



Subject: Research Authorization for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves		Policy No. PAM 13.01	New <input type="checkbox"/>
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Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provincial Parks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation Reserves <input type="checkbox"/> ANSI			

1.0 Purpose and Application

The *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* (PPCRA) establishes that objectives for both provincial parks and conservation reserves include “To facilitate scientific research and to provide points of reference to support monitoring of ecological change on the broader landscape”.

Subsection 2(2) of Ontario Regulations 347/07 and 319/07 under the PPCRA states that, except with written permission of the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager, no person shall conduct research in a provincial park or conservation reserve.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) will make efforts to accommodate all reasonable requests to conduct appropriate research in provincial parks and conservation reserves.

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the review and authorization of appropriate research in provincial parks or conservation reserves, and to ensure that the impacts of proposed research activities on provincial parks or conservation reserve resources, features, staff and visitors are adequately considered. Procedural direction on MNR staff responsibilities can be found in Research Authorization Procedure for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves (Procedure PAM 13.01.01).

2.0 Scope of Authorization

Authorizations issued under this policy represent approval under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. The research authorization does not replace or exempt the processes or authorizations of other applicable federal or provincial legislation and policies, such as permits or approvals. Other authorizations from MNR may also be required.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all other permissions, approvals, and authorizations are acquired before proceeding with their activities.

3.0 When a Research Authorization Letter Is Required

A research authorization letter is required for any investigation, assessment, inventory, monitoring or studies of natural, cultural, archaeological, social, recreational, economic, management and/or other features and characteristics of provincial parks or conservation reserves that involve fieldwork, specimen collection, and/or have the potential to disturb resources, users or staff within provincial park(s) or conservation reserve(s).

Activities for personal enjoyment or recreation, that do not involve handling, collecting, or otherwise disturbing natural, cultural or social features, do not require research authorization.

Researchers conducting research under contract with MNR will receive authorization as part of an endorsed consulting agreement.

The responsible manager (e.g., provincial park superintendent, conservation reserve manager) may provide authorization to his or her staff to carry out scientific activities within the provincial park(s) or conservation reserve(s) without requiring a research authorization letter. Staff must comply with the conditions normally associated with research authorizations within the provincial park or conservation reserve.

3.1 Who is Eligible

Applications will be considered from individuals affiliated with a school, college, university, museum, provincial park friends group or cooperating association, government agency (including MNR), consulting firm, non-governmental organization, Aboriginal community or organization, or scientific agency, and from individuals not affiliated with an institution.

Applications to conduct research will be considered from individuals and their assistants. In the case of student researchers, any research authorization letters will be issued to the professor or supervisor of the project.

4.0 Application to Conduct Research

The researcher shall complete an Application to Conduct Research in a Provincial Park or Conservation Reserve to begin the process. This application is available online, and may be updated from time to time without an update to this policy.

Should the researcher wish to obtain Ministry of Natural Resources data for use within their research, the researcher must also submit a request for a data sharing agreement to the appropriate park zone ecologist or district biologist.

5.0 Review

This section outlines the responsibilities for reviewing and authorizing applications to conduct research, and the criteria used to evaluate research applications.

5.1 Responsibilities for Authorization of Research Applications

Review of the application may involve several individuals depending on the number and location of provincial parks or conservation reserves where the research is proposed to be conducted. These responsibilities can be found in Research Authorization Procedure for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves (Procedure PAM 13.01.01).

The table below outlines who is responsible for confirming final authorization of a research application:

Research Projects Where Initial Written Authorization is Required By:	Manager Responsible for Confirming Final Authorization¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One Park Superintendent <li style="text-align: center;">or - One Conservation Reserve Manager 	Park Superintendent or Conservation Reserve Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple park superintendents in a single zone 	Zone Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple conservation reserve managers in a single region 	Regional Resources Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Park superintendent(s) <li style="text-align: center;">and - Conservation reserve manager(s) 	Manager, Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Park superintendents in multiple zones <li style="text-align: center;">or - Conservation reserve managers in multiple regions 	Manager, Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section

¹ As specified in Ontario Regulations 347/07 and 319/07, written authorization must be provided from the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager. This written authorization may take the form of internal document (email) on file with the review coordinator, with a single authorization confirmation letter issued to the researcher by the responsible manager as outlined in this table.

5.2 Review Criteria

As stated in the Ontario Regulations (347/07 Provincial Parks: General Provisions; 319/07 Conservation Reserves: General Provisions), in considering whether or not to grant authorization, the responsible manager shall base his or her decision on the following criteria:

- the potential for the proposed activity to protect or enhance human safety;
- the degree that the proposed activity would harm or benefit the natural environment, plants or wildlife or support or impede the maintenance of ecological integrity;
- the range and value of scientific benefits that the proposed activity would provide; and
- the extent that the proposed activity would promote cultural knowledge and understanding.

5.2.1 Critical Factors

In considering whether to recommend authorization to the responsible manager, reviewers will consider the following factors in addition to the review criteria. If any of these critical factors are not satisfactorily addressed, the reviewers and review coordinator will not recommend that the proposed research be authorized by the responsible manager.

The researcher:

- has submitted all data, abstracts and reports from previous projects conducted in Ontario's provincial parks or conservation reserves required under their previous research authorizations.

The proposed research project:

- is consistent with MNR legislation and policy;
- minimizes disruption to the visitors, staff, and operations within the provincial park(s) and/or conservation reserve(s);
- (where applicable) has obtained all necessary collecting permits, has an approved animal handling/care protocol, and has addressed any concerns raised by the review;
- provides sufficient lead time to allow for necessary review (a period of at least one to two months should be provided);

- will not adversely impact the natural or cultural resources or the facilities within the provincial park(s) or conservation reserve(s);
- minimizes impacts related to construction and support activities, trash disposal, trail conditions, and mechanized equipment use in sensitive areas;
- does not involve extensive collecting of natural or cultural materials or unnecessary replication of existing collections;
- when deemed necessary by MNR staff, has contacted and received consent from Aboriginal communities affected by the project (this may be done after the application to conduct research has been submitted and may be done with the aid or advice of MNR staff); and
- has identified any potential health and safety issues, and proposed measures to mitigate these issues.

5.2.2 Favourable Factors

In recommending authorization to the responsible manager, the reviewers will consider and address the following favourable factors associated with the research application.

The proposed research project:

- addresses MNR's current set of Protected Area Research Needs, contributing information useful to an increased understanding of provincial parks or conservation reserves resources, and thereby contributes to effective management and/or interpretation;
- addresses problems or questions of importance to science or society and shows promise of making an important contribution to humankind's knowledge of the subject matter;
- communicates the research findings to the scientific community, preferably through peer reviewed literature;
- provides for the investigator(s) to prepare occasional summaries of findings for public use, such as at provincial parks or conservation reserves, at community seminars or in written literature;
- discusses plans for the cataloguing, conservation and care of collected natural or archaeological objects, and their disposition in a recognized institution;

- clearly anticipates logistical needs and provides detail about provisions for meeting those needs;
- does not require substantial logistical, administrative, curatorial, or project monitoring support by MNR/Ontario Parks staff;
- considers alternative sites (e.g., outside the provincial park(s) or conservation reserve(s)) if appropriate; and
- addresses any other factors not listed here (e.g., site-specific issues).

6.0 Authorization

After the review of the project, and provided any concerns raised during the review have been satisfactorily addressed, written authorization will be provided by the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager to the review coordinator. An e-mail from the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager account to the review coordinator is acceptable. The review coordinator will retain this written permission on file and send a copy to the Protected Area Research Analyst.

The responsible manager outlined in the Section 5.1 of this policy may issue a single letter confirming park superintendent or conservation reserve manager authorization.

A template authorization letter is available through the Protected Area Research Analyst with the Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section. This template should be customized (adding or removing conditions) as necessary for each project. The authorization letter template may be updated from time to time without requiring an update to this policy.

Where applicable, MNR is responsible for meeting the requirements under the Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves. Conditions and requirements may be included in the research authorization letter as necessary.

6.1 Length of Authorizations

Authorization letters may be issued for a period up to and not exceeding three years. The researcher may request a maximum of two extensions, with each extension not exceeding two years. Therefore a single authorization, including extensions, may not exceed a total of seven years. If a researcher wishes to continue activities beyond two extensions, the researcher must submit a new Application to Conduct Research in a Provincial Park or Conservation Reserve

6.2 Data Sharing

If the researcher has been granted a data sharing agreement, the following condition should be added to the drafted authorization letter:

- “For the sole purposes of your research work in the [*insert provincial park(s) or conservation reserve(s)*], you will be granted access to [*insert specific data to be used*]. These data may be used solely for the purposes of this project and your use of these data must comply with the Electronic Intellectual Property End-User License Agreement (attached)”.

Along with this statement, a copy of the Ministry of Natural Resources “**Electronic Intellectual Property End-User License Agreement**” should be attached to the drafted authorization letter.

6.3 Reporting

Researchers are required to submit an annual report following each field season. The annual report must include:

- a copy of all field data collected
- a report on the activities conducted
- a maximum one page plain language abstract summary of the results
- any methodological changes (if applicable)
- the expected field schedule for the coming field season (if applicable).

If no major methodological changes are to take place, and all terms and conditions of authorization have been followed, a full review of the project is not necessary prior to the next field season. If major methodological changes are to take place, a new application must be submitted and a full review of the project is required.

Researchers are required to submit copies of any reports or publications arising from the research by the date stated in the authorization letter to the research review coordinator and to the Protected Area Research Analyst at pa.science@ontario.ca.

7.0 Tracking

Copies of all applications to conduct research, authorization letters (including rationale), letters of denial (including rationale), reports, abstracts and data will be submitted to the Protected Area Research Analyst at pa.science@ontario.ca for inclusion in an appropriate electronic file storage system.

8.0 Unauthorized Research

Unauthorized research is subject to possible charges and fines (subject to conviction) for contravening the regulations under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. Unauthorized researchers may also be prohibited from receiving authorization to conduct research in provincial parks and conservation reserves for a period of up to three years.

Failure to meet the terms of conditions associated with a previously authorized research project will result in the immediate withdrawal of authorization. Continuation of research for which authorization has been withdrawn will be considered as unauthorized activity, subject to the same possible penalties as described above.