

Brief to the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement concerning the proposed aquatic reserve on the Dumoine River**Submitted on behalf of Paddle Canada by Jay Morrison, Chair, Environment Committee**

Before beginning this submission concerning the creation of a protected area in the Dumoine River watershed, I would like to thank the BAPE and the commissioners for their interest in my unplanned comments during the hearing at Campbell's Bay on January 23rd. Governments may not always create policies with which we fully agree but no-one can say that in Quebec members of the public are denied the opportunity to make their views known in a fair and transparent way, particularly with respect to the environment.

This submission is made on behalf of Paddle Canada or Pagaie Canada (PC), the national organization for recreational canoeing and kayaking. I am chair of the environment committee for PC and am a certified moving water (eau vive) canoe instructor. PC's mission includes the promotion of paddling skills and safety as well as respect for the environment and works with governments across the country on safety and environment issues while teaching thousands of paddlers every year through PC courses delivered by its member instructors.

As vice president of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Ottawa Valley Chapter (CPAWS-OV) which has operated in Eastern Ontario and West Quebec for more than forty years, I have been the board member responsible for the Dumoine River campaign since 2003 when a number of environment groups and stakeholders first met to propose a candidate watershed for protection in Natural Region C under the SQAP program. Since 2005 CPAWS OV has taken a leadership role and consulted widely and repeatedly with local community groups, local and Quebec governments, First Nations communities, recreational users and the forestry industry. With the almost single exception of Commonwealth Plywood, there has been universal support for a large protected area in the Dumoine watershed. In brief, CPAWS proposed in 2006 a protected area of about 2900 km sq with FSC forestry permitted in the remaining 1/3 of the 4400 km sq watershed. In 2008, an interim protected area (aquatic reserve status) of about 1450 km sq was announced by the government.

Since that time consultations have continued with both the Temiscamingue and Pontiac MRCs, and First Nations in Kitigan Zibi, Wolf Lake and Kippawa (Eagle Village) and Kitcisakik. These consultations included meetings as recently as 2012. At these meetings I was told that there is support for an expanded protected area and the CPAWS vision of a biodiversity corridor between the boreal forest of la Verendrye and the transition forest toward Ottawa River and Algonquin Park. Therefore CPAWS has proposed a protected area of some 3000 km sq including areas on the Ottawa River. As an organization concerned with the future quality of the environment particularly in the face of global warming, as well as opportunities for recreational paddling, Paddle Canada supports CPAWS proposal for the Dumoine River watershed as part of a North American biodiversity corridor.

However, there are clearly some obstacles in the path toward this vision. While the MDDEP may be somewhat sympathetic to the need to establish north-south corridors and connectivity between protected areas and that the Dumoine may be the only viable candidate in the region for this purpose,

the government's normal model for the creation of protected areas, like that of most governments around the world, is the representation model, i.e., to protect representative landscapes and habitat for valued species. And it is true that some of the areas proposed by CPAWS for protection have been heavily affected by forestry and would not usually be good candidates for protection. But our world is changing and our models must change as well. If left undisturbed by industrial activity for 50 or 100 years these areas would serve well to mitigate the effects of warming in Quebec. A large and wide corridor without constrictions is needed to fulfill that role.

A second issue that the BAPE and the Government of Quebec must address is the conflicting interests of stakeholders with respect to the final status of the Dumoine protected area. A parc national would bring recreo-tourism and badly needed jobs to the region, but could result in current lease holders and being excluded from the park as well as a change in management structure not favourable to the ZECs.

Like CPAWS, Paddle Canada has no objection to a parc national. While paddlers can now enjoy a unique wilderness experience on the Dumoine due to its largely intact landscape and special values, the time may have come for more regulation and increased services (campsites) so that this experience is not degraded while increasing the economic benefit to the region. A management regime such as could be provided by the SEPAC could be the answer. On a personal note, having paddled 8,000 km from les Escoumins to Inuvik and I have paddled all of the major tributaries of the Ottawa river in both Ontario and Quebec and I can tell you that the Dumoine is one of the most attractive Rivers for white water paddling in all of Canada. Areas of the watershed near Lac aux sangsues that have been omitted from the current design also have very good lakewater paddling potential, and linked to la Verendrye to the north, could form an excellent network for those who prefer smoother waters. Having been trained as an economist at McGill, I can advise that the region has great economic recreo-tourism potential. I believe that the BAPE commissioners asked me how many visitors go to Algonquin Park which is just a few kilometers away from the mouth of the Dumoine. After accessing the most recent Ontario park statistics the answer is that in 2011 Algonquin had 818,000 visitors including 347,000 camper nights. We know that often demand for campsites in Algonquin Park in the summer cannot be met. I am not suggesting that the Dumoine could, or should, be developed to such a point but there is an undeniable potential here for tourism and jobs.

The current small numbers of chalets, that are mainly concentrated on the river near an area known as The Shearway, do not significantly detract from the wilderness quality of the Dumoine. I would suggest that if a parc national were implemented at some time in the short or medium term, existing leases could be honoured to some specified period well into the future. What Paddle Canada and recreational tourists of all kinds would not want to see is any expansion of the current number of leases or privately held properties. We understand that new leases have been proposed near Lac Ingley. This area should be included in the protected area per the CPAWS proposal and no new leases or sales should be given in the protected area in any case. Roads introduce a number of elements highly detrimental to biodiversity as well as imposing unrecoverable costs on local municipalities.

A third issue is the rights of First Nations in the protected area. FN communities have expressed support for a parc national provided that they have access for traditional activities, e.g., hunting, fishing

and trapping, and that establishment of a park would not affect land claims. Reports of difficulty accessing other parks, Opemican, for example, appear to justify concerns. I understand that other parks in Quebec have arranged to maintain access by First Nations and, as an organization that works with and respects First Nations rights, Paddle Canada supports this as a condition of support for a parc national.

I wish the commissioners good luck in arbitrating these competing interests, it will not be easy. Flexibility and compromise will be required. If there is any other information or perspective that I could provide to assist the commissioners, it would be my pleasure.

Jay Morrison