

Parc Mont O'Brien Project: Overview and Action Plan

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I. Introduction

In December 1999, a number of residents from the Danford Lake community began to lay the foundations of what has come to be known as the Parc Mont O'Brien Project. Much has been accomplished since our first community meeting and the goal of this document is to provide both a summary of what has happened as well as an overview of our future plans. It is hoped that a more official business plan for the future Parc Mont O'Brien can be created from this document.

a. What is the Parc Mont O'Brien Project

A beautiful, 9500 acre piece of Crown land lies to the south-west of the village of Danford Lake and some of the area's residents have started to work towards turning this area into a wilderness park for both the community and visitors to enjoy. One of the explicit tenets of this future park will be to protect the area and its resources through sustainable management practices. The future Parc Mont O'Brien would complement the existing eco-tourist attractions in the MRC Pontiac, i.e. Les Chutes Coulonge, PPJ CycloParc, Parc Leslie etc.

b. Overview of Danford Lake

The village of Danford Lake is situated in the Municipality of Allevyn-and-Cawood in the MRC Pontiac. The municipality has close to 200 year-round residents while its summer population reaches 500 with the addition of seasonal residents.

- add in its geographic size
- add in a description of its economy and employment rates
- discussion of present businesses -- Miljour Store, Vicki's Chip Stand, Danford Lake Hotel, local outfitting camps -- and present a summary of the benefits to the local economy of a Parc

Despite that its economy is not tremendously robust, the Municipality is blessed with two important items:

- i. The area's spectacular natural surroundings include the Laurentian foothills, lush forests, numerous lakes and rivers.
- ii. The Municipality can easily be reached by two access routes from urban areas:
 - a) Route 105, the main transportation route north from Ottawa and from the Montreal area, lies just 11 kilometres to the east of the village of Danford Lake; the northern sections of Ottawa-Hull can be reached in less than one hour; Maniwaki is one hour north
 - b) Route 301 from Otter Lake and the rest of the Pontiac lie 20-60 minutes to the west

It is interesting to note here that one of the other municipalities in the MRC Pontiac claims to be the eastern gateway into the Pontiac; in reality it is the south-eastern gateway while Alleyn-and-Cawood acts as the north-eastern gateway.

c. Description and History of the Mont O'Brien Region

Much (?clarify) of the Municipality of Alleyn-and-Cawood is Crown land. One piece in particular, situated just outside of the village, has occupied an important place in local residents' lives for many years. The Mont O'Brien region lies 4 kilometres south-southwest of the village of Danford Lake just south of Route 301. Over the years the area has been used by local residents for both recreational purposes and for logging, hunting and fishing. The region's network of trails, some of which still exist today, provided for access through to Ladysmith and the surrounding area.

- can add in more information regarding Mr. Gibson's logging camp and sawmill

Mont O'Brien itself is one of the highest peaks in the Municipality of Alleyn and Cawood reaching a height of 1150 feet. Its natural lookout spots, located on its south and southeastern sides, offer views of up to 25 miles. Lac O'Brien is located on the western side of Mont O'Brien and it measures approximately 1/2 mile by 1/2 mile. Local fishermen claim the lake is 140 feet deep in spots. Some of the forests in the region are home to large pines measuring 10 feet in diameter. The area is also home to a wide variety of flora and fauna (see Appendix 1).

d. How the Project Got Started

Work on the project began in earnest in April 2000 after a number of elements came together.

First, the Mont O'Brien area has always been much loved and used by local area residents. In recent years, changes in private land ownership around the area had made it increasingly difficult for local residents to gain access to the Mont O'Brien region.

Secondly, the Municipality of Alleyn-and-Cawood was encouraged to learn that the MRC Pontiac had included the Mont O'Brien region in its "Land Use Management Plan" which was recently approved at the end of February 2001.

Thirdly, some local area residents had identified a number of economic development possibilities for the municipality through community meetings that had been arranged and led by Tina Michaud, the Regional Economic Development Officer of the Outaouais Regional Community Economic Development and Employability Committee (CEDEC) - a federal government

organization committed to enhancing the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking communities. These meetings began in December 1999 and had been held periodically through February 2000.

At this point, many folks were starting to slowly look at ways of opening up access to the Mont O'Brien area in order to establish something in the region that would benefit all of the community.

These discussions were quickly accelerated when it was discovered that the Mont O'Brien area was part of the Ministry of Natural Resources' "Five-Year Forestry Management Plan" which meant that the area was scheduled to be logged between 2000-2005 according to the wishes of large logging companies whose Quebec offices were at least an hour away from Danford Lake.

A group of residents quickly formed themselves into a Steering Committee for the future Mont O'Brien Association and they set to work during the summer of 2000 acquiring the Letters of Patent for the Association, communicating with the Ministry of Natural Resources and providing input to its "Forestry Management Plan" as well as meeting with Bowater and Louisiana-Pacific Canada, two of the logging companies with an interest in the region. The group also worked to ensure that residents had the opportunity to have a say into what has come to be known as the future Parc Mont O'Brien Project. The area was mapped out and a number of local government employees were given tours of the region.

e. Formation of the Mont O'Brien Association

The Mont O'Brien Association was officially formed in December 2000 and its mandate is to:

- Maintain the wilderness environment of the Mont O'Brien area by protecting the numbers and varieties of its flora and fauna, and
- Provide educational opportunities and recreational access to the forest, lake, rivers and mountains.

f. Who's a Part of the Mont O'Brien Association

A seven-member Board of Directors presently heads up the Mont O'Brien Association and this group meets on a regular basis. Everyone in the community is always welcome at these meetings in order to provide input into the Parc's development process.

As of the middle of August 2001, the Association has approximately 140 family memberships.

II. External Partners

The success of the Parc Mont O'Brien Project so far has been the result of the hard work of a number of local Association volunteers plus the contributions of several other organizations, including:

a) Outaouais Regional CEDEC

- Tina Michaud, the Regional Economic Development Officer has provided invaluable support and contacts

b) MRC Pontiac staff members

- Philippe Vlasiu, Forestry Engineer and Pierre Duchesne, Land Planner, have both been extremely helpful in providing information, guidance and advice

c) CLD

- Jean-Pierre Ledoux, Executive Director, has provided expert guidance and advice

d) Fort Coulogne office of the Ministry of Natural Resources - Lands

- Bernard Carrière, Unit Head, has provided invaluable support, information and guidance regarding the usage rules and possibilities for Crown Land

e) Fort Coulogne office of the Ministry of Natural Resources - Forests

- Pierre Lapointe, Lisabeth Morin and Marco Trudel have demonstrated great patience and support in guiding us through the public consultation process of the MRN's "Five-Year Forestry Management Plan"

f) Hull office of the Ministry of Natural Resources -Forests

- Catherine Rooney joined us for the July 3rd site visit into the Mont O'Brien region with representatives from Bowater and Louisiana Pacific

g) Gilles Parent - Administration & Personnel 2000

- has provided invaluable information and support during the Association's registration process, the creation of our General By-laws and the organization and holding of our first founding meeting and election of our Board of Directors

h) Regroupement des Organismes Communautaires du Pontiac

- the Mont O'Brien Association is now a member of the Regroupement

i) Outaouais Alliance

- has provided important translation assistance

j) University of Ottawa's Department of Leisure Studies

- offered the possibility of the adding the future Parc Mont O'Brien to some of the Department's courses as student projects

- recently retired Director, Jean-Claude Pageot, has provided the Association with contact information for Algonquin Park's former chief biologist Dan Strickland and his wife Madeleine, former head of the Friends of Algonquin Park and may be able to introduce us to the Director of Gatineau Park

k) Municipality of Allevyn-and-Cawood

- has been absolutely instrumental in providing both human and financial support

l) Parc Miljour Estates, a building lot development project

- which lies just north of the Mont O'Brien area, has generously agreed to provide the Association and its members with an easy route into the region

m) GeoConnection's Sustainable Communities' Initiative - a Natural Resources Canada partnership with other federal government departments

- initial, exploratory discussions held

n) HRDC - Youth Employment Strategy

- Anie Barnes, Employment Service Agent, is interested in organizing the funding and hiring of a youth coordinator for disadvantaged youth (aged 18-29) to work in the Mont O'Brien region

o) Other potentially interested folks: Louise Donaldson of SADC, Patrick Charbonneau of the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CED)

- both of these organizations have expressed an interest in our project to Tina Michaud

III. Summary of Accomplishments: Highlights

April 2000

- establishment of the Mont O'Brien Association Steering Committee in order to register the Association

May - August 2000

- 70% of existing trails mapped out with a GPS

July-August 2000

- community petition circulated and 270 signatures of support collected

August 2000

- community meeting saw resounding agreement that a nature park, to be used for recreational and educational purposes, should be developed in the Mont O'Brien region
- a request to reserve the land (9500 acres) was given to Bernard Carrière, MRN

September 2000

- local CLD and MRC staff introduced to the Mont O'Brien region

October 2000

- two meetings held with Bernard Carrière, MRN-Lands in order to explore existing park models in order to determine which one most feasible, i.e. regional park vs. inhabited forest vs. a municipal park;
- Bernard also prepared a Land Utilisation Report which indicated present claims and leases on the land
- Letters of Patent for the Mont O'Brien Association received from the IGIF

November 2000

- Agreement signed between the Association and Bowater Canada for Year 1 of the MRN's "Five-Year Forestry Management Plan"

December 2000

- founding meeting of the Mont O'Brien Association held and its first Board of Directors were elected

January 2001

- Bowater carried out its agreed-upon cuts for Year 1 of the MRN's "Five-Year Forestry Management Plan"

February 2001

- letter sent out to all private landowners whose property borders the Mont O'Brien region

March 2001

- signaled interest in participating in Genivar Consulting Group's study of West Quebec's trail infrastructure

✓
March 2001 - present

- initial discussions held with the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Ottawa Chapter regarding the future Mont O'Brien Observatory; future presentation will be made to their Executive Committee and their membership

April 2001-present

- Parc Miljour Estates generously provided the Association and the future Parc with a Right-of-Way through their land and into the Mont O'Brien region; in excess of 800 volunteer hours have been spent so far in the construction of the road; more than 15 men from the extended community have donated their time and their resources, including chainsaws, bulldozers, dump trucks and other heavy machinery

DN
May 2001-present

- permission sought and acquired from the MRN- Lands and Forests to improve our access road through Crown Land

July 2001

- Board of Directors' insurance organized and acquired

August 2001

- Agreement signed between the Association, Bowater Canada and Louisiana-Pacific Canada for Year 2 of the MRN's "Five-Year Forestry Management Plan"
- first group hikes held, during the Municipality's 125th Anniversary Celebrations

September 2001

- Mont O'Brien web pages on Danford Lake village site at <http://www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca> (coming soon)

October 2001

- projected opening of the Association's access road into the Mont O'Brien region

December 2001

- Association's first AGM will be held

IV. Publicity and Promotion

- ◆ Shawville Equity article, August 9, 2000
- ◆ *Farm & Forest in the Valley* interview on CHIP 101.7 FM in Fort Coulonge
- ◆ Tourisme Pontiac Tourism (TPT), President's Report for 2000
- ◆ *Annual Report, 2000-2001* of The National Human Resources Development Committee for the English Linguistic Minority
- ◆ Outaouais Alliance's Newsletter article, May 2001
- ◆ West Quebec Post article, May 22, 2001
- ◆ Shawville Equity article, August 8, 2001, concerning the Association's involvement in the Municipality's 125th Anniversary celebrations
- ◆ will be part of the September 29, 2001 insert for the Year of the Volunteer in La Presse and the Montreal Gazette

V. Financial Assistance

The Mont O'Brien Association has actually been able to make quite a bit of progress with only a small amount of money. This situation, logically, will not continue for much longer.

The Association's revenue stream has been made up of the following sources over the past year:

- Réjean Lafrenière, MNA, provided \$1000, through the Municipality, to the Mont O'Brien Association
- Municipality of Allevyn-and-Cawood gave a \$2000 grant
- \$586 in donations from individuals, including one anonymous donation of \$500, have been received
- a joint t-shirt fund-raising initiative with the Municipality's 125th Anniversary Committee successfully undertaken
- 140+ \$5.00 family memberships sold so far

VI. Future Plans

1. Parc site plan - should attempt to acquire some expert assistance regarding:
 - a) Lac O'Brien - location of beach area, parking, picnic spots, washroom facilities
 - b) Mont O'Brien Observatory - location and building specifications
 - c) Mont O'Brien Lookout spots - best spot to put a road up to the top/lookout spots/observatory
 - d) Hiking, walking and ATV trails - need an environmentally responsible layout
2. Development of a business plan or appropriate document, if and when applicable
 - a) in March 2001 Jean-Pierre Ledoux, Executive Director of the CLD, advised us to create a business plan which 1) lays out our vision of where we want to be in 20 years and 2) divides our development plan into Years; the Board will attempt to adopt these two recommendations into this present document over the coming month
3. Continue on with the flagging and mapping of existing trails
 - a) the trails off of Gibson Road need to be flagged
 - b) the start of all trails off of Gibson Road and Lac O'Brien Trail should be marked with a reflector on a tree and should be named
4. Should attempt to acquire a "Recro-touristique" designation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and therefore need a certain kms of trails
5. Need to complete our existing flora and fauna list (see Appendix 1)
 - a) investigate the possibility of engaging a biologist to assist with establishment of interpretation trails and identification of flora and fauna
6. Send out letter to local municipalities and other organizations
7. If a Regional Park model is not to be followed, we must discover the best route to acquire the use? / rights? / ownership? of this piece of Crown Land
 - a) at the moment, know that the MRN is allowed to lease land (for 1% of the land's market value to non-profit organizations) or can sell land (land appraisal needed) or authorize use of land (to build roads and or trails and to use them for members or general public use)
 - b) however, parks are not treated the same way and in this case the MRN does not sell land when a park is created, instead the management of the land is delegated and at this point, regional parks are created only by MRC
 - c) need to explore the possibility of a municipal park

8. Future employee

- a) the Board of Directors of the Mont O'Brien Association believes that these planning and organizational stages would be an excellent opportunity (either full or part-time) for a new recreation or leisure studies graduate or business graduate from the area
- b) an office would be available in the Municipal Hall of Alleyn and Cawood

VII. APPENDIX 1:

FLORA AND FAUNA INHABITANTS

Big snapper turtle	White Pine
Wood turtle	Oak
Golden eagle	Poplar
White-tailed deer	White Birch
Black bear	Balsam
Moose	Spruce
Marten	Black Cherry
Weasels	Red Maple
Beaver	Sugar Maple
Wolves	Moosewood
Birds	
Watersnake	
Blacksnake	
Frogs	
Fish	
Deerflies	
Mosquitoes	
Blackflies	
Skunk	
Great Blue Herons	
Deer mice	
Tortoises	

VIII. APPENDIX 2:

RESULTS OF COMMUNITY BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS: IDEAS FOR PARC MONT O'BRIEN

YEAR 1:

Recreational	Educational / Outside Partnerships	Local Business Opportunities
<p><i>In Spring and Summer</i></p> <p>Around Mont O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Hiking and walking trails ❖ Interpretation trails ❖ Picnic spots ❖ Bird-watching ❖ 4x4 trails - one to Ladysmith <p>On top of Mont O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Look-out spots ❖ Hiking trails <p>@ Lac O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Swimming ❖ Canoeing ❖ Kayaking ❖ Fishing (? stocking needed) <p><i>In Fall</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Hunting (two weeks only) <p><i>In Winter</i></p> <p>Around Mont O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Cross-country skiing ❖ Snowshoeing ❖ Snowmobiling <p>@ Lac O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Skating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Scout and Girl Guide camping and daytrips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trail clearing and maintenance ❖ Shelter/cabin construction ❖ Parc gift shop (in Parc and in village for maps, t-shirts etc.) ❖ Artisan shop (in village) ❖ Bakery (in village) ❖ Snack bar ❖ Bed & Breakfast ❖ Additional visitors for existing businesses, Miljour Store and Danford Lake Hotel

YEAR 2 and future years :

Recreational	Educational / Outside Partnerships	Business Opportunities
<p>Around Mont O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Continued trail development (hiking, interpretation, 4x4) ❖ Horse-back riding trails ❖ Mountain biking ❖ Camping ❖ Rock-climbing <p>On top of Mont O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Accessible look-out spots with road up to top ❖ Astronomy Observatory - operated by solar/wind energy ❖ Lookout Tower <p>@ Lac O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Canoeing and kayaking rentals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Environmental centre for local schools ❖ Youth camp ❖ Medicinal herb and plant interpretation ❖ Corporate retreat ❖ Astronomy Observatory at the top (local groups and universities) ❖ Beaver habitat interpretation centre (with local biologists and universities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Horseback riding ❖ Canoe and kayak rentals ❖ Construction of environmental centre for local schools ❖ Construction of youth camp area ❖ Camping area caretaker