands and spectacular fjords, glaciation has made visible the park’s many geological features. It is a classic, textbook examples of monumental earth-building and modifying forces that are unique in terms of their clarity, expression, and ease of access. The area is geologically diverse with areas of Ordovician sedimentary rocks, Precambrian granite and gneiss, Palaeozoic serpentinized ultra-basic rocks, gabbros, volcanic and Lower Palaeozoic sedimentary rocks, exposed oceanic crust, mantle, a section of ancient Mohorovicic Discontinuity, and

other distinctive geological features (Statement of Significance, 2006).

Other important biodiversity values

► Plant and faunal diversity

36 distinct vegetation types and communities, with vascular species and bryophytes, representing about 60% of Newfoundland's insular flora, including approximately 100 species considered rare on the Island of Newfoundland. Faunal diversity resembles an oceanic rather than continental-shelf island and is markedly reduced compared with the mainland. The park is a significant breeding site for harlequin duck, blackpoll warbler, common tern and arctic tern, a nesting site for bald eagle, rock ptarmigan and American tree sparrow, and a stopover for migrating shore birds. Anadromous Atlantic salmon and arctic char are found in park waters and also in permanent freshwater form in certain landlocked lakes on the Long Range Mountains.

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

Threats to the geological values of the site are low. However, there is a serious concern for the state of the native forest in Gros Morne National Park. The hyperabundant moose is being harvested to resolve the problem but the level of harvest may be insufficient to correct the problem.

► Hyper-Abundant Species

High Threat

Inside site
Outside site

There is a loss of native forest after the forest has been over browsed by hyper-abundant moose (Gros Morne State of Park Report, Parks Canada). Some of the replacing species are exotic, such as Canada Thistle and Coltsfoot.

► Logging/ Wood Harvesting

Low Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Wood harvesting for domestic use by local residents for two generations was a condition in the Federal-Provincial agreement for park establishment. Because moose have severely reduced forest regeneration, this relatively small amount of wood harvesting puts an additional strain on the forest of the park.
Extensive patch logging within the park and within the enclave communities has affected the look of the forest and communities.

► Other

Low Threat

Despite an agreement to cap snowmobile use of the park and manage snowmobile use within the national park, numbers are rising and snowmobiles are impinging on areas that were supposed to be out of bounds. This affects the scenic values of the park and stresses species living in the high-use area.

► Forestry/ Wood production

High Threat
Outside site

There has been extensive logging along the southern boundary of the park, affecting the viewscape both outside and inside the park. Connectivity has been affected for migrating and dispersing species.

► Utility / Service Lines

Low Threat

Inside site
Outside site

Two high voltage hydro transmission lines (138 kV and 69 kV)—the only lines supplying the northern portion of the Great Northern Peninsula—run the length of the park lowlands. Because trees are stunted by the coastal climate, the power lines, and the wide cut corridors, are visible for most of their length. These lines require multiple vehicle access points for maintenance. A telephone line also runs parallel to a hydro line in the sensitive Tablelands area.

▶ Hyper-Abundant Species

High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Introduced moose are hyper-abundant and have no significant predators on Newfoundland (wolves were extirpated in the 1930s). Moose browsing has reduced or stopped forest regeneration in a large area of the park (>40 km2) (Gros Morne State of Park Report).

Potential Threats

High Threat

Changes in extent and duration of ice cover and in frost-free season due to climate change might affect the site’s ecosystems. Other threats include potential oil exploration in the vicinity of the site.

▶ Housing/ Urban Areas

Low Threat
Outside site

Cottage lots have been made available on enclave land in the centre of the park by the community of Rocky Harbour. This development is close to the base of Gros Morne Mountain, and a rough road has been bulldozed in to service them. This area is now heavily damaged by all-terrain vehicle use, and the disruption is compromising important autumn feeding barrens for caribou, black bears, and moose. Damage has so far been restricted to the extensive enclave lands, but the development is visible from highlands within

the park.

▶ Marine/ Freshwater Aquaculture

Low Threat
Outside site

A small mussel farm operated in Gadds Harbour, a cove known to have the highest biodiversity in Bonne Bay, in the last decade. It closed because it was difficult to get the mussels inspected. The floats on the water surface and gear accumulated on shore were an eyesore, and may have affected the use of the cove by marine organisms.

▶ Oil/ Gas exploration/development

High Threat
Outside site

One oil exploration pad has already been constructed 1.6 km north of the park. In 2012 further exploration was proposed, with the first drill rig to be positioned in the community enclave of Sally’s Cove in the centre of Gros Morne National Park.
The exploration company let its lease lapse in early 2014 so there has been no activity, and the province is currently reviewing the use of fracking as an oil recovery technique.

▶ Habitat Shifting/ Alteration

High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Changes in extent and duration of ice cover and in frost-free season might affect the site’s ecosystems.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

▶ Relationships with local people

Mostly Effective

The park encloses several communities, most employees live in those towns, and the park is one of the largest employers, both directly and indirectly. There are frequent chances for communities and individuals to interact with park management and usually relationships are constructive. The park co-operating association (a non-profit volunteer “friends” organization) also helps to forge stronger ties between people and the park.

► Legal framework and enforcement

Mostly Effective

The legal protection for the park is strong, centering on the Canada National Parks Act and federal Species at Risk legislation. However, there are only three enforcement wardens within the entire field unit, which includes two widely separated national parks and three national historic sites.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Data Deficient

Data deficient

► Management system

Mostly Effective

Mostly effective

► Management effectiveness

Mostly Effective

Mostly effective

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Data Deficient

Data deficient

► Boundaries

Mostly Effective

The park boundary is clearly cut in most high-use areas (the lowland), but

many markers have fallen or been knocked over. Parts of the eastern boundary are very hard to discern, with no markers visible.
Unlike recently listed World Heritage Sites, no protective non-industrialized buffer zone has been established around the park.

▶ Sustainable finance

Data Deficient

Data deficient

▶ Staff training and development

Mostly Effective

Staff training and development could be affected by financial restraints.

▶ Sustainable use

Mostly Effective

The Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism, a shared initiative of Parks Canada and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, operates out of the park and trains tourism operators from throughout eastern Canada in sustainable techniques for communities. The park incorporates as many “green” and sustainable techniques into its operations as possible (solar powered fans, biological waste processing for washrooms, efficient heating and cooling systems, etc.).

▶ Education and interpretation programs

Mostly Effective

The quality of personal interpretation declined dramatically in recent years due to lack of support and direction and negligible staff training. This seems to be improving. Gros Morne continues to be a partner in outdoor education programs held in the park for each Grade 5 student in the district. The interest and support of the park superintendent and managers has a profound effect on the successful implementation of interpretation programs.

▶ Tourism and interpretation

Mostly Effective

Mostly effective

▶ **Monitoring**

Some Concern

Human and financial resources are inadequate to deal with monitoring and threat remediation in Gros Morne and the other four parks within the Field Unit.

▶ **Research**

Mostly Effective

Mostly effective

Overall assessment of protection and management

Mostly Effective

The site’s protection and management system and its implementation are mostly effective. The legal protection framework is strong and the site is working well with neighbouring communities. However, concerns have been raised regarding financial restraints.

▶ **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site**

Data Deficient

Data deficient

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **An area of exceptional natural beauty**

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

The majority of scenic values are not being affected by any serious threats.

► **An internationally significant illustration of the process of continental drift**

Good

Trend:Stable

Geological values of the site are well preserved.

Other important biodiversity values

► **Plant and faunal diversity**

36 distinct vegetation types and communities, with vascular species and bryophytes, representing about 60% of Newfoundland's insular flora, including approximately 100 species considered rare on the Island of Newfoundland. Faunal diversity resembles an oceanic rather than continental-shelf island and is markedly reduced compared with the mainland. The park is a significant breeding site for harlequin duck, blackpoll warbler, common tern and arctic tern, a nesting site for bald eagle, rock ptarmigan and American tree sparrow, and a stopover for migrating shore birds. Anadromous Atlantic salmon and arctic char are found in park waters and also in permanent freshwater form in certain landlocked lakes on the Long Range Mountains.

Summary of the Values

► **Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values**

Low Concern

Trend: Stable

Geological values and the majority of scenic values are well-preserved and not being impacted by any serious threats.

► **Assessment of the current state and trend of other important biodiversity values**

High Concern

Trend: Data Deficient

Biodiversity values are at significant risk. The park has documented a significant decline in woodland caribou and a significant impact on native forest communities from hyper-abundant moose and invasive exotic plants.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ **Decline in forest health**

Regional

Park Forests are declining dramatically in health because of hyperabundant moose and, on the lowlands, because of subsequent invasion by exotic plants. Forest stands are being converted into open meadows of native and exotic species. Parks Canada is attempting to resolve this by reducing the number of moose through licensed hunting.

▶ **Decline in woodland caribou**

Regional

Woodland Caribou are declining because of a number of province-wide and complex reasons, including loss of overwintering habitat. Monitoring is done on a provincial level with data shared with Parks Canada.

▶ **Decline in Atlantic Salmon**

Regional

Atlantic Salmon Populations are far below historic levels

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

The park is the most important economic driver regionally.

► **Traditional agriculture**

Certain local residents have the right to personal harvest of firewood, boat building timbers, and snowshoe hare.

► **Legal subsistence hunting of wild game**

Being able to assist the park in the removal of over-abundant moose has been beneficial to local and regional hunters and their families.

► **Does management of the site provide jobs (e.g. for managers or rangers)?**

The park is one of the major employers in the region, and has led to the relative stability of enclave communities compared to the steady depopulation of small towns elsewhere in the region.

► **Sacred natural sites or landscapes**

Gros Morne is the most important tourism draw in western Newfoundland, and perhaps for the entire Island. Its direct and indirect effects on the economy of the Island are of major importance. Scenes within the park have been used as the advertising icons for the province for years. The park continues to draw visitors from around the world.

Summary of benefits

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Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects

1	Parks Canada	Moose management program
2	Parks Canada	Piping plover nest site protection

REFERENCES

№	References
1	Burzynski, Michael, Tom Knight, Shawn Gerrow, Jennifer Hoffman, Randy Thompson, Peter Deering, Danny Major, Scott Taylor, Carson Wentzell, and Angus Simpson. 2005. State of the Park Report Gros Morne National Park of Canada; an Assessment of Ecological Integrity. Parks Canada, GMNP. 21 pp.
2	Gros Morne National Park Management Plan http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/nl/grosmorne/plan.aspx