

ONTARIO



PARKS

# Bigwind Lake

Interim Management Statement



Ontario

2007

## APPROVAL STATEMENT

I am pleased to approve this Interim Management Statement for Bigwind Lake Provincial Park. The natural features and land base of Bigwind Lake contribute to the natural heritage protection, heritage appreciation, outdoor recreation, and tourism in the area. Bigwind Lake Provincial Park was originally regulated under the *Provincial Parks Act* in 1985 (O. Reg. 279/85 Schedule 184). In 1998, two road allowances were added under O.Reg. 167/98. The park is managed as a natural environment class park.

This Interim Management Statement provides direction for the protection and management of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park.



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Brian Pfrimmer  
Zone Manager  
Central Zone, Ontario Parks

August 30.07

Date

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is located in the geographic township of Oakley, Town of Bracebridge, in the District Municipality of Muskoka (Figure 1). The park is approximately 20 kilometres east of the town of Bracebridge, and is approximately 1,967 hectares in size. Bigwind Lake was originally regulated as a natural environment class park in 1985, under R.R.O. 950, Reg. 279/85, s.184. In 1998 the park was re-regulated under Ontario Regulation No. 167/98 to address two road allowances that were removed from the park.

This non-operating park is situated in Ecodistrict 5E-8, and contains biological features of provincial significance and representation of locally significant geological features. The rugged landscape is dominated by disturbed, late successional deciduous and mixed forest, with a diverse complex of wetlands flowing through valleylands and depressions. The middle to late Precambrian bedrock is part of the Central Gneiss Belt of the Grenville Province.

This Interim Management Statement (IMS) will provide direction to ensure custodial management of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park until a comprehensive Park Management Plan has been prepared. Any significant decisions regarding resource stewardship, development, operations, and permitted uses, will require a further planning process by Ontario Parks with public consultation.

Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is managed as part of the Arrowhead cluster of parks, under the jurisdiction of the Park Superintendent of Arrowhead Provincial Park.

## 2.0 CLASSIFICATION

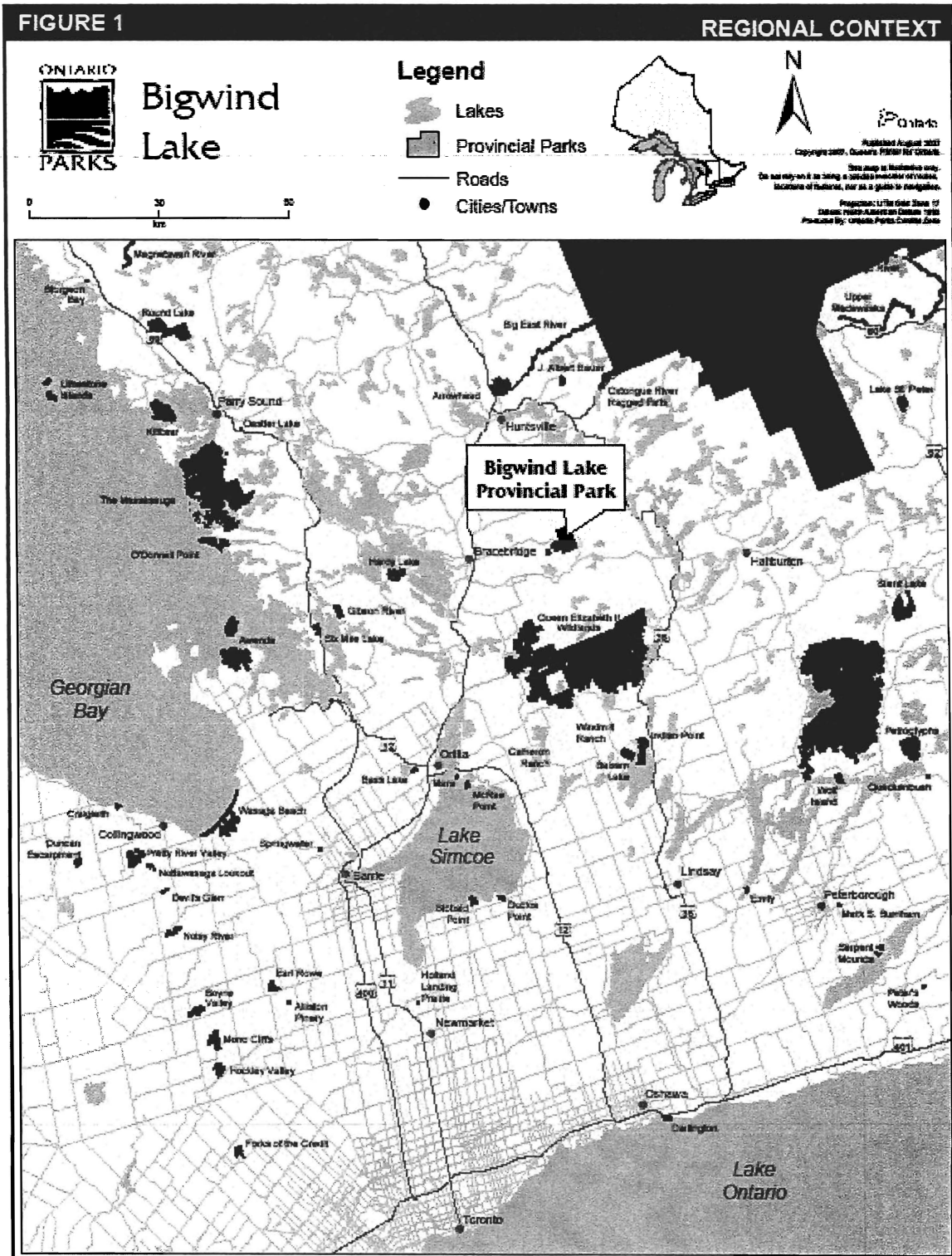
Through park classification, Ontario's provincial parks are organized into broad categories, each of which has particular purposes and characteristics.

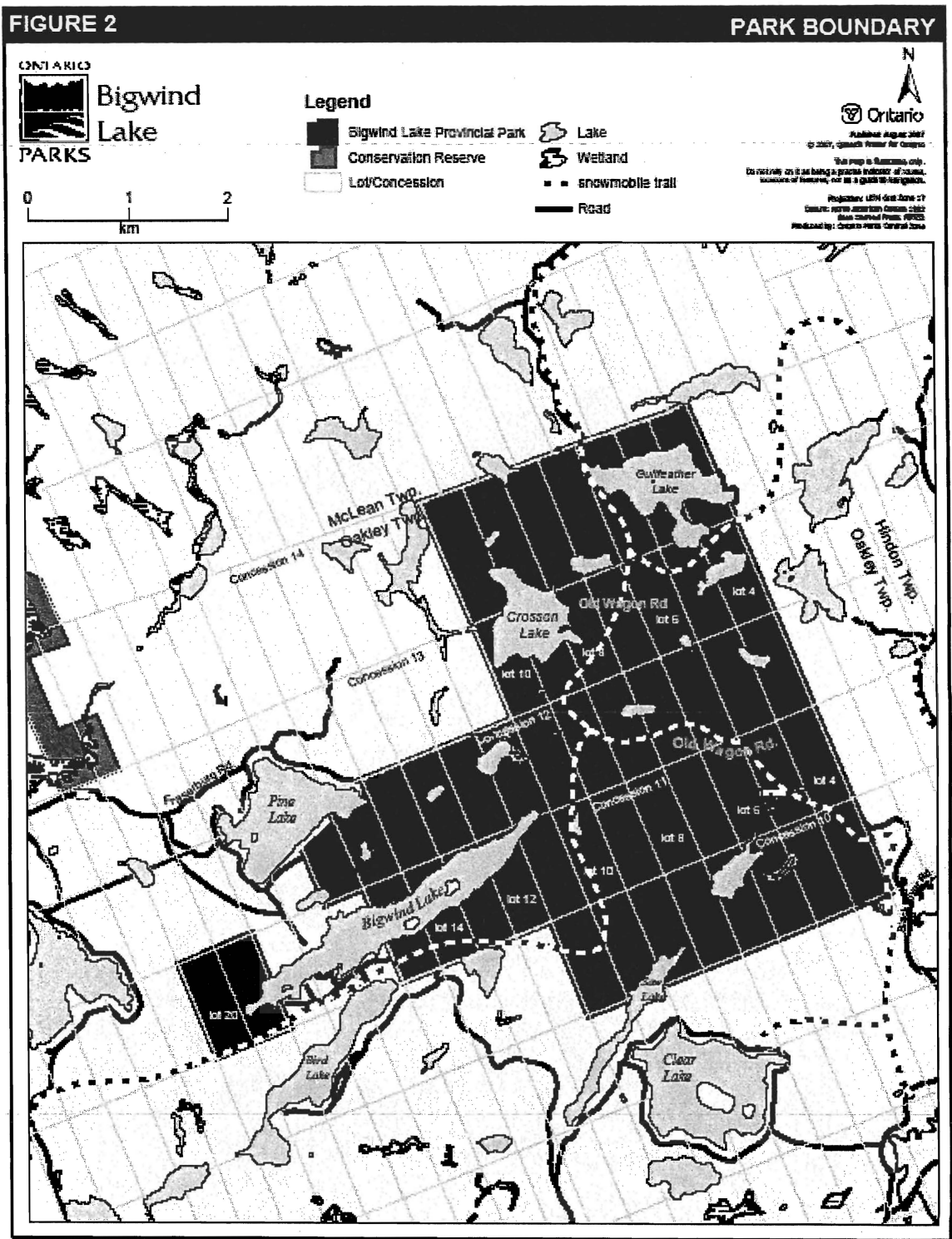
Bigwind Lake is a natural environment class park. The emphasis of natural environment parks is on providing high quality outdoor recreational and educational experiences in an attractive outdoor setting. This non-operating park is open for day-use only, and has no maintained public access or other facilities for visitors. Camping is not permitted.

## 3.0 OBJECTIVES

Management of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park will be consistent with the four objectives for provincial parks, as described in the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* (effective September 4, 2007):

1. To permanently protect representative ecosystems, biodiversity and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage and to manage these areas to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained.
2. To provide opportunities for ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities and encourage associated economic benefits.
3. To provide opportunities for residents of Ontario and visitors to increase their knowledge and appreciation of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage.
4. To facilitate scientific research and to provide points of reference to support monitoring of eco-logical change on the broader landscape.





## 4.0 MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

Park management will follow direction from:

- *Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies* and updates;
- *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*;
- *Ontario Crown Land Use Policy Atlas* and amendments; and the
- *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*, and regulations (effective September 4, 2007).

In addressing custodial management to protect park features and values and ensure public health and safety, Ontario Parks may decommission existing facilities while ensuring that policy and environmental assessment requirements are implemented.

This Interim Management Statement will provide direction for the custodial management of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park until a comprehensive management plan is prepared. The park is under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Arrowhead Provincial Park

### 4.1 Environmental Assessment

As part of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks is a public sector agency subject to the *Environmental Assessment Act*. Management of this natural environment park will be carried out in accordance with legislation, policies and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves*.

## 5.0 ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Nothing in this plan shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for the existing Aboriginal or treaty rights of the Aboriginal people of Canada as recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

There are no known land claims at Bigwind Lake Provincial Park.

## 6.0 BOUNDARY

The boundary of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is described in Ontario Regulation No. 167/98. The 1,967 hectare park is located in the geographic township of Oakley, in the District Municipality of Muskoka, and is approximately 20 km east of the town of Bracebridge (Figure 2). The park occupies Lots 4-8 and 11, and part of Lots 9 and 10, Concession X, Lots 4-10 and part of Lots 11-15, 19 and 20, Concession XI, Lots 4-10, 13 and 14 and part of Lots 11, 12, 15 and 16, Concession XII, Lots 4-10, Concession XIII, and Lots 4-7 and 10, and part of Lots 8 and 9, Concession XIV.

## 7.0 ZONING

Park zoning further refines the range of management activities occurring within a park and defines geographic areas for various uses and activities. Although designated as a Natural environment class park, zoning in Bigwind Lake Provincial Park has not been determined.

Zoning for Bigwind Lake Provincial Park will be determined through future development of a Park Management Plan.



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## 8.0 PARK FEATURES AND VALUES

### 8.1 Life Sciences

Bigwind Lake is situated in Ecodistrict 5E-8, and supports good representative examples of forest and wetland habitat. The park is dominated by late successional (100-130 year old) deciduous and mixed forest (sugar maple, yellow birch, American beech, eastern hemlock, eastern white cedar) over rugged, bedrock controlled substrates.

Wetlands in the park exhibit a great diversity of composition and structure. Water flow rates are often slow and beaver-influenced with severely interrupted drainage patterns. Wetland habitat types include poor fens, wet meadows, thicket swamps, and occasional Black Spruce dominated kettle bogs. Lakes in the park are cool, deep and oligotrophic, with narrow sand/gravel or peaty emergent shores (Brunton 1993).

The most recent detailed wildlife inventory was completed in 1979 (Simpson 1979). Wildlife species that were found in the park are typical of the region and included black bear, snowshoe hare, red fox, white-tailed deer, and beaver. Waterfowl species including common loon and common merganser were observed on the lakes. A variety of wetland and forest bird species were also identified in the park, including common yellowthroats, yellow warblers, red-eyed vireos and a variety of other wood warblers. A deer yard was found just west of Bigwind Lake. A small breeding colony of American herring gulls was located on an island in the middle of Gullfeather Lake and a small heronry, composed of seven great blue heron nests, was reported northeast of Bigwind Lake.

There are some more recent MNR reports which indicate the presence of red-shouldered hawk nests in the park and to the south-west of the park. An active heronry has been located to the south-west of the park boundary, west of Clear Lake, with 17 nests found in the summer of 2007.

### 8.2 Earth Sciences

Earth science features of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park are considered locally significant, and include representation of gneisses of the Opeongo Domain of the Algonquin terrain (Eaton, 1992). These gneisses have been described as granitized, banded, pink and grey rock (Lawrence 1973).

The area is dominated by low, rounded hills of bedrock cut by one fault and numerous joint planes which are frequently topographically expressed as valleys. Indications of glacial action include glacial polish and depositional features such as the bouldery-sandy till which thinly mantles the hills. Boulder trains are found at the mouths of the valleys and a small area of outwash deposits is found at the south end of the park (Lawrence 1973).

### 8.3 Cultural Features

A reconnaissance inventory of cultural resources was conducted for Bigwind Lake Provincial Park, which included archaeological sites, historical use of artefacts and historical landscapes (Stevens 1973). Evidence of earlier human activity includes remnant logging dams, camps, roads, and a saw mill. All are evidence of the intense logging that once took place here.

## 9.0 STEWARDSHIP POLICIES

An adaptive management approach will be applied to resource management activities within Bigwind Lake Provincial Park. Adaptive management allows for frequent modification of management strategies in response to monitoring and analysis of the results of past actions and experiences.

## **9.1 Industrial / Commercial Uses**

The following uses are not permitted in Bigwind Lake Provincial Park:

- Commercial forestry;
- Prospecting, staking mining claims, developing mineral interests, working mines;
- Extraction of sand, gravel, topsoil or peat;
- Commercial hydroelectric power development;
- Fuel wood cutting;
- Timber salvage and sunken log retrieval; and/or
- Commercial harvesting of non-timber forest products (e.g. Wild Rice, Canada Yew, etc.).

## **9.2 Land Management**

### **9.2.1 Access and Crossings**

Access to the park is via Highway 118 east from Bracebridge, off of Bird Lake Road or Black River Road. Access is also possible from the end of Fraserburg Road off of Highway 11.

The Park is bisected from north to south by an unmaintained forest access road (Old Wagon Road) from Kawpakwakog River, east of Crosson Lake, to a crossing on Clear Creek. The status and condition of the road will be reviewed during management planning. There is one unmaintained access point on North Lake and another on Gullfeather Lake.

### **9.2.2 Land Use**

There are no hydro transmission lines or pipelines in Bigwind Lake Provincial Park. A single Land Use Permit (LUP) has been issued within the park for a hunt camp, located on Lot 13, Concession XI (LUP-Oakley-003). Provincial Park policy requires that all hunt and recreational camps be phased out by December 31, 2009. A registered trap line covers much of the park area, and a trappers cabin is located on Lot 5, Concession XIII. The park is also located within a Bear Management Area, however no hunting is permitted in the park.

An authorized snowmobile trail runs from north to south along the forest access road, and extends to two side trails which exit the park to the south-west and north-east (Figure 2). Winter use of this trail, as part of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' Trans Ontario Provincial (TOP) trail network, will be allowed to continue without expansion until a park management plan is prepared for the park.

There are no authorized boat caches within this provincial park. Boats are not permitted to be left unattended in the park without written permission of the Park Superintendent.

No land disposition (such as roads) for the private use of individuals or corporations will be permitted.

### **9.2.3 Adjacent Land Management**

Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is surrounded by a combination of crown and patented land. Cottage lots abut the park on Bigwind, Pine and Bird Lakes, and large areas of patented land are found to the south and east. Private land is not included within the park boundary and as such park policy does not apply to these areas.

To the east and north of the park, land is largely in public ownership and is part of the French Severn Forest Management Unit. The Black River Enhanced Management Area (E-65r-1) runs past the south-east corner of the park. This riverine area is managed by the MNR to protect

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recreational and natural values along the river, while permitting resource uses such as forest management. Much of the remainder of Crown land falls within the Parry Sound District Multiple Resource Management Area (G362).

### **9.3 Water Management**

Sustaining high quality water resources is fundamental to the protection of park and adjacent land features and values. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment enforces applicable legislation and regulations pertaining to water quality.

Two Ministry of Environment (MOE) weirs are situated at the inlet and outlet of Crosson Lake. The condition and status of these structures will be monitored, and they will be maintained or removed as required.

### **9.4 Non-Native and Invasive Species**

Where possible, actions will be taken to eliminate or reduce the threat of invasive non-native species which may be affecting the diversity of naturally occurring populations. Where non-native species are already established and threaten natural or cultural values, a program of control may be undertaken if feasible and practical. Non-native species are species not native to Ontario or are species native to Ontario but not to the park. Non-native species will not be deliberately introduced. Invasive species are species that are likely to spread and negatively affect native ecosystems.

### **9.5 Forest Fire Management**

Fire management in Ontario is based upon a division of the province by management objectives, land use, fire load, and forest ecology. Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is located within the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Fire Management Zone. In accordance with existing provincial park policy and the *Forest Fire Management Strategy for Ontario*, forest fire protection will be carried out in Bigwind Lake Provincial Park as on surrounding lands. The Ministry of Natural Resources is the first response for any fire emergency within the park.

Whenever feasible, techniques which do not cause undue damage to the landscape (i.e. limiting the use of heavy equipment and/or limiting the number of trees felled during response efforts) will be implemented.

### **9.6 Vegetation**

Insects and diseases may be managed when the aesthetic, cultural, and/or natural features and values of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park are threatened. Control will follow guidelines established by the Ontario Ministries of the Environment and of Natural Resources. Whenever possible, biological controls will be given preference over the use of chemicals.

### **9.7 Wildlife**

Hunting is not permitted in Bigwind Lake Provincial Park.

The park is located within a licensed Bear Management Area (BMA) (BR53-02). Existing authorized BMA licenses may be renewed or transferred through the Bracebridge MNR Area Office. Renewal and transfer of those portions of the BMA which fall within the park will be addressed through park management planning. No new BMA licenses will be issued for the area within the park. Hunting is not permitted in the portion of the BMA which falls within the park.

A registered trap line also covers much of the park area (BR-06). The trapper's cabin is located on the shore of Gullfeather Lake on Lot 5, Concession XIII. Any improvements, maintenance or removal of the cabin will be subject to *A Class Environmental Assessment for Parks and*

*Conservation Reserves* (2005). Existing commercial fur harvesting will continue indefinitely in the park. If a commercial license is revoked or surrendered, all portions of the registered trap line within the park will be rescinded from the trap line's legal description.

From time to time, animals may pose a threat to public safety, or to park facilities (e.g. flooding caused by beaver dams). Wildlife management may be undertaken by the Park Superintendent or other authorized persons on an "as required" basis in order to protect the health and safety of park visitors and park staff, or to protect park facilities. The removal of nuisance animals will be undertaken only by, or under the supervision of the Park Superintendent.

## **9.8 Fisheries**

Sport fishing is permitted within Bigwind Lake Provincial Park. Any sport fishing activity is governed by the legislation and regulations in the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (1997)*, as well as the *Federal Fisheries Act (1985)*. The *Recreational Fishing Regulations Summary* contains details regarding general regulations and exceptions to these regulations for the area of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park.

Singh (1973) found 11 species of fish in the lakes including brook trout, rainbow trout, lake trout, yellow perch, white sucker, golden shiner, creek chub, bluntnose minnow, fat-head minnow, northern redbelly fish and brown bullhead. Smallmouth bass were found in Gullfeather Lake in 2005.

Crosson Lake has been stocked by the MNR with rainbow trout since 1981. Walleye (stocked in 1939 and 1942), brook trout (1964, 1966, 1983) and lake trout (1972) are no longer stocked and are no longer present in any abundance. A netting assessment by researchers from Laurentian University in 2005 found rainbow trout (1 fish), brook trout (2), white sucker (3), brown bullhead (7), pumpkinseed (24), largemouth bass (24) and yellow perch (39).

Bigwind Lake is managed by the MNR as a 'put-grow-take' lake for lake trout, and has been regularly stocked with that species by the MNR since 1975. Stocking of brook trout (1989 and 1991) and rainbow trout (1979-1985) has happened historically, but is no longer occurring. A netting assessment for Bigwind, also by Laurentian University in 2005, found brook trout (6), lake trout (39), white sucker (2), bluntnose minnow (36), brown bullhead (2), pumpkinseed (6), largemouth bass (213) and yellow perch (386). The largemouth bass found in both lakes are non-native and are believed to have been introduced intentionally but without authorization.

There is one bait harvest area registered for the park (PS-246). Existing commercial bait fishing will continue indefinitely, subject to sustainable resource management and local management needs as well as conditions identified in provincial park and fisheries management plans. New operations will not be permitted.

## **9.9 Cultural Resources**

As identified in Section 8.3, there are a few areas of potential cultural/historical significance related to the logging history of the region. These include remnant logging dams, camps, roads, and a saw mill. Any necessary management of these sites will be determined through the future development of a Park Management Plan.

## 9.10 Research

Scientific research by qualified individuals contributing to the knowledge of natural and cultural history and to environmental management will be encouraged. All research will be conducted by, or authorized by, Ontario Parks. Research projects will be administered through park policy directive and requires a research permit. Research must also meet all requirements under applicable provincial and federal legislation. Approved research and monitoring activities must be consistent with *Ontario Parks' Research and Information Strategy (1997)*. The collection of fossils, rocks, minerals, archaeological/cultural artefacts, plants, seeds and bioprospecting is permitted by research permit and/or scientific collector permit only.

Temporary facilities in support of approved research and monitoring activities may be considered. Approved research activities and facilities will be compatible with protection values and/or recreational uses in the park, and will be subject to development and management policies associated with the park's classification unless special permission is given. Sites altered by research activities will be rehabilitated as closely to their previous condition as possible.

## 10.0 OPERATIONS POLICIES

### 10.1 Recreation Management

#### 10.1.1 *Motorized Recreation*

An authorized snowmobile trail runs from north to south along the forest access road, and extends to two side trails which exit the park to the south-west and north-east (Figure 2). Winter use of this trail, as part of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' Trans Ontario Provincial (TOP) trail network, will be allowed to continue without expansion until a park management plan is prepared for the park. The designated snowmobile club will be allowed to perform minor maintenance to authorized trails, in accordance with the requirements of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. Any major repairs to the trail, including stream/creek crossings will require approval from the Park Superintendent and must also adhere to *A Class Environmental Assessment for Parks and Conservation Reserves (2005)*.

Use of ATVs is prohibited in the park. Exemptions may be granted for specific circumstances, such as the operation and management of the trapper's trail, by permission of the Park Superintendent. Use of ATVs may be reviewed through future development of a Park Management Plan.

No trails are permitted without the authorization of the Park Superintendent.

The use of motorized vehicles may occasionally be used for park maintenance or monitoring under the authority of the Park Superintendent.

Aircraft landings are not permitted in the park.

#### 10.1.2 *Non-Motorized Recreation*

Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is a non-operating park, open for day-use only, and has no maintained public access or other facilities for visitors. Camping is not permitted. If there is an identified need, the development of trails or other recreational facilities may be considered during future development of the Park Management Plan.

#### 10.1.3 *Emerging Recreation Uses*

Adventure racing and physical geocaching is not permitted. Virtual geocaching may be considered as a recreation use subject to approval by the Park Superintendent (PM 11.03.4).

There are emerging recreation uses for which there is no or limited policy to deal with their management. In the interim, the Park Superintendent will use legislation, park policy and guidelines to manage emerging uses. The Park Superintendent will also work with the Bracebridge MNR Area Office to manage these emerging uses.

## **10.2 Heritage Education**

Basic literature and supporting information may be developed to describe Bigwind Lake Provincial Park in the context of Ontario's provincial parks and protected areas. Boundary limits, significant heritage features and permitted uses of the park may be included in park literature.

Prospective visitors to Bigwind Lake Provincial Park may be informed about the sensitivity and significance of this park through the Ontario Parks' website.

## **11.0 DEVELOPMENT**

Development in Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is currently limited to the existing unmaintained forest access road and access points, and the authorized snowmobile trail. Any new development of trails or facilities will be determined during the future development of a Park Management Plan.

In recent years, Ontario Parks has been approached by the Town of Bracebridge with a proposal to review the opportunity for development of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park as an operating park. In 2003 a report was prepared for the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Town of Bracebridge to determine the feasibility and costs of developing both camping and day-use facilities in the park. Further pursuit of this issue has been halted due to the lack of resources currently available for park development at this scale, and also due to concern about impacts to use at nearby operating parks. Future consideration for the development of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park as an operating park may be explored through the development of a Park Management Plan.

Infrastructure for commercial tourism does not exist within this provincial park. New commercial tourism facilities are not permitted within the provincial park.

Decisions regarding new development will comply with *A Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves* (2005). Development will be carried out in accordance with approved site plans, utilizing appropriate standards and in conformity with relevant legislation and policy.

## **12.0 INTERIM MANAGEMENT STATEMENT AMENDMENT AND REVIEW**

The park Interim Management Statement can be reviewed or amended to address changing issues or conditions. At ten year intervals, this Interim Management Statement will be assessed for the need for a review or amendment. A review may involve a reassessment of all or part of the plan, including classification and all resource management, operations and development policies. An amendment can be considered to address specific issues or needs. Any person may initiate an amendment process by submitting a proposed amendment, with an explanation of its purpose, to Ontario Parks, which will determine whether, and under what conditions, the amendment process should proceed.

### 13.0 REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX 1 ~ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name	Bigwind Lake Provincial Park (P368)
Classification	Natural Environment
Ecoregion/Ecodistrict	5E/5E-8
OMNR Administrative Region/District	Southern Region / Parry Sound District
Ontario Parks	Central Zone – Arrowhead P.P. cluster
Total Area (ha)	1967
Regulation Date & Number	1985 (O. Reg. 279/84 Schedule 124)
	1998 (O. Reg. 167/98)

### REPRESENTATION

#### EARTH SCIENCE

Earth science features of Bigwind Lake Provincial Park are considered locally significant, and include representation of gneisses of the Opeongo Domain of the Algonquin terrain (Eaton 1992). The area is dominated by low, rounded hills of bedrock cut by one fault and numerous joint planes which are frequently topographically expressed as valleys. Indications of glacial action include glacial polish and depositional features such as the bouldery-sandy till which thinly mantles the hills. Boulder trains are found at the mouths of the valleys and a small area of outwash deposits is found at the south end of the reserve (Lawrence 1973).

#### LIFE SCIENCE

Bigwind Lake Provincial Park supports good representative examples of forest and wetland habitat. The park is dominated by disturbed, late successional (100-130 year old) deciduous and mixed forest (sugar maple, yellow birch, American beech, eastern hemlock, eastern white cedar). Wetlands in the park exhibit a great diversity of composition and structure. Wetland habitat types include poor fens, wet meadows, thicket swamps, and occasional Black Spruce-dominated kettle bogs (Brunton 1993).

#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

A reconnaissance inventory of cultural resources was conducted for Bigwind Lake Provincial Park, which included archaeological sites, historical use or artefacts and historical landscapes (Stevens 1973). Evidence of earlier human activity includes remnant logging dams, camps, roads, and a saw mill. All are evidence of the intense logging that once took place here.

#### RECREATION & TOURISM

Bigwind Lake Provincial Park is a non-operating park, open for day-use only, and has no maintained public access or other facilities for visitors. Camping is not permitted. An authorized snowmobile trail runs through the centre of the park.

#### INVENTORIES

Survey Level	Earth Science	Life Science	Cultural	Recreational
Reconnaissance	Lawrence 1973	Simpson 1979	Stevens 1973	Required
Detailed	Required	Required	Required	Required