



WAPUSK NEWS

The voice of Wapusk National Park

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Wapusk National Park Use Regulations – Why celebrate?

Cam Elliott

Superintendent, Wapusk National Park
& Manitoba North National Historic Sites

Usually people don't view the implementation of new rules and regulations as a reason to rejoice, but in the case of the Wapusk National Park Use Regulations, which came into effect on March 26, 2010, there is reason to celebrate.

The Wapusk regulations are unique in Canada's national park system. By allowing certain activities customarily prohibited in other national parks, they reflect and respect the unique history and traditional local use of the Wapusk National Park (NP) lands.

The commitment to the distinct local use of Wapusk NP was made by the Government of Canada in the Federal-Provincial Agreement to Establish Wapusk National Park, an agreement that grew out of public consultations in the Churchill area. Certain activities are generally prohibited in national parks: hunting, trapping, gathering natural products from the land, using all terrain vehicles to access park lands, and using cabins to support these activities. However, the Wapusk Park Establishment Agreement (1996) recognizes these as traditional user activities for the longtime residents of Churchill at the time the agreement was signed. Aboriginal and treaty rights in the park, continuation of traditional use of park lands by First Nation



*Picking berries
Photo: Parks Canada*



people, and continuing specified traditional uses of park lands and resources by eligible non-Aboriginal people are outlined in the agreement and are allowed through the park use regulations.

In short, the Wapusk park use regulations, which respect the acceptable activities as outlined in the Wapusk Park Establishment Agreement, take precedence over the National Park General Regulations that prohibit these activities.

Having the tools and knowledge to keep oneself safe when on the land in polar bear country is second nature to the residents of the Hudson Bay coast in Manitoba. The Wapusk Park Establishment Agreement has provisions for carrying firearms for protection from polar bears. Parks Canada recognises this as a need in all areas frequented by polar bears, not just in Wapusk NP. The National Parks Wildlife Regulations currently being developed will allow eligible individuals to carry firearms for protection in all the northern national parks and national park reserves that have polar bears. Interim Guidelines for this were adopted in January, 2010.

Through the Wapusk National Park Use Regulations and the Interim Guidelines for Use of Firearms (to be replaced by the new National Parks Wildlife Regulations) all of the provisions committed in the Wapusk Park Establishment Agreement will have been implemented. March 26, 2010 is truly a day to celebrate.

Parks Canada Plans Public Consultation on the Use of Firearms in Northern National Parks

Sheldon Kowalchuk
Resource Conservation Manager
Wapusk National Park
& Manitoba North National Historic Sites

Parks Canada is proposing amendments to the National Parks Wildlife Regulations to allow certain categories of park users to carry and use firearms for self-protection and the protection of others from bears in the Northern National Parks and Northern National Park Reserves. In order to solicit feedback from interested parties who may be affected or have an interest in these regulations, Parks Canada will be consulting with people across Canada on the National Parks Wildlife Regulations during the summer and fall of 2010.

Parks Canada has established criteria for obtaining a firearms permit if you are member of a designated group (e.g. person holding a guiding license, researcher, bear monitor, member of a Canadian Forces sovereignty operation) to allow a firearm to be used for protection from bears. Other topics that will be covered during consultation include Parks Canada's commitment to land claim agreements, impact benefit agreements or, in the case of Wapusk, the Park Establishment Agreement.

Information on how and where you can obtain more information and provide feedback on the National Parks Wildlife Regulations will be forthcoming. For more information, please contact Wapusk National Park at **wapusknp@pc.gc.ca** or call 204-675-8863.



Photo: Parks Canada

Churchill Northern Studies Centre Receives Funding Through Arctic Research Infrastructure Fund

Sheldon Kowalchuk

Resource Conservation Manager, Wapusk National Park & Manitoba North National Historic Sites



*Hauling building materials to Nestor Two in March, 2010.
Photo: Parks Canada*

In April of 2010, research facilities in the Churchill area received a huge injection of funds when the Churchill Northern Studies Centre (CNSC) was successful in obtaining \$11,000,000 from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) as part of the Arctic Research Infrastructure Fund (ARIF). The ARIF is an \$85,000,000 program that is part of Canada's Economic Action Plan. The fund is designed to invest in maintaining and upgrading key arctic research facilities.

The CNSC is the key research facility in the Churchill area and, with the new construction occurring at that site in addition to upgrades to existing infrastructure, the CNSC will continue to be the centre of attention for many researchers in the Churchill region for years to come. The CNSC is a launching point to access the northern portion of Wapusk National Park (NP). The funding proposal by the CNSC also included a number of partners that have a research interest in WNP. There are a number of outlying research camps and facilities in Wapusk NP that have supported researchers in their work and some have been in operation for nearly four decades.

In total, approximately \$750,000 will be spent on research infrastructure within Wapusk NP over the two-year life of this program. The implementation plan for the work in the

park is split into two key phases. The design, acquisition and transportation of materials by over snow vehicle is occurring in 2009-10. The majority of the construction will occur in the summer of 2010.

The investment in Wapusk NP will occur at four locations. The Nestor One research camp is owned by the Province of Manitoba and activities at this location include the construction of a new washroom building and upgrades to the viewing tower and kitchen building. At the Nestor Two research camp, operated by the Hudson Bay Project, two new buildings will be constructed to replace the existing bunkhouse and kitchen building. A new water and wastewater treatment unit will also be installed to provide potable water to the camp in addition to treating all wastewater. Parks Canada will be constructing a backcountry cabin, washroom building and a water and wastewater treatment unit at Broad River and a fenced compound, backcountry cabin and shed at Owl River.

There has always been a great interest by researchers to work in this part of the world and that is likely to continue in the future. The funding provided by INAC was a timely source of funds to improve research facilities in the Churchill area and in Wapusk NP and will leave a legacy for years to come.



*Samantha Grosbrink from the 2009 camp
Photo: Parks Canada*

special moments as we look ahead to some events forecast for Wapusk NP.

Wapusk welcomes its first summer camping visitors – the Adventure Experience of a Lifetime!

Variety, The Children's Charity of Manitoba, has partnered with Parks Canada to auction the first ever visitor camping trip to Wapusk NP. The trip was auctioned at the Variety Gold Heart Gala in Winnipeg on April 24, 2010 and the lucky winners will travel by VIA Rail to Churchill this summer. Not only will they have the experience of a lifetime in the Park, but they will also have the opportunity to explore the attractions in Churchill.

Parks Canada and Variety are grateful to the sponsors of the trip:

- VIA Rail
- Hudson Bay Helicopters
- North West Company
- Bonne Cuisine by Michael
- Seaport Hotel
- Nature First

Proceeds from the auction of the Wapusk NP Adventure are in support of the Variety Heritage Adventure Park, an interpretive play park for children of all abilities, which is being built at The Forks National Historic Site in Winnipeg.

What's up, what's down & what's all around

Karyne Jolicoeur-Funk

Interpretation Coordinator - Wapusk National Park

Look up and you might see thousands of geese, streaks of clouds, brilliant sun and at night ... magical lights! Look down and discover delicate flowers, mouth-watering berries and maybe even your ancestors' footprints.

Look all around and see nothing or see everything: ice cold waves, imposing polar bears, mystical caribou and a myriad of lakes. Fog

rolls in ... and it all disappears.

There's always a lot going on in Wapusk NP. An outing in the park can reveal so much and can change so fast. Tiny events, such as the pollination of a dewberry flower, may go unnoticed. Ground-thundering events, such as the passing of a caribou herd, are hard to miss. This summer a few more visitors will likely have a chance to witness these

Leaders for our Planet – Youth Leadership Camp in Wapusk National Park

Imagine seeing the Arctic for the first time or discovering a magnificent part of Canada from the birds-eye-view of a helicopter, exploring ancient routes your ancestors may have travelled and viewing the magnificent wildlife that calls Wapusk home. This park is

a special place where you can learn about yourself, your heritage and your role in protecting it for the future. Between July 8-13, students from around Manitoba joined park staff and other adult facilitators for a once in a lifetime opportunity participating in the 7-day camp in Churchill and in Wapusk NP.

You can link to the students' blog pages from the Wapusk NP web site (<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/mb/wapusk/ne.aspx>) to learn more about their adventure.

National Parks Project

For a few special days this August, a group of artists will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in Wapusk NP. Renowned Canadian musicians Sam Roberts, Kathleen Edwards and Matt Mays will take time to discover the land and let the park's surroundings inspire their work. The famous director, Hubert Davis, will guide the project while creating a short film that will capture their creative process as well as the beauty of Wapusk NP. The team will also produce a piece for the Discovery HD channel that will air in Spring 2011. For more information, visit the project website at: <http://www.nationalparksproject.ca/> (available in English only)

University of Manitoba Field Course

Wapusk NP. Never heard of it? This group of young adults always seems to go into the park not quite knowing what to expect. They are the scientists of tomorrow and they always emerge with a great respect for the land and what it has revealed to them. Continually creating ambassadors for Wapusk NP and contributing to current research, we look forward to seeing another group this year.

A Grizzly Encounter!

Melissa Gibbons

Resource Management & Public Safety Specialist
Wapusk National Park & Manitoba North National Historic Sites

Barren-ground grizzly bears were thought to have disappeared from Manitoba for many years. However, over the last 10 years or so, there have been several confirmed sightings of this animal within Wapusk National Park. More frequent observations of the grizzly bear in northern Manitoba may simply be due to the fact that there are more people out looking, or it could point to a more permanent increase in the species' range. In 2009, there were several sightings of black bears in the York Factory and Churchill region, suggesting that these two species may be extending their natural range, or perhaps simply taking advantage of the available habitat.



Grizzly Bear in Wapusk National Park
Photo: Linda Gormezano, 2008

Since the establishment of the park, there have been 11 separate sightings of grizzly bears, and an additional sighting in 2009 east of the Town of Churchill.

It is evident from the increase in both grizzly and black bear sightings, that additional monitoring is important to determine whether these species are simply accidental visitors, or extending their range.

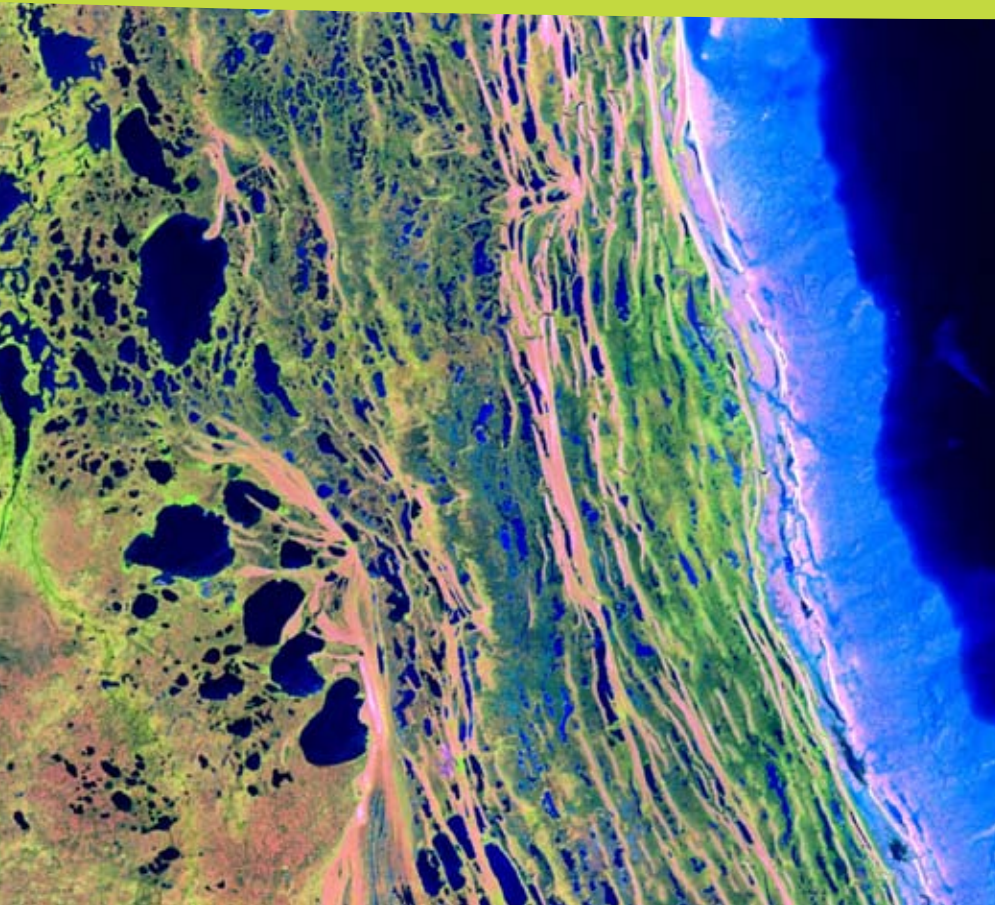
In 2004, I was lucky enough to observe a barren-ground grizzly up close. Here is an excerpt from the article published in our office newsletter.

“Set the Scene ... Wapusk National Park, Broad River area... July 6, 2004 ... 23:30 hours

Three tired campers had just settled in for a much-needed sleep. It was our last evening in the park, and we had most of our gear packed and ready. The alarm fence was on, the shotgun was ready and we were all tucked in our sleeping bags. I hear a thump... there's something out there. I crawled out of bed, put on my glasses and stand near the door listening... nothing. I peeked out the corner of the door. Yup, it's a bear bum!

I grab the shotgun and an air horn. Open the door and the bear is about ten feet from the cabin, walking beside the (broken) fence. The bear turns and looks at us, we look at him; that is definitely not a polar bear. His colouring is pale brown - almost a cinnamon colour, and his legs are darker brown. His snout is short and his face is wide, not the regal face of a polar bear. He has a huge ruff of fur around his (short) neck, with a large hump on his shoulder. He seems to be a small bear (well, compared to the white bear I was expecting), maybe 300-350 pounds. We stare at him for a few seconds before I decide to scare him away. I open the door wide, and lay on the air horn. He turns tail and quickly runs away heading towards an esker. He keeps running until he is about 100 metres away. He then looks back, but keeps running. We watch until we can't see him anymore.

We chatter excitedly about what we saw – a real, up-close, grizzly bear! I think we were pretty lucky to have seen this elusive animal. And in case you were wondering ... nope, no pictures!



SPOT Image showing beach ridges
©2008 CNES, Licensed by lunctus Geomatics Corp., www.terraengine.com

Beaches

Heather Stewart
Ecosystem Scientist – Wapusk National Park

Think of beach ridges, and the imagination runs to sandy dunes interspersed with coastal lowlands - perhaps a nice place to hike and picnic in July or a place to rest after a day by the water. The beach ridges in Wapusk National Park fit this image in some ways - they are formed by wave and current action on sands, pebbles and gravel and are nice, breezy, dry places in July. But in other aspects, they are drastically different. Distance from the coastline is one thing that sets them apart. Although



some of Wapusk NP's beach ridges are immediately beside the water, older beach ridges can be up to 15-20 km from the coast. The gradual rising of the Hudson Bay Lowlands (60 cm-1m per century), coupled with the low elevation of the region, has left noticeable beach ridges along the eastern shore of Wapusk NP from Cape Churchill to Broad River. As the land has slowly risen, freed from the weight of glaciers following the last ice age, coastal influences such as wind, storms and waves have built ridges along the high tide line each year. Over a few years the ridges, no longer at the coastline, become landlocked. Through this process, called isostatic rebound, Wapusk NP is actually getting bigger every year! In fact, the edge of Hudson Bay, where it meets the Manitoba coast, is known as one of the more dramatic areas of isostatic rebound on earth, with the land emerging out of the Hudson Bay at a rate of 40 cm-1m per century!

These beach ridges, currently making up one percent of the park area, are covered in the only vegetation community truly classed as dry tundra in Wapusk NP.

Newly emerged, or young beach ridges are generally easy to spot on satellite images such as Google Earth, as they appear as white, wispy features almost like scratches on the surface of the land. They are irregular in shape, being formed by currents and storm events that took place in the past. Further inland, the ridges become covered in shrubs and trees and are more difficult to see from the air. Often trees, such as spruce, indicate the higher ground of the beach ridges.

On most new ridges, the vegetation consists of low-growing woody shrubs such as Mountain avens, bearberry, Lapland rosebay, and buffaloberry, interspersed with sedges, lichens and the few herbaceous plants that can withstand the dry, exposed conditions on the

Mountain avens growing on a beach ridge
Photo: Parks Canada

ridges. In winter, snow is blown off the tops of the ridges and forms drifts on the lee side causing moist pockets, which are colonized by other shrubs such as low growing willows. On the undisturbed ridges, arctic plants common in areas further north, such as alpine azalea and nard sedge, can be found.

The beach ridges make good habitat for arctic and red foxes, and many dens are occupied year after year. Around fox dens, bright greens indicate grasses and sedges growing where droppings fertilize the ground. Caribou migrate to the coast in spring and travel along the ridges with their calves, foraging on the abundance of grasses and lichens through the summer. Their trails etch long white scars into the gravel and vegetation and their droppings, common along the ridge top trails, leave a pungent smell and become freeze-dried.

The beach ridges of Wapusk are a testament to change along western Hudson Bay ...

Stone tent rings, hunting blinds and caches found along beach ridges farther inland attest to early human use. Perhaps these spots were nice breezy places to hunt and get away from the mosquitoes which are so numerous in low lying areas. Some of these archaeological sites

are now 10 km inland, with driftwood larger than the trees found along the current coastline of the park. In recent history, the military used the beach ridges as landing strips and vehicle access points, setting up observation towers along these higher landscape features. Today, one scientific research camp (Nester One)

is located on a beach ridge.

The beach ridges of Wapusk NP are a testament to change along western Hudson Bay, both in human use as well as geological process, and are a valued and special part of the landscape of this national park.



*A view of Nester One research camp
Photo: Parks Canada*

Former Lightening Bug Sets Olympic Torch Ablaze

When the Olympic Torch travelled through Churchill Manitoba in early November, it was an opportunity to reward one local student for his voluntary service to the community. Dylan Burton was part of the Olympic Torch Relay on November 8th.

A role model for local youth, Burton was employed by Parks Canada last summer to assist with the Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site wall stabilisation project. Burton's commendable work ethic and comic wit quickly made him a valued member of the team as they carried out sensitive repair to the historic structure. From representing Manitoba Hydro as Louis the Lightening Bug to standing in for Santa, Burton enjoys supporting his community and his contributions have been acknowledged by other local and international organizations. Recently, Parks Canada sponsored Burton's attendance at the Polar Bear International Ambassador Camp.

All the Parks Canada staff at Wapusk NP join in congratulating Dylan on this once-in-a-lifetime honour. Well done!



Parks Canada summer student Dylan Burton carries the torch in Churchill, Manitoba. Photo: Jaime Sorenson

Send us your story or feedback!

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You may also drop this off at the
Parks Canada office in Churchill,
MB or email at:
wapusknp@pc.gc.ca

Name: _____

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We want to hear from you!

Parks Canada and The Wapusk Management Board appreciate any comments or suggestions you have about this issue of the newsletter.

**Wapusk News is produced by Parks Canada and
the Wapusk Management Board**

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