Canadian Parks Service Encyclopedia Article

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Canadian Parks Service

The Canadian Parks Service (CPS) is the government agency charged with fulfilling the statutes and policies of Canada's national parks. The first **national park** was established in Banff, Alberta, in 1885, although parks were not institutionalized in Canada until 1911. The original policy and program established national parks to protect characteristic aspects of Canada's natural heritage, and, at the same time, cater to the benefit, enjoyment, and education of its people.

The National Parks Act of 1930 required parliamentary approval of parks, prohibited **hunting**, mining, and exploration, and limited forest harvesting. Other federal statutes gave control over lands and resources to the provinces, which meant land assembly for park development could not proceed without intergovernmental agreement. An amendment to the Parks Act increased the Park Service's ability to enforce regulations and levy meaningful penalties.

In 1971 the park system was expanded to include examples of all 39 terrestrial natural regions of Canada. Currently, 25 regions are represented by 39 parks. The Canadian government has pledged to develop sites in the remaining 14 regions in upcoming years. The CPS hopes that national parks will eventually encompass 12 percent of Canada's land base; they currently occupy only 1.8 percent.

Canada's four marine coasts have been classified into 29 regions, all of which are to be represented in a marine parks program. One site has been formally established, while four others are being considered. The CPS mandate was amended in 1986 to share control of marine parks with two other federal agencies, which manage fisheries and marine **transportation**.

Current park policy emphasizes the maintenance of **ecological integrity** over tourism and **recreation**. Much conflict, however, has centered on development within park boundaries. Townsites, highways, ski resorts, and **golf courses** provide public enjoyment, but conflict with the protective mandate of the parks' charter. Commercial and recreational fishing, **logging**, and **trapping** have also been allowed, despite legal prohibitions. In 1992, the Canadian Parks and **Wilderness Society** and the Sierra Legal Defense Fund successfully sued the Canadian government to stop logging in Wood Buffalo National Park, a protected **habitat** for both the endangered **whooping crane** and wood **bison**.