

PILOT PROJECT AUTHORIZING DOGS IN QUÉBEC NATIONAL PARKS (2016-2018)

HISTORY



- **2000** Revision of the regulation pertaining to parks: Authorizing movement, stays, or the practice of activities in a park accompanied by a dog kept on a leash at all times, only in areas designated for this purpose
- **2012** Summary literature review (Dorion, 2012)
- **2013** Impact and perception study on the presence of dogs in national parks (SOM, 2013)
- **2014** Decision to implement a pilot project over three years

THE PRE-PROJECT

- **2015** Literature review “ Impact of pet dogs on wildlife in the natural environment in Québec ” - Université de Sherbrooke (Roy, 2015, our translation of title)
Investigation on the regulatory framework for dogs in other park networks in North America and in the regional parks and campgrounds of Québec
- **2016** Literature review – social component – Université Laval (Gindre, 2017)

PROJECT PLANNING

- **2015-2016** Choice of selection criteria, choice of parks and sectors, drafting of the regulation, development of a code of conduct for the responsible owner
- **2016** Creation of an external expert committee, an indicators program, and a client survey

THE PROJECT

- **2016** Year 1 of the project – 3 national parks (Frontenac, Jacques-Cartier, and Oka)
- **2017** Year 2 of the project – same as above
- **MAY 2018** Year 3 of the project – addition of 2 national parks (Aiguebelle and Lac-Témiscouata)
- **FALL 2018** Analysis of the results of the 3-year pilot project
Presentation of results to the internal monitoring committee and the external expert committee
Final decision

REGULATED ACCESS TO DOGS IN NATIONAL PARKS

- **MAY 17, 2019** Entry into force of dogs being permitted in Québec’s national parks network, in certain sectors and under certain conditions

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MAIN RESULTS

PRESENCE OF DOGS

- ▶ 19,481 dogs registered at registration centres (stable data from 2016 to 2018)
- ▶ 1 dog per 10 hikers during the summer on authorized trails
- ▶ 1.7 dogs seen by patrols during the summer and 2.3 dogs during the fall
- ▶ 5% of sites where dogs were spotted during campground patrols

ACCEPTABILITY OF DOGS BY THE PUBLIC

- ▶ 92% of campers and 98% of daily visitors surveyed say they had a good or very good visitor experience despite the presence of dogs
- ▶ The proportion of people in favour of or neutral with respect to the presence of dogs in national parks on the rise after three years of surveying (resulting in 79% for campers and 85% for daily visitors in 2018).

INFRINGEMENT NOTICES

- ▶ 35 infraction reports in 3 years

EVENT REPORTS

- ▶ 15 events in 3 years – No major incidents

AUTHORIZED TRAILS

- ▶ 94% of dogs are kept on a leash (summer/fall)
- ▶ 67% of dogs are kept on a leash (winter)
- ▶ 2 dogs not on a leash per week (summer)

OFF-LIMIT TRAILS

- ▶ 15 dogs seen on off-limit trails in 3 years (202 patrols)
- ▶ Average of 0.7 dogs per week passing in front of security cameras during the summer and 1.9 during the fall

CAMPGROUNDS

- ▶ 97% of dogs kept on a leash
- ▶ 97% of dogs kept under surveillance
- ▶ No barking heard during patrols in 91% of sites
- ▶ Excrement observed in fewer than 1% of sites with dogs
- ▶ No barking in 90% of cases in Jacques-Cartier and in 70% of cases in Oka (audio recordings in campgrounds)

IMPACT ON WILDLIFE

AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ No impact on the abundance and diversity of bird and other animal sounds in camping loops where dogs are permitted (audio recordings)
- ▶ No wildlife deaths attributed to the presence of dogs

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SÉPAQ'S DECISION

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

Authorize dogs in certain designated areas in Québec's national parks network as of May 17, 2019, according to the following conditions:

- ▶ Respect the criteria established for identifying authorized areas. During the winter, limit the offer in order to focus it primarily on the busiest areas and on sectors where it is possible to ensure compliance with the rules.
- ▶ Maintain the framework rules applied during the pilot project.
- ▶ Properly inform customers before and during their visit about the admission of dogs, authorized areas, and framework rules.
- ▶ Make sure to monitor both compliance with the rules and the quality of the visitor experience and adjust implementation if necessary.

FOLLOW-UP MEASURES AND ADJUSTMENTS

- ▶ Monitor the compliance rate with regard to leashes on trails where dogs are permitted.
- ▶ Monitor the customer satisfaction rate and data regarding the presence of dogs on the territory.
- ▶ Establish compliance rate thresholds regarding the use of leashes on authorized trails and the quality of the visitor experience. If the results are below the established thresholds, put in place corrective measures in order to reach the targeted rates.

VIGILANCE POINT: WINTER UNDER SURVEILLANCE

With regards to lower conformity rates of dogs on leash in winter:

- ▶ Limit the offer accordingly and adjust patrol plans to reach compliance targets.
- ▶ In the case of non-satisfactory conformity rates adopt appropriate measures.