NURTURING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN NIAGARA PARKS

ACTION PLAN 2020-2030

Brock University

NIAGARA PARKS

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Table of Contents

Our Vision	1
Our Mission	2
Context	3
Strategic Goals and Objectives	4
Integration, Implementation, and Continuous Improvement	8

Our Vision

To be an innovative example of sustainability as the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River corridor.

Our Mission

The Niagara Parks Commission has been the entrusted steward of the area surrounding Niagara Falls since 1885. Stewardship has always been foundational to the Niagara Parks Commission, and it endures as a present and future imperative.

Context

The Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) is committed to being an international leader in environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship is an essential feature of our internationally recognized "stewardship story", and is a critical part of our efforts to navigate climate change.

The Niagara Parks Commission's *Strategic Plan 2018-2028* builds upon past values and sets forth guiding directions for the future of Niagara Parks. Stewardship is a cornerstone of the plan, and has been an enduring core value of the NPC since its inception.

The strategic plan for environmental stewardship was developed in partnership with Brock University, and sets forth the goals and objectives for environmental stewardship within Niagara Parks for the next decade.

Goals & Objectives

GOAL 1. STEWARDSHIP PLANNING STRATEGY

Strategically incorporate environmental stewardship in Niagara Parks environmental management, activities, operations, and events, with an emphasis on preserving and restoring the unique character of ecosystems and the Niagara Parkway.

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL, NPC WILL:

1.1. Develop a comprehensive, environmentally sustainable landscape strategy to link the landscapes of the river, gorge and Park, and develop a system for ensuring that these standards are included in all NPC strategies and plans going forward.

1.2 Create a plan to develop landscape features (e.g., recreational trails, scenic outlooks, etc.) and tourism expansions that that are environmentally sustainable, enhance the visitor experience (e.g., provide enhanced river views), and that are accessible.

1.3. Develop and implement an interpretive strategy along Niagara Parks' 56km corridor that highlights environmental stewardship efforts and the unique ecosystem of the parks.

1.4. Incorporate landscape design features that foster a "sense of place".

1.5. Identify the tradeoff between benefits and negative impacts of restoration efforts (e.g. active restoration versus 'do nothing').

Goals & Objectives

GOAL 2. THE EXPERIENCE

Foster environmental stewardship in Niagara Parks which enriches visitor experiences, promotes awareness, and encourages appreciation.

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL, NPC WILL:

2.1. Grow the breadth and depth of environmental education programming and nature interpretation by creating a strategy to foster opportunities for education, interaction, and appreciation, and by promoting NPC's environmental stewardship role.

2.2. Develop a comprehensive, multidimensional strategy for showcasing stewardship efforts (past and present), enhancing internal and external outreach regarding environmental stewardship initiatives to both NPC staff and local, provincial, national, and international guests (frequent and infrequent), thereby increasing opportunities for engagement.

Goals & Objectives

GOAL 3. INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Develop the expertise and capacity to be an international leader in environmental stewardship innovation and climate change adaptation.

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL, NPC WILL:

3.1. Advance understanding of Niagara Parks as a social-ecological system by becoming a leader in demonstrating and communicating the diversity of ecology, geology, and vegetation of NPC.

3.2. Develop strategic partnerships and secure resources for environmental stewardship.

3.3. Work towards becoming ISO 14001 certified.

Goals & Objectives

GOAL 4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitor and evaluate environmental stewardship efforts to promote learning, adaptation, and continuous improvement.

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL, NPC WILL:

4.1. Develop a framework for monitoring and evaluation with measurable key performance indicators to demonstrate effective achievement of actions (tactics) and objectives.

4.2. Conduct annual monitoring and periodic evaluation in a systematic manner using both internal and external resources to inform management and decision-making.

4.3. Conduct Gap analyses based on monitoring data to identify potential new projects/project sites.

Integration, Implementation, & Continuous Improvement

Environmental stewardship has been a foundational and enduring priority of NPC since 1885. Our goals and objectives for environmental stewardship from 2019-2029 are articulated in this strategic plan. Integrating them with existing and ongoing efforts within and beyond NPC is essential.

Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are central to realizing the goals and objectives set out in this strategic plan. An accompanying framework will operationalize the goals and objectives by prioritizing actions, setting timelines for completion, and detailing resource requirements.

The framework will connect implementation with measurement of performance by carefully monitoring actions on an annual basis, and evaluating effectiveness and impact every five years. Continuous improvement is ensured through iterative cycles of reflection and refinement. Together, this strategic plan and the framework will ensure that NPC is an international leader in environmental stewardship.