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Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2017



DECEMBER 2017

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Foreword



Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world.

This vast network of national parks, historic sites, and marine conservation areas represent the very best that Canada has to offer and tell stories of who we are, including the history, cultures and contributions of Indigenous peoples.

Management plans are key accountability documents for the management of heritage places. They are developed through extensive consultation and articulate a long-term vision, set strategic management direction and establish objectives for Parks Canada places.

This management plan represents Parks Canada's continued commitment to protect and present Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site for the benefit of present and future generations.

The input from many dedicated individuals and organizations, including Indigenous peoples, local and regional residents, visitors and stakeholders has been invaluable in helping shape this plan.

Parks Canada will report on progress toward achieving the objectives for Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site and review this management plan every ten years, or sooner if required.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this management plan for their contributions and their commitment to the future of this national treasure. I am pleased to approve the present Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site Management Plan.

Daniel Watson
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada

Recommendations

Recommended by:

Daniel Watson
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada

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Executive Summary

Located in the estuary of the St. Lawrence River 50 km from Quebec City, (map 1, p.2), Grosse Île was used as a quarantine station from 1832 to 1937. At the time, it was the main point of entry for immigrants to Canada. It was the theatre for a major human drama in 1847 when thousands of Irish succumbed to typhoid. For more than a century, the employees of the quarantine station tried to protect Canadians from epidemics by caring for sick immigrants.

The Grosse Île quarantine station was recognized as being of national historic significance in 1974 and has been managed since 1993 by Parks Canada. In 1996, the site will henceforth bear the name "*Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site*" and will reflect the important aspects of immigration in Canadian history.

Since the publication of the last management plan in 2001, a number of cultural resources of national historic significance have benefited from major conservation work. Special attention was focused on the restoration of a number of significant viewpoints listed in the commemorative integrity statement, thus contributing to the strengthening of the spirit of the site. During the same period, the reception infrastructure was improved. In addition, the opening to pedestrian traffic of the centre and eastern sectors of the island, the creation of two walking paths as well as access to additional historic buildings helped to improve the visit experience in addition to offering more flexibility to visitors.

This management plan will guide the management, operation and development of the site for the next ten years and will be based on the following three key strategies:

- 1) An authentic, evocative historic site focused on sustainable operations management
- 2) A key heritage destination for the region
- 3) An important, always accessible heritage site commemorating immigration.

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1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The *Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

Canadians, including citizens, elected officials and regional tourism stakeholders, as well as a number of national and international interest groups involved in the commemoration of the Irish tragedy of 1847, participated in the preparation of the management plan. The plan provides clear and strategic guidance to the management and operation of the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site and sets out the vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the management plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Map



2.0 Significance of Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site

In the Parks Canada network, Grosse Île is the only historic site that commemorates the arrival of immigrants in Canada and the Irish tragedy of 1847. Since 1993, this historic site has been a significant example of the Canadian tradition of welcoming immigrants. In addition, it has always been the object of a special attachment on the part of the Irish community because of its connection with the tragedy that occurred in the middle of the 19th century.

The commemorative objectives of the site are stated as follows:

- The Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site commemorates the importance of immigration to Canada, especially through the entry port of Québec from the early 19th century until the First World War.
- The commemoration of this site is also based on the role played by Grosse Île from 1832 to 1937 as a quarantine station for the port of Québec, for many years the main point of entry for immigrants to Canada.
- Grosse Île also commemorates the tragic experiences of Irish immigrants at this site, especially during the 1847 typhus epidemic.

Today, Grosse Île occupies a major place in the tourism offer of the Chaudière-Appalaches region. From a regional point of view, Grosse Île has been part of the cultural and social landscape for nearly two centuries. This site is a source of pride for the people who contributed over the years to the operation of the island, the reception of immigrants as well as the creation of the national historic site. Nationally, the island remains a significant site for thousands of Canadians whose parents or forebears crossed the Atlantic in search of a better future. To its Canadian clientele are added the Irish communities of Ireland, America and elsewhere for whom Grosse Île remains a symbolic place.

Importance of In-situ Cultural Resources

Cultural resources of national historic significance are evidence of the occupation of the island since 1832. Overall, the physiognomy and the space occupation of the island have changed very little since the time when the quarantine station was created. The three sectors where the various functions associated with the quarantine activity took place are still noticeable (map 2). They bear witness to the operating procedures introduced in the middle of the 19th century. The landscape of Grosse Île remains charged with authenticity and feeling. The presence of cemeteries, the architecture of the buildings, their arrangement and the relationship maintained with the river give the milieu an exceptional capacity for evocation of the past.

Today, the island includes thirty two buildings of national historic significance, a number of which have been the subject of restoration work. Beyond their architectural value, these buildings, based on their functions, strengthen the idea of a functional division on the south shore of the island: the hotels are in the same sector, the hospitals are in another sector, the employees' houses are in a third sector.

Most of the existing buildings were built over a period of thirty years beginning in 1892, a period that could be called the "golden age" of the station. Four other buildings erected before 1860 bear witness to the first decades of the station; that is, the era of major

epidemics. A number of buildings or facilities were also present on the island between 1832 and 1937. Burned, destroyed or demolished, these works make up one or more of the approximately nine hundred archaeological resources associated with the objectives of commemoration where one is likely to find remains under the ground in Grosse Île. Finally, several dozen objects testifying to the occupation of the island during the commemoration period are kept on the island.

Importance of Natural Resources

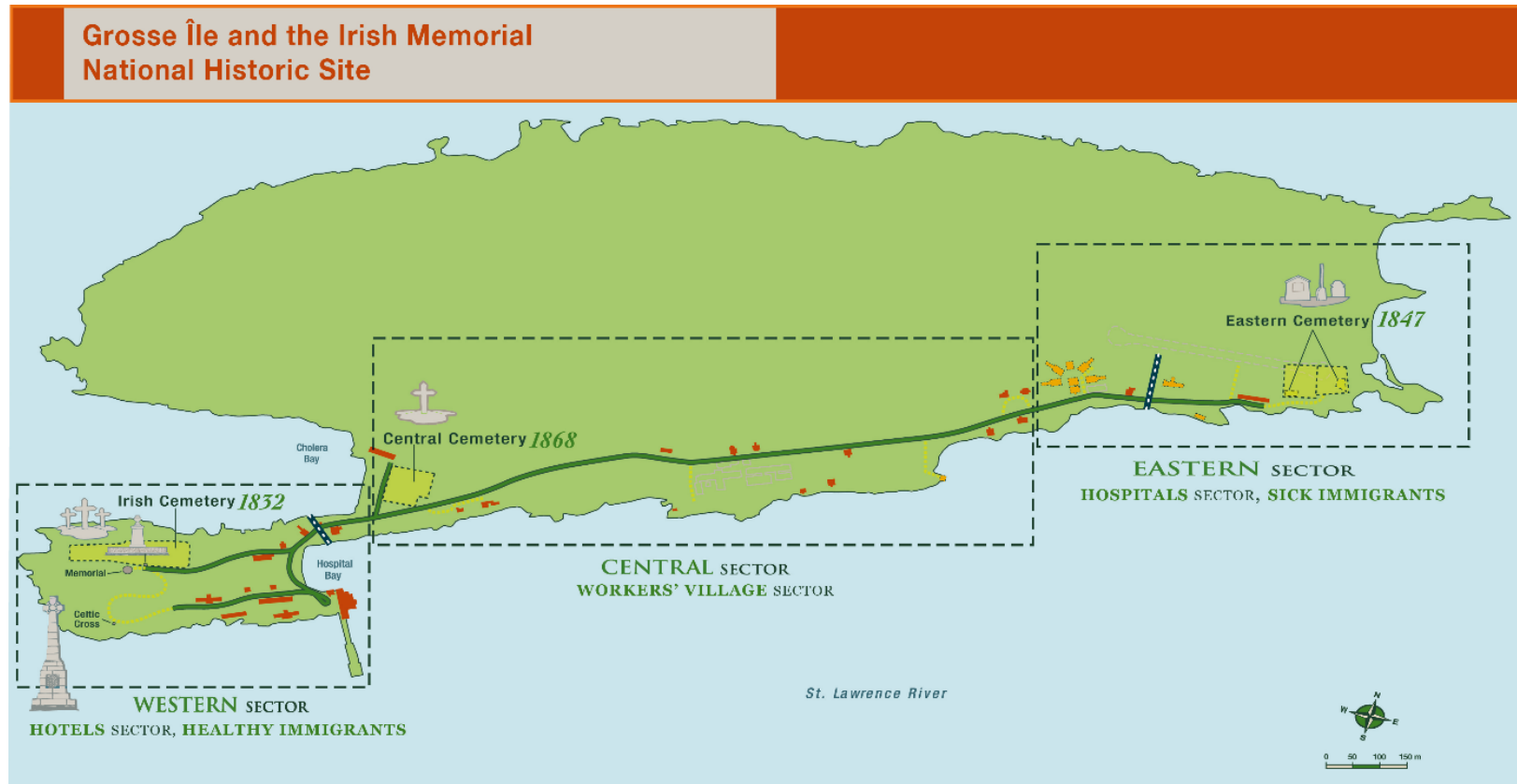
Located in the transition zone that separates the estuarine and maritime sectors of the river, Grosse Île and the Isle-aux-Grues archipelago (map 1) form the limit of the range of many plant species. The island offers a wide diversity of habitats with over twenty-five tree species and more than six hundred floral species identified. Three species present on the national historic site have special status: the butternut tree (facing imminent extinction), Victorin's gentian (threatened) and Victorin's water hemlock (of special concern).

The island is also a remarkable wildlife habitat for several species, including many shorebirds and snow geese during migrations. In addition to the little brown bat which is facing imminent extinction, the monarch is also part of species whose status is of special concern.

On Grosse Île, the threats to different species are mainly due to loss of habitat caused by climate change, damage resulting from wildlife including the white-tailed deer and the spread of diseases and of exotic invasive species. The presence of white-tailed deer on the island represents a threat to rare plants which are destroyed by grazing and trampling. This heavy concentration of deer on a small territory also raises questions about public safety for the personnel as well as visitors.

Interest in the conservation of natural resources is not only limited to the preservation of the ecosystem. The presence of flora and fauna, for example the forest cover and the birds, contributes to the "Grosse-Île experience" and strengthens the spirit of the site.

Map 2: Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site
The Three Sectors of the Island



3.0 Planning Context

In 1937, after its closure as the port of Quebec quarantine station, Grosse Île was under the successive responsibility of the Departments of National Defence and of Agriculture. Recognized as being of national historical significance in 1974, the island has been managed since 1993 by Parks Canada and has been known since 1996 under the official name of "Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site". At the time of the transfer, the vast majority of heritage buildings had been abandoned for a number of years and were in bad condition, some practically in ruins. The hospitality infrastructure also required a major upgrade in order to meet the needs of the thousands of visitors expected annually.

Following public consultations held in 1992 and 1993 and the creation of an advisory committee on the development of Grosse Île, a first management plan was adopted in 2001. Having been renewed in 2007, the majority of the commitments and guidance it contained has since been achieved in whole or in part. In fact, since 2001, Parks Canada has invested over 19 million dollars in operations and maintenance and 13 million dollars in capital assets, whether for the conservation of cultural resources or the improvement of infrastructure. The majority of the 32 buildings of national historic significance were the subject of conservation and maintenance work, contributing to the maintenance or improvement of the site's commemorative integrity. In addition, important heritage presentation projects were developed in partnerships, in particular, with Canada Economic Development and the Irish Government.

In terms of the visitor experience, a number of projects were implemented such as the opening of the east sector to walking tours, the creation of a nature trail and access to newly restored buildings. In addition, one-time events and activities were offered to visitors.

Starting in 2013, the national historic site made many efforts with regional and private partners to promote the site and its presence in the media. For example, Parks Canada participated in the implementation of a major promotional campaign in collaboration with Tourisme Chaudière-Appalaches, Economic Development Canada, Tourisme Montmagny, the carrier and the accommodations establishments.

Since 2010, Parks Canada has maintained an office in the municipality of Montmagny in order to bring the management of the site closer to the community, partners and stakeholders in the community.

3.1 The Main Issues

1) Conservation and maintenance of cultural resources

Grosse Île remains very evocative of the past despite the worrying state of a large number of built resources. Although efforts are still to be achieved, Parks Canada took advantage over the years of various investment programs. Since 2001, five million dollars has been dedicated to the conservation of cultural resources.

Despite these efforts, the island environment results in a more rapid deterioration of the buildings, which results in more frequent maintenance work. It also generates significant additional costs for the transport of materials and the logistics of the work.

2) Energy Supply

Oil is currently the primary source of energy for the island. It is used to refuel vehicles and especially to produce electricity for the operation of the water supply network, the fire protection and sewage treatment systems, the lighting and heating of a number of buildings. Without oil or an alternative energy source, the island would become non-operational, which would endanger the preservation of cultural resources of national historic significance and would have an impact on accessibility to the historic site by visitors.

The insular nature of the site as well as respect for the commemorative integrity objectives sometimes make it difficult to implement operations related to the transport and storage of petroleum products.

The approach of the Government of Canada to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions paves the way over the longer term for the substitution of fossil fuels by renewable energy sources that are more environmentally friendly.

3) Satisfaction of and Increase in the Number of Visitors

Since 2001, Parks Canada has become increasingly involved in the welcoming of visitors and interpretation. These tasks were previously offered in collaboration with the Corporation pour la mise en valeur de Grosse-Île Inc. This body, at the heart of the creation of the national historic site in the mid-1980s, withdrew from the operations on the island in 2015.

In 2009, although overall visitor satisfaction exceeded Parks Canada targets, certain more specific aspects, such information received prior to the visit, the availability of activities on the island or the value/admission relationship, was ranked slightly below the Agency's expectations. Since then, a number of actions have contributed to improving the visitor experience.

The result of a visitor survey conducted in 2009 revealed that more than 95 percent enjoyed visiting the historic site. This recognition of the quality of the product highlights the importance of the role of promotion in increasing the number of visitors. Even more so since Grosse Île plays a major role in the regional tourism strategy centred around the St. Lawrence River and the Isle-aux-Grues archipelago.

As for attendance, it has stabilized since 2011 after several years of decline. This stability is probably not unrelated to the efforts made to improve the visit experience and the implementation of a more aggressive promotional strategy. However, the achievement of attendance targets in the future remains a concern. In fact, as the price for transportation to the island increases, it reduces the accessibility of the site. The ability of the visitor to pay an increasingly elevated cost to access Grosse Île could become a barrier to attendance.

4) Access to the Historic Site

Since 2014, access by boat to the site has only been from the Berthier-sur-Mer marina and via a single transportation company. Berthier-sur-Mer is the shortest and most direct access point to Grosse Île by boat. Over the medium and long term, this embarkation point remains dependent on the will and the financial capacity of third parties to continue to offer this service.

4.0 Vision

In 2037...

For Canadians, the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site is an outstanding example of the leadership shown by their predecessors in favour of immigration, a tradition that continues today.

Grosse Île remains an authentic location where more than ever, the spirit of the site will reveal to visitors its symbolism and its soul in a distinctive atmosphere where sadness and hope intermingle.

This evocative place for people of all origins, and especially for those from the Irish community, is a place of discovery, of remembrance and recollection.

Recognized internationally as having been the gateway for tens of thousands of people seeking a new life in America, this historic site is a key heritage destination in Canada's tourism offer and more particularly for the Quebec and Montmagny regions.

Its cultural and natural heritage is protected and valued for current and future generations. Committed partners support the conservation of resources and the development of this historic site.

This site, laden with history, remains a source of pride for the regional population and contributes to a strong sense of attachment and gratitude for Canadians.

5.0 Key Strategies

Remaining a relevant site in the eyes of the public, being known to Canadians and being accessible in order to perpetuate a profound attachment to the very essence of Canada is a priority. The strategic orientation of the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site includes three key strategies as well as the corresponding objectives and targets. The objectives and targets, established for the three key strategies proposed, support one another. They are designed to enable the historic site to renew itself, to become better known and appreciated by Canadians and to strengthen its links with the community.

Key Strategy No. 1: An authentic, evocative historic site focused on sustainable operations management

True to its mandate, Parks Canada will continue to maintain and preserve the cultural and natural resources of the historic site according to recognized heritage and environmental standards. Although the location of the site in an insular environment creates significant challenges, the strong evocative potential of the landscape, buildings and facilities will be preserved or even improved in order to maintain "the Grosse-Île experience" for current and future generations.

Parks Canada will also pay special attention to the environmental aspects associated with the operation of the site, in particular with regard to the supply, storage and use of petroleum products which are currently indispensable to the conservation of resources and the reception of visitors.

Objective 1.1: The overall state of conservation of the property and buildings of national historic significance, including those for the visitor experience, remains stable or is improved.

Target: The state of the buildings of national historic significance that were already the subject of conservation work remains stable.

Target: Financing opportunities are analyzed to improve the conservation and development of cultural resources.

Objective 1.2: The inspection reports of environmental enforcement officers are free of issues or corrective measures.

Target: The modification or replacement of facilities and equipment related to the transportation, transshipment and storage of petroleum products that do not meet the latest environmental standards are carried out according to the directives issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada taking into account the insular and heritage characteristics of the site.

Objective 1.3: An alternative option for the future energy supply of the island is being considered and the principles of sustainable development guide the operation of the site.

Target: An assessment is performed to identify the most appropriate option to replace the current systems operating on oil.

Target: The orientations of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy are taken into account in the management of the site by recognizing the insular particularities of the site.

Key Strategy No. 2: A key heritage destination, a source of pride and attachment

Grosse Île today occupies a major place in the tourism offer of the Chaudière-Appalaches region. This strategy is intended to maintain Grosse Île as a key destination based on discovery, learning, reflection and commitment, but also more broadly, based on heritage tourism.

This strategy will also help increase the number of visitors by the implementation of concerted promotional efforts. To this end, and while building on the strengths and skills of each party, Parks Canada will continue to enhance the synergy created through the involvement of many institutional and private stakeholders in the promotion of the site, whether at the regional, national or international level. The common goal is to make Grosse Île a must-see heritage destination, thus contributing to the increase in attendance at the site, its reputation and the sense of belonging felt by all.

In addition to promotional investment, special attention will be paid to new trends that develop in communication, as is currently the case with social media.

Objective 2.1: The concerted strategy with stakeholders to promote visits to Grosse Île and that was put in place by Parks Canada and the regional stakeholders has helped increase the number of visitors.

Target: In the next ten years, Grosse Île national historic site traffic increases by 20% (reference year 2016-17: 19,000 visitors).

Objective 2.2: The presence of the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site in traditional and social media maintains relationships with our visitors and enables us to reach potential new clients, in particular, members of Irish communities here and elsewhere.

Target: Over the next five years, the number of subscribers who follow the national historic site via social media increases on average by 10% per year (reference year: summer of 2016 with 2,500 subscribers).

Target: Each year, five approaches designed to promote the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site are made with the traditional media.

Objective 2.3: The strong sense of pride, belonging and attachment of the population with regard to the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site is maintained and developed.

Target: Each year, the national historic site plans an event for the regional population in order to bring the site closer to its host community.

Key Strategy No. 3: An important, always accessible heritage site commemorating immigration.

This strategy will consolidate and enhance the performance of the site in each of the components of the visitor experience cycle, especially in those that relate to the dream, the planning, the trip, the arrival and the visit.

In order to provide a better service to visitors during the preparation of their visit, the historic site will offer more information on how to access Grosse Île as well as on the visit experiences offered at the site.

Parks Canada will also have an interest in encouraging the regional partners so that Berthier-sur-Mer remains an embarkation point for Grosse Île.

Finally, the national historic site will add an alternative programming to the basic offer that is focused on personalized experiences where the visitor plans his visit based on his points of interest.

Parks Canada is thus intended to facilitate a better planning of the visit, to ensure the sustainability of access to the historic site as well to develop diversified programming that is better adapted to the tastes and values of actual and potential clients.

Objective 3.1: Parks Canada and its committed partners increase the information provided to visitors about the various aspects of the visit and the possibilities of access to Grosse Île during the trip planning stage.

Target: Visitor satisfaction with regard to the information received before the visit improves in the next satisfaction survey.

Objective 3.2: Visitor access to the site by boat is provided over the long term.

Target: The role of Parks Canada as a facilitator agent enabled the carrier at the Berthier-sur-Mer harbour and other regional stakeholders to find a solution that allows Berthier-sur-Mer to remain a preferred point of access to Grosse Île.

Objective 3.3: The programming of the national historic site creates more room for personalized experiences and special development programs.

Target: The national historic site offers three personalized experiences every year.

Target: The national historic site organizes at least one special event each year.

6.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impact of its management measures on the ecosystems and cultural resources. The *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency requires a strategic environmental assessment for all plans and policies that are considered as having a positive or negative environmental impact.

A strategic environmental assessment was undertaken for this management plan, and management direction was adjusted based on the conclusions reached. The following section presents a summary of the environmental assessment.

The strategic environmental assessment of this management plan leads to the conclusion that there is no risk of significant effects on the environment, natural resources, cultural resources, the objectives associated with the visitor experience or specific concerns related to the public interest. In addition to the value of the cultural resources present on this site, the main environmental components worthy of mention and evaluated include: sensitive and endangered species, a remarkable natural environment and a great diversity of habitats. The orientation of the management plan will have a net positive effect, especially if the mitigation measures identified are taken into account.

The strategies align with the objectives of sustainable development as established in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. The strategic orientations presented in this management plan support Parks Canada's mandate and management policies. The public and the stakeholders were invited in July 2017 to emit their comments during the sessions of public consultation concerning the Management Plan of Grosse-Ile and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site.