

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. On the right, a sandy beach meets a body of water. A path winds through a wooded area with sparse trees and patches of sand. The foreground shows a body of water with some lily pads. The overall scene is a mix of natural and managed land.

Balancing Protection with Recreation in Ontario's Provincial Parks

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Darlington Provincial Park
Recreation Class

North Beach Provincial Park
Recreation Class



Presqu'ile Provincial Park
Natural Environment Class

Sandbanks Provincial Park
Natural Environment Class



Ecological Integrity

Ecological integrity refers to a condition in which...

- biotic and abiotic components of ecosystems
 - the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities
- ...are characteristic for their natural regions

AND

rates of change and ecosystem processes are unimpeded



Objectives

1. To permanently **protect** representative ecosystems, biodiversity and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage and to manage these areas to ensure that **ecological integrity** is maintained.
2. To provide opportunities for ecologically sustainable **outdoor recreation** opportunities and encourage associated economic benefits.
3. To provide opportunities for residents of Ontario and visitors to increase their **knowledge and appreciation** of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage.
4. To facilitate scientific **research** and to provide points of reference to support **monitoring** of ecological change on the broader landscape.



It's in Our Nature

Planning and management principles

The following principles shall guide all aspects of the planning and management of Ontario's system of provincial parks and conservation reserves:

1. Maintenance of **ecological integrity** shall be the first priority and the restoration of ecological integrity shall be considered.
2. Opportunities for consultation shall be provided.

Darlington





- Recreation class
- Baymouth barrier beach



- *“protect...natural features found in (natural environment zones) from detrimental forms of development, management, and recreational use”*

-1985 Park Management Plan



Presqu'île

- Natural Environment class
- 2000 Management Plan
- Established Beach Management Committee in 2005

- Conflicting values: dune processes, recreational beach use, shorebird habitat, bird viewing opportunities





- *“to provide quality beach recreational opportunities and habitat for migrating and resident birds, and educate park users on the values of the beach and dune system.”*

- 2006 Draft Beach Management Strategy



- Adaptive management – adjusting operational plans



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An aerial satellite photograph of a coastal area. The left side of the image shows a dark blue ocean with a white sandy beach. To the right of the beach is a large, dark bay or inlet. The land to the right of the bay is divided into a dense grid of rectangular parcels, likely agricultural or residential. The colors of the parcels range from green to brown. The text "North Beach" is overlaid in the bottom left corner in a light blue font.

North Beach



- Recreation class
- Management planning underway
- Large infrastructure footprint



- ATV traffic in off-season
- Limited vegetation trampling



- Crown land addition considered for addition to park since 1970s
- Adjacent landowner wants access through 1811 road
- Current use completely unrestricted – vehicles, camping, garbage



Map

Satellite

Hybrid



Sandbanks

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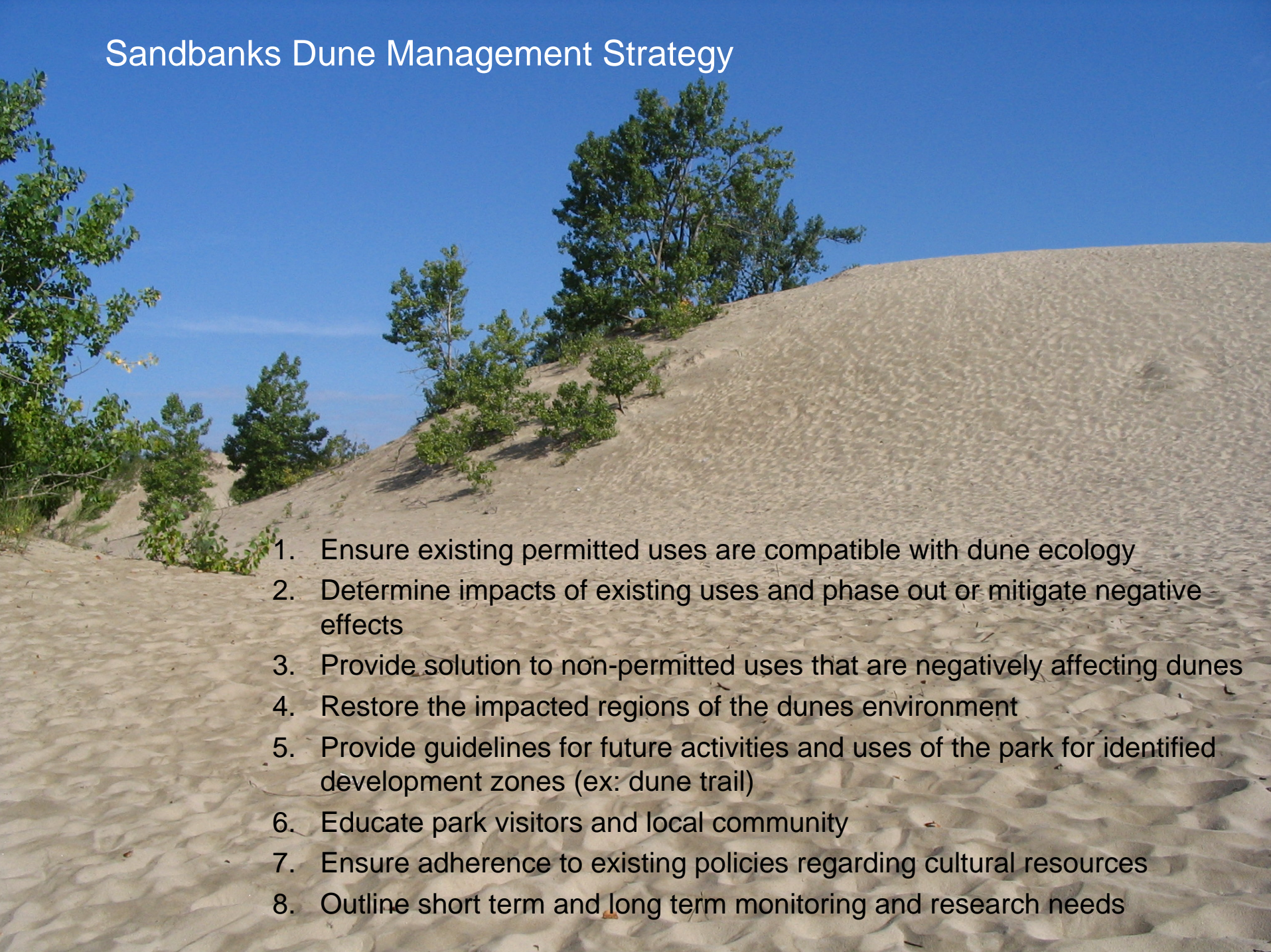
Uncontrolled access to nature reserve zones

Legacy of past uses and development



Designing appropriate controlled access points

Sandbanks Dune Management Strategy

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1. Ensure existing permitted uses are compatible with dune ecology
 2. Determine impacts of existing uses and phase out or mitigate negative effects
 3. Provide solution to non-permitted uses that are negatively affecting dunes
 4. Restore the impacted regions of the dunes environment
 5. Provide guidelines for future activities and uses of the park for identified development zones (ex: dune trail)
 6. Educate park visitors and local community
 7. Ensure adherence to existing policies regarding cultural resources
 8. Outline short term and long term monitoring and research needs

Challenges to Ecological Integrity

Controlled Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• existing access not designed with ecological integrity in mind• access provided to some sensitive areas
Uncontrolled Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• difficult or impossible to prevent unauthorized use of sensitive areas
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• parking lot layout problematic• buildings and campsites located in foredunes
Beach maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• raking changes habitat and dune dynamics• coordinated restoration efforts needed

Solutions...

- Consider EI in all parks
- Develop strategies that balance all uses and issues
- Enlist assistance of experts
- Learn from other protected areas
- Test and adopt consistent techniques
- Engage park staff



Thanks!

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