

February 2020

Rideau Canal

National Historic Site of
Canada and UNESCO World
Heritage Site (including
Merrickville Blockhouse National
Historic Site of Canada)

Draft Management Plan

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RIDEAU CANAL AND MERRICKVILLE BLOCKHOUSE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES OF CANADA
MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2020.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

For more information about the management plan or about

Rideau Canal National Historic Site

34 Beckwith Street South

Smiths Falls, Ontario

Canada

K7A 2A8

Tel: 613-283-5170 fax: 613-283-0677

Email: RideauCanal-info@pc.gc.ca

www.pc.gc.ca/rideau

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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:

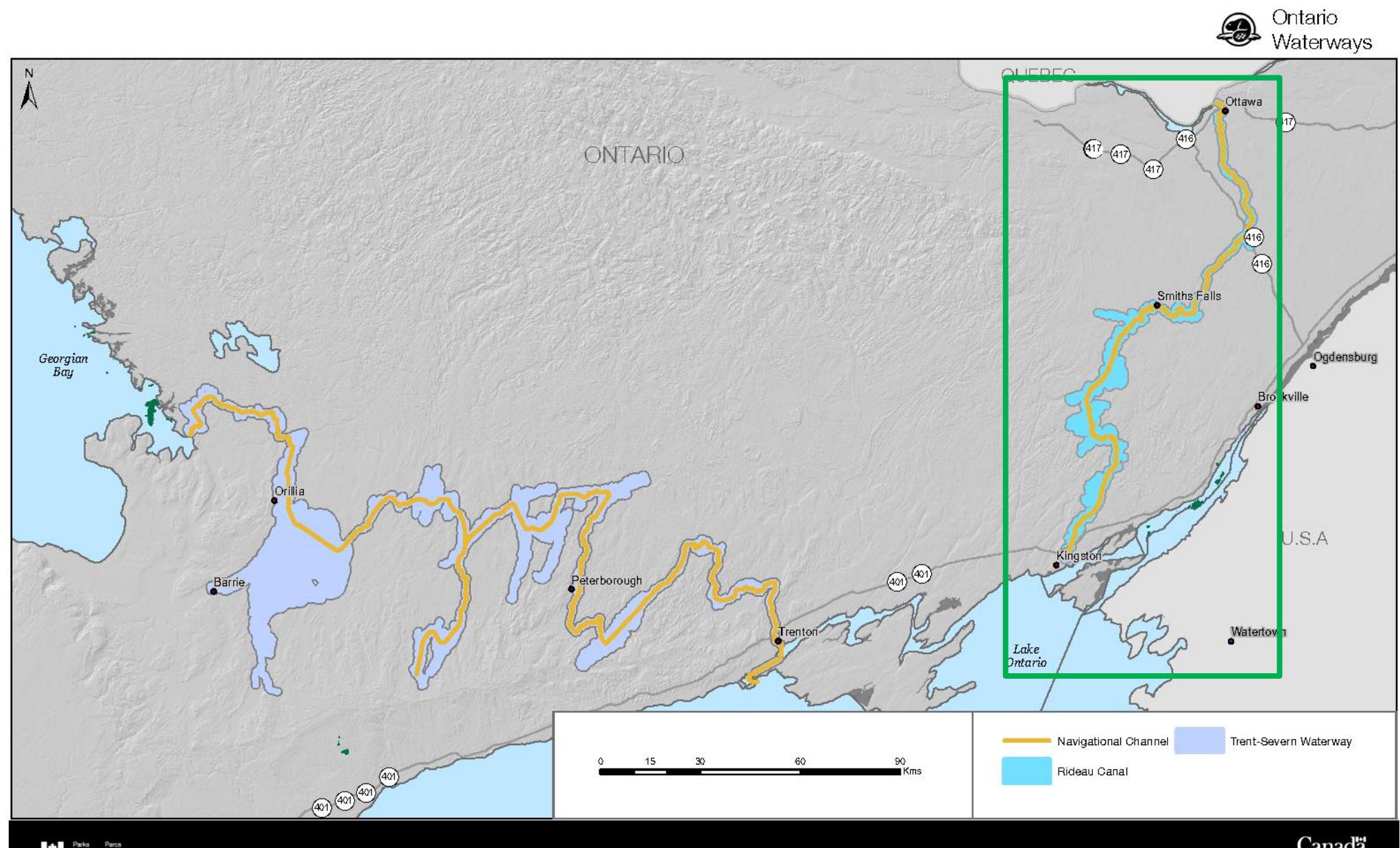
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The *Rideau Canal and Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Sites of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

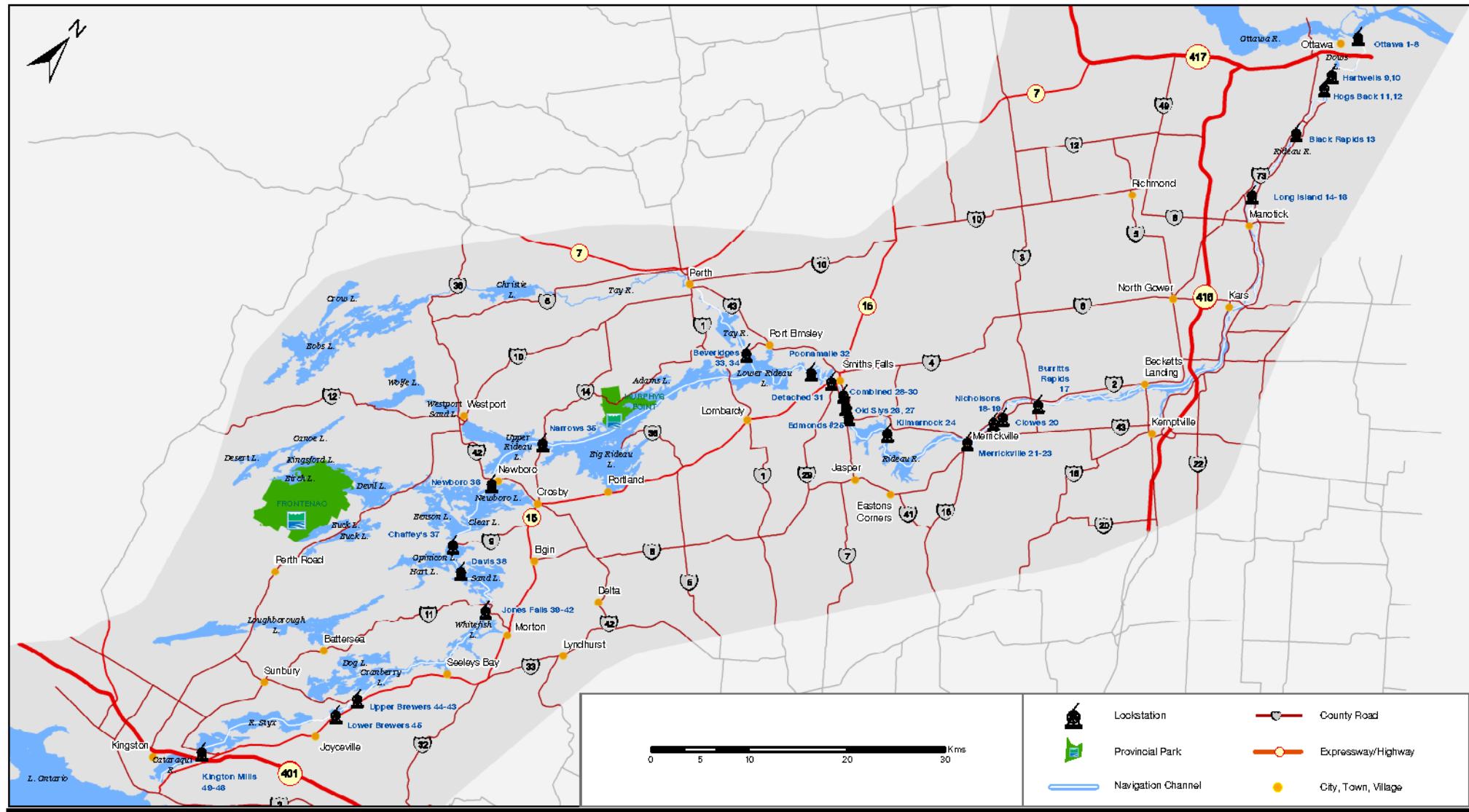
Canadians, including Indigenous peoples, were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national historic sites. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Rideau Canal and Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Sites by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the 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 Rideau Canal and Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Sites in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Rideau Canal National Historic Site



2.0 Significance of Rideau Canal and Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Sites

The Rideau Canal was conceived in the wake of the War of 1812 to serve as a war-time supply route providing a secure water route for troops and supplies from Montreal to reach the settlements of Upper Canada and the strategic naval dockyard at Kingston.

The original plan for the Canal called for the construction of dams, and locks that could handle small barges. With considerable foresight, Lieutenant Colonel By advocated for a larger lock system that would accommodate the new steamboats which were beginning to ply the Great Lakes. Plans were also made to establish fortified lockmaster houses and blockhouses at lock stations deemed especially vulnerable.

Work did not begin until 1827: construction was difficult as the route passed mostly through unsettled wilderness. Irish immigrants, French Canadians and Scottish stonemasons were among the contracted labour force brought in to push the canal through the rough bush, swamps and rocky wilderness of Eastern Ontario. Most of the locks and dams were built of stone quarried near the construction sites. Timber for lock gates, bridging and buildings was sourced locally, while the necessary iron fixtures were forged by local blacksmiths using flatiron imported from England, and iron castings were sourced from established foundries in Lower Canada.

The Rideau Canal was officially opened in the summer of 1832 with 47 locks, 23 lock stations and supporting dams and swing bridges. The Canal was expanded in the 19th century when the Tay Canal connected the town of Perth to the Rideau Canal in 1887. The construction of the Canal was an incredible engineering feat at the time: today, it still serves as a monument to the great 19th Century canal building era in North America.

Prior to the Canal's construction, these lakes and rivers were important traveling and trading routes for Indigenous peoples. In the north, the Rideau Canal connects to the Ottawa River near the confluence of three major rivers, an area that historically has been a natural meeting place and focus for trade.

The natural beauty of the area through which the Canal passes, along with the promise of excellent sport fishing and hunting, swimming, and boating, stimulated outdoor recreation and tourism. By the end of the 19th Century, hotels and private cottages made their appearance along the waterway. By the end of the First World War, commercial traffic disappeared almost entirely from the Rideau Canal. The system was saved from abandonment in large part due to the high cost of decommissioning the waterway: since that time, there has been a massive expansion of the recreational use of the Rideau Canal.

Today, the value of the Rideau Canal has been recognised in many ways:

1. In 1925, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada declared the Rideau Canal to be a site of national historic significance for:
 - the construction of the canal system;
 - the survival of a high number of original canal structures including locks, blockhouses, dams, weirs and original lockmasters' houses plus the integrity of most lockstations; and
 - the unique historical environment of the canal system.
2. In 2000, the Rideau River, which forms a significant part of the Rideau Canal, was designated a Canadian Heritage River for its human heritage and recreational values. These values include the Canal system, its historical setting,

the wide range of water-based recreational activities, and water quality suitable to recreation.

3. Most recently, in 2007, the Rideau Canal was inscribed as Canada's 14th and Ontario's only World Heritage Site. It is considered of universal value by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for being the best-preserved 'slackwater' canal in North America, and the only one dating from the great North American 19th-century canal-building era that still operates along its original route with most of its original structures intact. It is also recognized as a significant example of a canal used for military purposes associated with a significant stage in human history – that of the fight to control the north of the American continent.

The Canal comprises a remarkable collection of cultural resources including locks, dams and weirs; a diversity of buildings; lockstation landscapes; archaeological sites and artifacts; and archival material. This includes the Merrickville Blockhouse, designated a national historic site in 1939 because it represents a fine example of the best type of blockhouse erected for the defence of the Rideau Canal. In the event of war, the Blockhouse was intended to be a mustering point for local militia, a supply depot where provisions, munition and arms could be stored, and a strong defensive position for repelling anyone attempting to destroy the Canal structures. It served its military function only once, in the aftermath of the 1837 Rebellion, when it was temporarily taken over by the 34th Regiment.

3.0 Planning Context

3.1 Geopolitical

The Rideau Canal stretches 202 kilometres, winding its way through wilderness, towns, and urban centres. It is bookended by Kingston, Canada's first capital, in the south and Ottawa, today's national capital, in the north. The Canal overlaps two (2) Conservation Authorities, three (3) regional tourism organizations, three (3) counties, nine (9) federal ridings, and (13) municipalities.

The sheer size of the Rideau Canal, and the two watersheds it connects, presents jurisdictional complexities. Parks Canada is responsible for the administration of the Rideau Canal National Historic Site, comprising the bed of the Canal up to the upper controlled water elevation limit, as well as the land associated with the lock stations and dams. In Ottawa, the National Capital Commission has land use and design approval authority over federal lands and maintains the scenic parkways, green space and pathways alongside the Canal.

Other government departments and agencies, at the municipal, federal and provincial levels, share responsibility for conservation, protection, land use and development, resource extraction, transportation, agriculture, water quality and tourism activities. Parks Canada works closely with each of these authorities to ensure activities adjacent to the Canal, most notably new development, do not negatively impact the Canal's commemorative integrity and outstanding universal value. As an example, the *Rideau Corridor Landscape Strategy* (2012) demonstrates Parks Canada's leadership and recognition towards heritage protection. Developed to guide the multiple jurisdictions along the waterway to address the UNESCO's recommendations for protection of the canal's visual values, the *Landscape Strategy* is the result of collaborative efforts from 13 local municipalities, three counties and many related jurisdictions.

3.2 Socioeconomic

The Rideau Canal is one of the busiest National Historic Sites in Canada – welcoming nearly one million land-based visitors each year. The Canal corridor is in the heart of one of the most densely populated areas of the country, making it uniquely placed to enable young and urban Canadians to discover and connect with history and nature. Canadians, residents and visitors cherish the Rideau Canal as a symbol of Canada's identity and take pride in their contribution to preserving this national treasure for future generations. Residents of the Canal corridor value and protect the unique cultural and natural heritage character and scenic beauty of the Canal corridor.

Since 2015, Parks Canada has invested over \$75 million in projects to rehabilitate infrastructure assets on the Rideau Canal. These investments support the conservation of heritage assets while promoting visitor experience and improving public safety. An additional \$52 million will be invested in asset improvements by 2022.

The waterway is also the economic backbone of many of the small communities it connects, many of which rely heavily on tourism to contribute to their local economies. The economic contributions from the Rideau Canal can fluctuate as visitation to the Rideau Canal, whether it be by land or by water, is heavily impacted by factors such as fuel prices, exchange rates, social trends, and weather conditions.

Despite these challenges, the Rideau Canal also presents a wealth of opportunities to collaborate with all levels of government, Indigenous partners, community groups, not-for-profit organizations and businesses. Parks Canada is well placed to bring all these disparate groups together to celebrate, promote and enhance the corridor to become a world-renowned destination.

3.3 Indigenous Peoples and the Rideau Canal

Indigenous peoples of North America have a strong connection with waterways. The waterways were an integral part of the livelihood of Indigenous peoples for all aspects of existence including fishing, hunting and gathering, transportation, trade, as well as cultural and spiritual gatherings. Archaeological information indicates that Algonquin peoples have lived in the Ottawa Valley for many generations, long before the Europeans arrived in North America. As a result of the slack-water engineering technology employed to construct the canal, submerged archaeological resources and sites may be located along former shorelines and islands.

When the Rideau Canal was first constructed, the new canal passed through mostly unsettled wilderness. As these lands were traditionally used by the Algonquins, Mohawk and Mississauga prior to canal construction, this military undertaking had an impact on their unique relationship to the land. In addition to labour, Indigenous Peoples aided canal construction through harvesting and supplying goods and provisions to the British military and trades peoples, and assisted in establishing the canal route based on traditional use and navigation of the lands and water.

Most of the Rideau waterway, from Ottawa to the height of land between the Rideau and Cataraqui watersheds near Kingston, is included in the Algonquins of Ontario Settlement Area, currently under negotiation with the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario. The Agreement-in-Principle includes the Algonquins' interest in the Rideau Canal related to management planning, access fees, interpretation, and harvesting, in support of ongoing land claim negotiations. The southern end of the Rideau Canal in the vicinity of Kingston is home to the Algonquins, Iroquois, Mississauga and Mohawks.

The Rideau Canal engages with the Algonquins of Ontario, as well as the Mississauga of Alderville and the Mohawk First Nations at Akwesasne and Tyendinaga through management planning, review of development proposals, advisory committees and operational interactions. In the spirit of reconciliation, Parks Canada is actively pursuing

ways to grow our relationships with these communities through cooperation and new partnerships.

3.4 Living History

The Rideau Canal is steeped in history and showcases rich cultural landscapes, which has cemented its place as one of the most iconic symbols of nation building in Canada. Today, lockmasters continue the tradition of manually operating the majority of the locks, stop-log dams and swing bridges that make up the canal system, providing passage to passing boats and spectacle for land visitors. The survival of a high number of original structures positions the Rideau Canal well to be an international symbol of commemorative integrity and authenticity. As custodians of this World Heritage Site, Parks Canada is committed to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value for which the Rideau Canal was designated.

The Rideau Canal was inscribed on the list of UNESCO World Heritage in 2007 on the basis of the following two criteria:

- i. The Rideau Canal remains the best preserved example of a slackwater canal in North America demonstrating the use of European slackwater technology in North America on a large scale. It is the only canal dating from the great North American canal building era of the early 19th century that remains operational along its original line with most of its original structures intact; and
- ii. The Rideau Canal is an extensive, well preserved example of a canal which was used for a military purpose linked to a significant stage in human history – that of the fight to control the north of the American continent.

Today, the recreational paradise of the Rideau Canal encourages the exploration of the many lakes, rivers and canal cuts by self-propelled and motorized watercraft. Visitors can stop in at the Smith Falls Visitor Centre to discover the cultural history of the waterway or take advantage of guided boat tours offered by commercial operators on the water. Parks Canada works with not-for-profit organizations who operate museums from historic canal buildings including the Bytown Museum, Merrickville Blockhouse Museum, and the Chaffey's Lockmaster's House Museum. The Canal serves as a venue for a range of important events and celebrations, for example, during the winter, the National Capital Commission transforms the canal from Ottawa Locks to Hartwells Locks into the world's largest outdoor skating rink.

3.5 Nature Legacy

The Rideau Canal corridor has long been recognized as an area of special interest owing to its unique combination of cultural, natural, scenic and recreational values. The landscape of the corridor is a mosaic of agricultural land, wood lots, forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers, scenic shore-lands and urban settlements. This diversity of landscapes and natural resources contributes not only to the national historic significance of the Canal but also to its conservation value. There are extensive ecosystem features - lands, waters, plants and animals - under the jurisdiction of the Rideau Canal that are valued because they comprise an important component of the canal's history and landscape and as such are considered a vital heritage resource that must be respected and safeguarded. Conservation management actions, such as inventories, research, monitoring and impact analysis, are undertaken on an annual basis to ensure Rideau Canal effectively protects its biodiversity conservation value.

One significant effect of canal construction on the corridor landscape was the creation of drowned lands. Although the thousands of hectares of drowned lands now exist as natural features, like wetlands, most of these were human-made as a direct result of the slack-water system that flooded shallow waters to create the navigation route.

The Rideau Canal's natural environment is also home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including many species which are threatened or at risk. There are at least 17 Schedule 1

Species at Risk that are known to be ‘regularly occurring’ at the site, and the Rideau Canal has been identified as containing critical habitat for 6 species covering more than 75% of the waterway. Additionally, there are many species of cultural importance to Indigenous Peoples, such as the American eel, living in and along the waterway. The threat of invasive species will also be an ongoing management challenge in the coming years.

3.6 Operational Realities

Today, the Rideau Canal consists of 25 independent lock and bridge stations, including the Tay Canal to Perth. The operation of the lock and dam structures serves as the core purpose and function of the Rideau Canal. The Canal’s reputation as a premiere destination for pleasure craft is due in large part to the high quality service provided by Lockmasters and Lock Operators. In the 2019 season, over 61,000 vessels passed through one or more locks.

The built assets found across the Rideau waterway, such as locks, dams, weirs, canal walls and bridges, are valued at \$929 million. These assets are integral to the ongoing operations of an enduring, modern and working canal. Parks Canada is also the custodian of other structures, like blockhouses and lockmaster’s houses. The protection and presentation of these engineering works and buildings require sufficient and stable capital investments, ongoing corrective and preventative maintenance, and adequate resources to manage them effectively.

As the waterway has evolved over its lifetime, the overall management of water as a resource has remained central to its function. The Rideau Canal operates 26 dams across the Cataraqui and Rideau River watersheds. However, water levels and flows are no longer managed with only navigation in mind as the canal’s infrastructure plays an important role in maintaining public safety. Decision-making considers the entire water system and is balanced to meet a broad range of considerations and stakeholder needs across the watersheds. Climate change also places an increasing pressure on Parks Canada to manage the Rideau Canal to mitigate flooding and these challenges will only grow in complexity and scope.

Similarly, the complexities of the Canal’s modern day operations require a strong, responsive legislative and policy framework to ensure effective management. Today, Parks Canada responsibilities for the Rideau Canal include responding to tourism trends, managing economic growth and development responsibly, carrying out enforcement activities, and protecting the natural and cultural resources. Parks Canada is proud to continue the legacy of the countless stewards of the Rideau Canal who came before us, but must continue to champion continuous improvement and necessary change to support historic canals in the 21st Century.

4.0 Vision

The heritage waterways managed by Parks Canada were once vital links for transportation and economic activity in what was to become Canada. Today, they continue to perpetuate this proud tradition in many Canadian communities by contributing to their socio-economic well-being.

The Rideau Canal is a recreational paradise in Eastern Ontario and a landmark to nation building in Canada. Managed by Parks Canada as a premiere heritage waterway and World Heritage Site, the Rideau Canal strives for excellence in the delivery of unforgettable experiences that immerse visitors in the living history and natural beauty it embodies. It is a cultural destination – a symbol of integrity and authenticity – where its engineering works, heritage landscapes and historic buildings are well protected and

appreciated.

Parks Canada has transformed the Rideau Canal into a sustainable historic site through meaningful cooperation with Indigenous partners, collaboration with organizations that share its values, and innovative partnerships with the vibrant communities it connects. The site is an entry point for people in urban centres to experience examples of the natural and cultural experiences that Parks Canada offers across the country. It is also the economic backbone of the communities of the Rideau Corridor, promoting outdoor recreation, low impact tourism and responsible development. The Rideau Canal serves as a symbol of commemorative integrity and is the best-preserved example of a slack-water canal in North America.

In the years to come, Parks Canada will continue to work with its partners to elevate the Rideau Canal, both nationally and internationally, into a world-renowned, welcoming and lively site that inspires people to discover and connect with Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

5.0 Key Strategies

The key strategies below frame the management direction for the Rideau Canal National Historic Site for the next ten years. The strategies and corresponding objectives and targets focus on achieving the vision for the site through an integrated approach to site management. Unless otherwise specified, all objectives and targets are meant to be achieved within the ten-year period of this plan. Annual implementation updates will be reported to Indigenous Peoples, partners, stakeholders and the general public, and will feed into Parks Canada's broader business planning processes. More importantly, these strategies and their related objectives and targets will serve as the basis for engagement and consultation into the future.

KEY STRATEGY #1 - REALIZING THE WATERWAY'S FULL POTENTIAL AS A GREAT CANADIAN OUTDOOR DESTINATION

The Rideau Canal is an outdoor paradise and one of the most scenic and historic waterways in the world. In between Kingston and Ottawa, its key points of entry, the Rideau Canal consists of a series of beautiful lakes, rivers and canal cuts dotted by smaller communities and historic lock stations. While recreational boating use of the Rideau Canal remains a key focus, there are also increasing opportunities to encourage land-based visitors to explore new locations along the Canal and to attract new and different types of users to the waterway.

This key strategy seeks to offer visitors more diversified experiences, aimed at discovering and enjoying the great outdoors with low-impact recreational activities and with the support of organizations focused on conservation and sustainability. The Rideau Canal is well positioned to capitalize on these opportunities and trends, with its calm and flat water for paddling, its accessible land for camping, and its many connections to trails, rails and roads.

Strategically expanding the Rideau Canal's World Heritage Site image and profile, by connecting visitors with more opportunities to experience its natural and cultural heritage, will enhance its reputation as a relevant and sustainable heritage waterway. Parks Canada must also leverage new and existing partnerships to further animate the Rideau Corridor and to champion it as a destination, both at home and abroad.

Objective 1.1: Visitation Is Diversified through More Opportunities for Authentic Canadian Experiences like Paddling, Camping, Cycling and Hiking

Targets:

- A visitor offer targeting paddlers locking through the Rideau Canal is developed and implemented by 2023.
- Trip planning tools (e.g. routes, brochures, guides, outfitters) and amenities/facilities (e.g. docks, showers, camping sites) for paddlers, hikers and campers are developed by 2025 in partnership with stakeholders.
- Yearly, at least one special event that promote camping, hiking, cycling and paddling on the Rideau Canal is hosted in partnership with stakeholders (e.g. Learn to Camp, Paddlefest).

Objective 1.2: Land-based Visitation to Lock Stations is Increased and Visitors are More Engaged with the Canal

Targets:

- By 2024, two (2) master plans are developed, in collaboration with key stakeholders, for strategic lock stations (and/or groups of lock stations), that outline priorities for future site improvements to support visitor experience and canal operations. Examples could include Kingston Mills lock station, Jones Falls lock station, or the lock stations within the City of Ottawa. By 2030, an additional three (3) master plans are developed.
- By 2030, improvements to land-based programs and service offers are implemented (such as heritage accommodation) at five (5) lock stations. Opportunities for collaboration with local communities and stakeholders are identified as part of this process.
- Enhanced measurement of land-based visitation and demographic information is implemented by 2023 in support of developing marketing targets and diversified offers.
- By 2022, a Visitor Experience Strategy is developed for the Rideau Canal.

Objective 1.3: Relationships with Strategic Partners are Developed and Strengthened to Manage the Rideau Canal in a Collaborative Way

Targets:

- Parks Canada meets annually with partners, stakeholders, organizations, local communities and the tourism industry to discuss ongoing management of the Rideau and to explore new initiatives and opportunities for the Canal.
- Parks Canada meets annually with key regional and municipal tourism organizations to ensure the Rideau corridor and its many attractions, amenities, services and experiences are collaboratively marketed and promoted, with a consistent approach that effectively leverages the Rideau Canal brand and the National Historic Site and UNESCO World Heritage Site designations.
- Relationships with domestic and international canals and world heritage sites are strengthened through collaboration and annual participation at the World Canals Conference and by working with the World Heritage Centre on matters relating to the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

KEY STRATEGY #2: DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY, PROTECTION AND PRESENTATION

Canadians are proud in knowing that the Rideau Canal is an authentic, well-conserved and sustainable national historic site and world heritage site. The inscription of the Rideau Canal as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has increased public expectations of Parks Canada to improve visitor experience, levels of service, and heritage and natural conservation.

The Rideau Canal must find a way to work within its means as resources are finite, while creating more capacity to respond to increased expectations. Regular maintenance, strategic capital investment, and ongoing monitoring of cultural and natural heritage resources are required to support the protection and presentation of North America's oldest continuously operated canal as the waterway approaches its 200th anniversary.

In the spirit of reconciliation, Parks Canada will also work cooperatively with Indigenous Peoples who have traditional connections to the lands, waters, and histories of the Rideau Canal to expand the inclusion of Indigenous cultures and perspectives in interpretative and other opportunities on the Canal.

Sustainable development is central to Parks Canada's mandate and vision. As such, the Rideau Canal must do its part to support overall Agency goals for sustainable development with concrete local action.

Objective 2.1: The Rideau Canal's Engineering Marvels, Heritage Landscapes, and Natural Beauty Are Protected

Targets:

- By 2030, the cultural landscapes at 5 key lock stations are described and documented to support the commemorative integrity of the waterway as well as visitor experience opportunities that support heritage connections.
- Long term asset management plans that protect and maintain the cultural and natural significance of the Rideau Canal are developed by 2025 and are reviewed annually.
- By 2029, at least 70% of engineering works of national significance are maintained in fair or good condition.

Objective 2.2: Indigenous Peoples Have Meaningful Opportunities to Connect with traditionally used lands and waters and Share Their Cultures

Targets:

- The Algonquins of Ontario and the Mohawks of Akwesasne are engaged on an annual basis to discuss initiatives related to presentation of Indigenous cultures, histories and perspectives on the Canal.
- Through collaborative work with Indigenous communities, contracting opportunities and capacity are identified.

Objective 2.3: Ecological and Cultural Aspects of the Rideau Canal Are presented to visitors and Integrated in Tourism

Target:

- The next Visitor Information Program survey shows an increase in its learning indicator as visitors at the Rideau Canal are educated about the cultural and natural heritage of the Rideau Canal through the use of new and emerging technologies.

Objective 2.4: Sustainable Development Principles Are Better Integrated into Rideau Canal Operations

Targets:

- By 2023, a strategy for the greening Rideau Canal field unit activities that includes adopting electric vehicles, increasing energy efficiency, and decreasing waste production, is developed and implemented.
- By 2030, the use of small-scale hydroelectric generation is implemented to support operations, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and offset energy costs.

KEY STRATEGY #3: MANAGING A 19th CENTURY CANAL IN THE 21st CENTURY

The Rideau Canal has been relying on capital investments to manage and maintain many of its cultural resources in recent years. Significant investments through the Government of Canada's Infrastructure Investment Program have been made to protect the commemorative and structural integrity of the engineering works. Cultural resources with a high rate of deterioration, such as lockstation buildings, require stable funding and asset management capacity to monitor conditions and deliver conservation work in a timely, effective and cost-efficient manner.

Sustainable business development represents an opportunity for the Rideau Canal to generate revenue, off-set costs, and to reinvest in Canal assets and cultural resources, while enhancing visitor services and activities, and conserving and interpreting cultural resources in new, innovative, and exciting ways.

The Rideau Canal was initially designed primarily for military navigation. Today, Parks Canada is responsible for managing water levels and flows on the Canal on a year-round basis to achieve multiple objectives. These include navigation, flood mitigation, protection of the environment (e.g. fisheries and wildlife habitats), provision of water for municipal water supplies, recreation, and hydro generation. Public safety also represents a challenge as the canal was not initially intended for visitation. Extreme fluctuations associated with climate change patterns have resulted in challenges for water management decision-making.

Finally, the Historic Canal Regulations are antiquated and do not fully address the complexities of operating a historic canal in the 21st century. There are also limitations on existing regulations and legislation which impact the ability to issue permits and carry out enforcement. Developing modern, comprehensive and supportive regulations and tools will improve the ability of Parks Canada to effectively and timely respond to the diversity of visitor interest and needs, address the legacies left by industrial contamination, manage water levels and flows while responding to the impacts of climate change, and will better support the Agency's regulatory authority on a historic, navigable waterway in the 21st century.

Objective 3.1: Administrative Tools are Modernized to Comprehensively and Effectively Address the Complexities of an Operational Canal

Targets:

- An analysis of gaps in the current statutory, regulatory and policy framework is completed and needed improvements within the Agency's control are identified by 2021.
- Compliance and enforcement capabilities are improved by establishing by 2021 in-house law enforcement capacity and through enhancing partnerships with other law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction.
- A review of in-water and shoreline works policies is completed by 2023 and changes that strengthen the protection of natural and cultural resources are implemented by 2024.

Objective 3.2: Sustainable Sources of Revenue Are Developed and Enhanced

Targets:

- By 2025, the implementation of business licencing is expanded to include all commercial operators who use Parks Canada's lands and facilities or the bed of the Canal in support of their business operations.

Objective 3.3: Water Management Decisions Are Made Using a System-Wide Approach Based On Data

Targets:

- The water monitoring network continues to be modernized through the on-going exploration and development of new tools and methodologies, such as hydrological modelling, and their integration into decision-making is reviewed on an annual basis.
- A formal communications protocol for communicating Parks Canada water management information to stakeholders is in place by 2022.
- An assessment to identify the potential impacts of climate change on water management is conducted by 2025 to support adjustments to data gathering approaches.

6.0 Management area: Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Site of Canada

Significance

Merrickville Blockhouse is situated on the grounds of the Merrickville Lockstation in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford, 60km southwest of Ottawa. Built in 1832-33, the Blockhouse is the largest and the most impressive of the four blockhouses built along the Rideau Canal and the second largest surviving in Canada. In the event of war, the Blockhouse was intended to be a mustering point for local militia, a supply depot where provisions, munition and arms could be stored, and a strong defensive position for repelling anyone attempting to destroy the Canal structures. It served a military function only once, in the aftermath of the 1837 Rebellion, when it was temporarily garrisoned by the 34th Regiment.

As a cultural resource of national significance associated with the Rideau Canal, a classified federal heritage building, and as a national historic site itself, the Blockhouse is a landmark within the village and along the Rideau Canal. Great care is needed to conserve and maintain this impressive structure, which has thick masonry walls, gun ports for mounting cannons, loopholes to defend from attackers, and a ditch surrounding the building.

The Blockhouse and its extensive interpretive collection provide an authentic and engaging glimpse into the original defensive role of the Rideau Canal and foster a deep connection for the local citizens and its visitors.

Planning context

The Merrickville Blockhouse has been leased since 1966 to the Village of Merrickville-Wolford, and operates as the Blockhouse Museum by the Merrickville and District Historical Society. The museum comprises a collection of artifacts and archives which reflect the history and industry of the Canal and the surrounding urban and agricultural community. The site also offers interior and exterior interpretive panels about the significance of the Merrickville Blockhouse and the Rideau Canal. The Museum is operated from May to October by a group of volunteers and students and welcomes approximately 10,000 visitors annually.

Capitalizing on opportunities for collaboration between the Blockhouse Museum and the Rideau Canal can broaden visitors' understanding of the evolving role of the waterway and its impact on shaping the region, and engage visitors in experiencing the latest chapter in the canal's long history.

An integrated management approach for the Merrickville Blockhouse is recommended, given the long history of collaboration with many community partners, its connections to the Merrickville Lockstation, as well as the site's prominence within a community of many other historical assets.

Vision

For the next 20 years, the Merrickville Blockhouse remains a landmark within the Village of Merrickville-Wolford that is appreciated and enjoyed for its historical significance in the defense of British North America, as an integral part of the Rideau Canal, and as a treasured local museum.

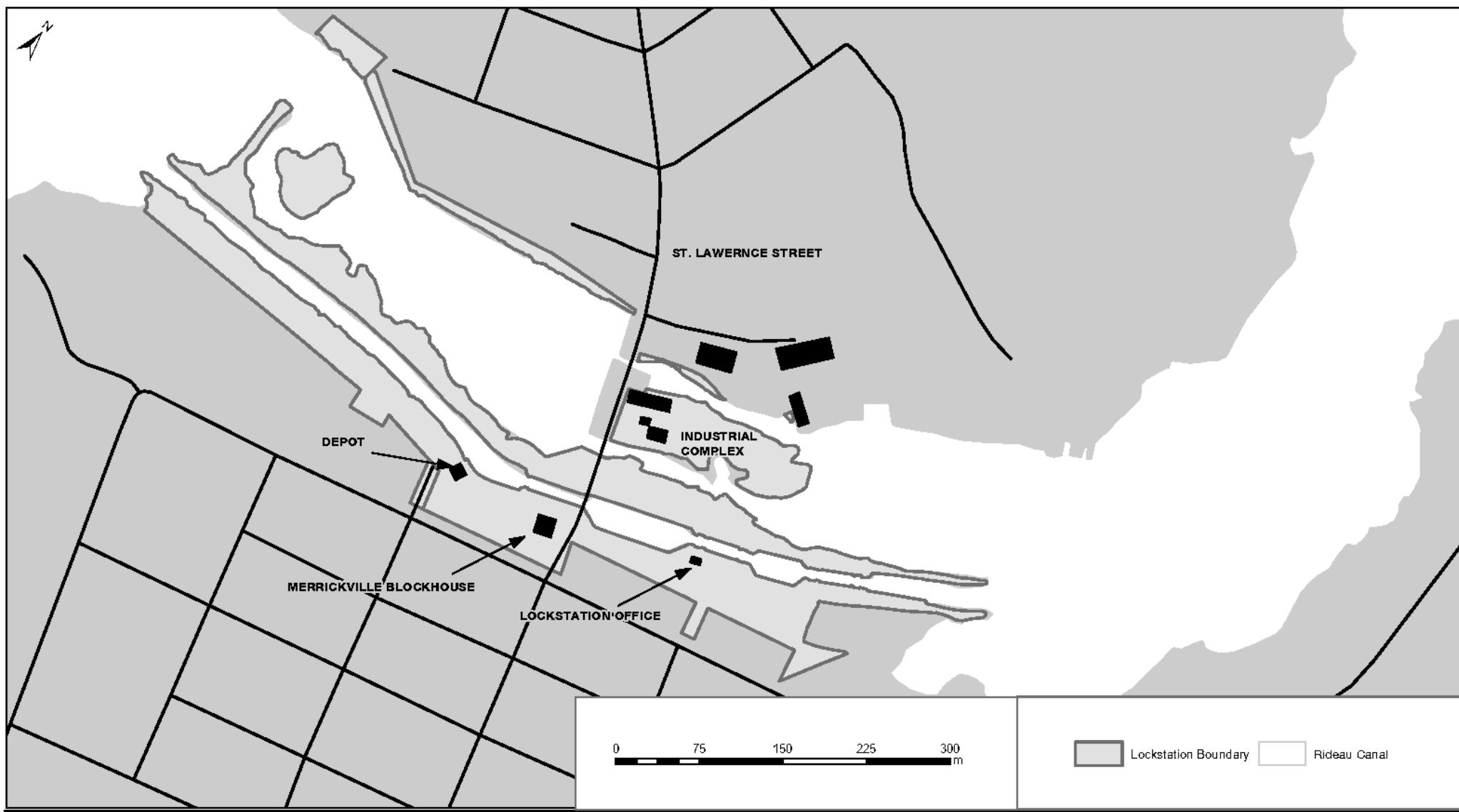
Objective

A renewed and strengthened collaboration between Parks Canada, the Village of Merrickville-Wolford and the Merrickville and District Historical Society in the areas of interpretation, promotion and asset maintenance ensures the Merrickville Blockhouse remains a must-see destination for visitors of the Rideau Canal.

Targets:

- The Merrickville Blockhouse is maintained in fair to good condition in the next State of the Site assessment through regular monitoring, maintenance and repair.
- By 2025, a dialogue is initiated to identify opportunities for collaboration in visitor experiences and marketing and promotions efforts at Merrickville Lockstation.

Map 3: Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Site and Lockstation



7.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

The purpose of a strategic environmental assessment is to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and program proposals, to support environmentally-sound decision making. In accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010)*, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was conducted on the Rideau Canal National Historic Site and Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Site Management Plan.

Many positive effects will occur as a result of the implementation of the plan, for example: Key strategy 3 identifies several areas where modernizing the management approach at the canal is overdue, and identifies the key priorities to achieve those objectives, including: Updates to the legislative and policy framework, modernizing the approach to water management using data-based decision making, and enhancing the protection of natural and cultural resources through a review of the in-water and shoreline works policies. These updates are anticipated to benefit natural resources, cultural resources, visitor experience, and improve operations. The management plan will help connect Canadians with nature contributing to the implementation of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. The Management Plan also supports the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals of Healthy Coasts and Oceans, and Pristine Lakes and Rivers.

Strategies/objectives/targets identified in the management plan that could potentially result in negative environmental effects include: The development of new land-based programs and service offers at strategic lock stations; and development of new amenities and facilities for paddlers, hikers, and campers. However, these effects can be minimized by proactively incorporating strategic input from natural resource conservation and cultural resource management experts early in the planning of these concepts to help identify opportunities and constraints. Done properly, this can augment positive results and avoid or minimize negative effects. Operations at the site are required to mitigate impacts on climate according to Greening Government requirements in support of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, and specific objectives have been identified to do so.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public will be consulted on the draft management plan, including a summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the strategic environmental assessment and management plan as appropriate.

There are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from the implementation of the management plan. Individual projects at the site will be evaluated separately under the *Impact Assessment Act*, or successor legislation, as necessary.