



Gros Morne
National Park

What We Heard:

Consultation on the request for inclusion of Gros Morne National Park in an Early Intervention Strategy Spruce Budworm Control Program

May 2021



Parks Canada
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Introduction

With indications that western Newfoundland is on the verge of a spruce budworm outbreak, Parks Canada received a request from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador - Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to include Gros Morne National Park (GMNP) in an Early Intervention Strategy for Spruce Budworm (EIS). The EIS is a research program being delivered collaboratively by the Healthy Forest Partnership, which includes Natural Resources Canada, all four Atlantic Provinces, academia, and the forest sectors. EIS is a novel management approach that involves treating spruce budworm “hotspots” (smaller areas where populations are still low, but are increasing) with the objective of preventing an outbreak from occurring, with minimal or no defoliation to forests.

Spruce budworm is a native forest insect in Newfoundland and Labrador, and its cycle is part of the ecosystem process supporting regeneration of the forests. However, there is some uncertainty and debate about the degree to which the impending outbreak is natural or exacerbated by climate change and forest management.

To support decision makers considering whether to allow the EIS in the national park, Parks Canada conducted a review of policy and legislation and developed an evidence-informed decision support guide that was reviewed by scientific/technical experts from the federal government, universities and non-governmental organizations. At the same time, Parks Canada launched a public consultation process seeking input from groups and individuals to help the Agency better understand the socio-economic and other impacts on Indigenous and other communities, including adjacent land owners and national park users. This document summarizes the input received during this public consultation process.

Consultation Process

Parks Canada’s consultation process on whether to allow Gros Morne National Park to be included in the EIS budworm control program was held between March 29 and April 18, 2021. The public was informed of the consultation by various means, which included:

- an Info Bulletin sent directly to 63 media contacts;
- emails sent to 384 addresses representing local municipalities, Indigenous groups, partners, tourism operators, environmental stewardship groups, the forestry industry organization, and other stakeholders;
- letters with questionnaires sent directly to all 466 local residents who are eligible for domestic resource harvesting permits in the national park;
- posters advising of the process placed at several locations throughout enclave communities (e.g. in post offices);
- information posted on the Gros Morne National Park website;
- public service announcements broadcast on local community radio; and

- two social media posts on Facebook.

Those interested in participating in the consultation were encouraged to register for public information sessions and to submit feedback until April 18, 2021 by email to pc.grosmorneconsultations.pc@canada.ca.

Gros Morne National Park Parc national du Gros-Morne

We want to hear from you!

Could an outbreak of spruce budworm in Gros Morne National Park affect you, your business or your community?

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has asked Parks Canada to include Gros Morne National Park in an Early Intervention Budworm Control program starting in 2021. Parks Canada would like to hear how you would be affected by a decision to allow, or not allow, spraying for spruce budworm in the national park.

Virtual Public Information Sessions:
April 12 at 7 pm (English session)
April 13 at 3:30 pm (Bilingual session)
April 14 at 10:30 am (English session)

To register, please email pc.grosmorneconsultations.pc@canada.ca

Parks Canada will be accepting input from the general public until April 18, 2021

<http://parkscanada.gc.ca/grosmorne-sb>

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Poster distributed in park enclave communities

Parks Canada held a virtual town hall meeting with employees of its Western Newfoundland and Labrador Field Unit on April 7th. As people who take pride in maintaining the national park and showcasing it for visitors, Parks Canada employees have unique insights to contribute. Over 50 employees participated in the meeting and several submitted questions and comments over the course of the consultation.

Agency staff were interviewed by the CBC Radio Morning Show in Corner Brook, Voice of Bonne Bay community radio, and the National Parks Traveler. These interviews covered the background on the issue and encouraged the public to review information provided, participate in public information sessions, and submit feedback to the Agency on how they could be impacted by a decision to allow or not allow the national park to be

included in an aerial spray control program. Public service announcements carried on Voice of Bonne Bay community radio also encouraged the public to participate in the consultation process.

Parks Canada held three virtual public information sessions on April 12th (7:00 pm), 13th (3:30 pm) and 14th (10:30 am). A total of 25 people participated in the sessions, representing the general public, enclave residents, domestic harvesters, academia, environmental groups, and federal and provincial governments. The sessions provided participants an opportunity to learn about the conditions leading to the request to allow spraying in the Park and the factors being weighed by Agency staff and external experts examining the issue. Participants had an opportunity to submit questions, both prior to and during the sessions, and to offer their comments and insights. They were also encouraged to provide additional written feedback through the consultations email address.

During the consultation period, Parks Canada held additional meetings with Miawpukek First Nation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Gros Morne Cooperating Association, and Qalipu First Nation. Once again, discussions included an outline of the circumstances behind the request to include the national park in the control program and inviting questions and comments on the issue. A total of 16 people participated in these sessions.

The letters that were mailed to domestic harvesters contained a questionnaire and a postage-paid envelope. Ten domestic harvester questionnaires were returned by mail.

Two separate posts on the Gros Morne National Park Facebook page generated comments and reactions, reaching 11,541 people and resulting in 66 click-throughs to the consultation website page.

When the public consultation period ended on April 18th, 38 emails with comments and questions had been submitted to pc.grosmorneconsultations.pc@canada.ca.

What We Heard

A total of 60 responses were received through the emails, letter mail and meetings: 13 individual respondents (22%) were in favour of including GMNP in the provincial EIS budworm control program and 36 (60%) were opposed the intervention. The remaining 11 (18%) of respondents contacted the Agency with questions and comments but indicated no preference on the issue.

Of the 60 individual respondents, 42 (70%) could be identified as members of the general public, residents of enclave communities, or domestic timber harvesters. Within these groups, the majority of the general public and enclave residents (25 of 32 respondents, or 86%) were opposed to the control program. Of the responses from

domestic resource harvesters, four were in favour of spraying, four against, and two had comments or questions but did not indicate a preference.

Those who oppose including the national park in the budworm control program feel that Parks Canada should not interfere in what is a natural process as part of the life cycle of the forest ecosystem. Several respondents said that we should not allow spraying or any other intervention that would be contrary to Parks Canada's mandate or policy of ensuring ecological integrity.

Concerns were expressed about the use of the pesticide and the effect it could have on biodiversity, non-target species, human health, food chains, local vegetation and water sources. Some commented that controlling pests gives the forest no opportunity to adapt and that spraying to control the outbreak would have too many unknown consequences. Other respondents encouraged the Agency to work with nature and to recognize that we cannot control nature, even if the current state of the forest has been created by climate change and human impact. Some also felt that the amount of forest that could potentially be sprayed within the Park is likely to have little impact on the size of the outbreak outside the national park.

“National Parks are supposed to be supporting natural processes and the suppression of anything like this always has consequences.”

“GMNP is one of the only examples of coastal balsam fir forest that can serve as a benchmark in Newfoundland. Benchmarks will be important to understand the impacts of climate and land-use change on natural ecosystems. We are not aware of any scientific evidence that demonstrates that spraying spruce budworm is beneficial for natural ecosystems and ecological integrity.”

“As food for the Spruce budworm becomes scarcer, the outbreak in the park will cease.”

“By not allowing this spray to go ahead, nature will take care of itself, those forest will regenerate over the time of a few years, and we will have a younger forest instead of a more mature, older forest.”

“The type of visitor who comes to Gros Morne is environmentally-conscious. They are responsive to learning about ecological processes, and are more likely to support Parks Canada's decision to not use insecticide.”

In encouraging Parks Canada to not allow spraying in the national park, some respondents suggested that the situation affords an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to work together on research into what happens when an area is left untreated for spruce budworm. Others felt there could be promotion of sustainable harvesting methods and education of the public on the importance of forest disturbances. Others suggested scientists could explore ways to work with nature and see if there are natural ways to lessen the impacts of the outbreak.

Some respondents pointed out that past outbreaks created an environment where young, strong forest could grow and that outbreaks were important for creating a healthy forest ecosystem. They also indicated that if experts feel that forests in the park will regenerate well after an outbreak, then the outbreak should be allowed to proceed.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society submitted written input, in which they indicated that their “strong recommendation is that Parks Canada reject the province’s proposal to spray in the Park.” They supported this with a number of concerns related to the potential impact of the control program on park ecosystems and ecological integrity, as well as concerns about conflict with Agency policy and legislation, impacts on visitors, and their belief that the program had limited likelihood of success. It should be noted that CPAWS was included among 13 expert reviewers of Parks Canada’s draft decision support guide, so relative to other respondents may have had greater awareness of the evidence base and Parks Canada’s policy and legislative considerations on this issue.



There were only 13 respondents that were in favour of the national park being included in the control program. Some were concerned that the forests have already been altered to the point where they cannot withstand outbreaks as well as they should and they believed humans can play an active role in forest management. Some recalled the effects of past outbreaks on the forest and suggested that many Newfoundlanders will be negatively affected if the current outbreak is allowed to continue. It was noted that the Canadian Forest Service has done considerable work in support of the EIS and the objective of preserving forests for future generations.

“Spraying will protect the forest and it is necessary to protect it, especially with how the moose population has affected forest health.”

“The forests are poorly altered by us enough, let us alter in a way that restores instead of decimates.”

“The last budworm infestation devastated our forests. Some areas, including Gros Morne National Park still haven't recovered. It is vital we get ahead of this next wave.”

“Destruction to the forest was massive and only now starting to recover. A large outbreak of SBW could potentially cause much more damage to the forest and take decades to repair itself.”

“Only clear effect is the damage to our forest should you not get in front of a potential outbreak. Firewood and logs are becoming more difficult to get in my area each year.”

Parks Canada also heard from the Newfoundland and Labrador Forest Industry Association and the Registered Professional Foresters of Newfoundland and Labrador; both groups voiced the concern that the outbreak will have an impact on available timber resources. Noting that the forestry sector is worth \$383 million annually and creates 5,000 direct and indirect jobs, the industry representatives felt it is necessary to actively manage conditions that threaten the health of our forests.

Conclusion

Following the technical review and the public consultations, Parks Canada will make a policy-based decision on whether or not to further consider the province's request to allow the EIS budworm control program in Gros Morne National Park.

Parks Canada has a proven track record of effective ecosystem management and is committed to maintaining and restoring forest health both inside Gros Morne National Park and in the greater ecosystem, and to working with partners on the sound management of lands and waters surrounding the park. Parks Canada appreciates the time, effort, and perspectives of all those who contributed to this consultation process.

Appendix

Examples of communications materials distributed during consultation period:

Information Bulletin distributed to media:



Information Bulletin

CONSULTATION ON INCLUSION OF GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK IN AN EARLY INTERVENTION SPRUCE BUDWORM CONTROL PROGRAM

ROCKY HARBOUR, NL, MARCH 31, 2021.—Parks Canada has received a request from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to include Gros Morne National Park in an *Early Intervention Spruce Budworm Control Program* starting in 2021. The Agency is considering this request and invites the public to participate in a consultation process and provide Parks Canada with their views on how they would be affected by a decision to allow or not allow spraying in the national park.

Spruce budworm is a native species and insect outbreaks are an important part of the natural forest cycle in Gros Morne National Park. Insect outbreaks open up gaps in the canopy so new trees can start to grow, creating a patchwork of young and old forest across the landscape, which helps ensure that all wildlife species can meet their habitat needs.

Monitoring suggests a spruce budworm outbreak is emerging in western Newfoundland, which could cause widespread defoliation and mortality of balsam fir and spruce forests. The outbreak could be more severe and potentially affect areas that would not have been impacted in the past because of climate change and human impacts on the landscape. The concern is that the national park could act as a source of spruce budworm that spreads to surrounding lands.

The control program uses a product called *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki (Btk)*. This is a soil bacterium that is lethal to the spruce budworm and not considered toxic for humans, or other mammals, birds, fish, or most other insects. *Btk* is applied through aerial spraying of outbreak areas.

Ecological integrity remains Parks Canada's first priority in all decision-making processes. Parks Canada's policy and legislation allow for intervention to manage naturally occurring ecosystem processes under certain conditions, including to prevent impacts on neighbouring lands.

The Agency is conducting an evidence-based technical/scientific assessment that will be reviewed by a range of subject matter experts. At the same time, Parks Canada is consulting with Indigenous groups, partners and stakeholders, including residents of enclave communities, representatives of environmental organizations, and those in the forestry and tourism sectors.

Following the consultation period, if Parks Canada proceeds with further consideration of the request to allow the national park to be included in the spruce budworm control program, the Agency will develop an Integrated Pest Management Plan and complete a Detailed Impact Assessment, which would entail further public consultation.

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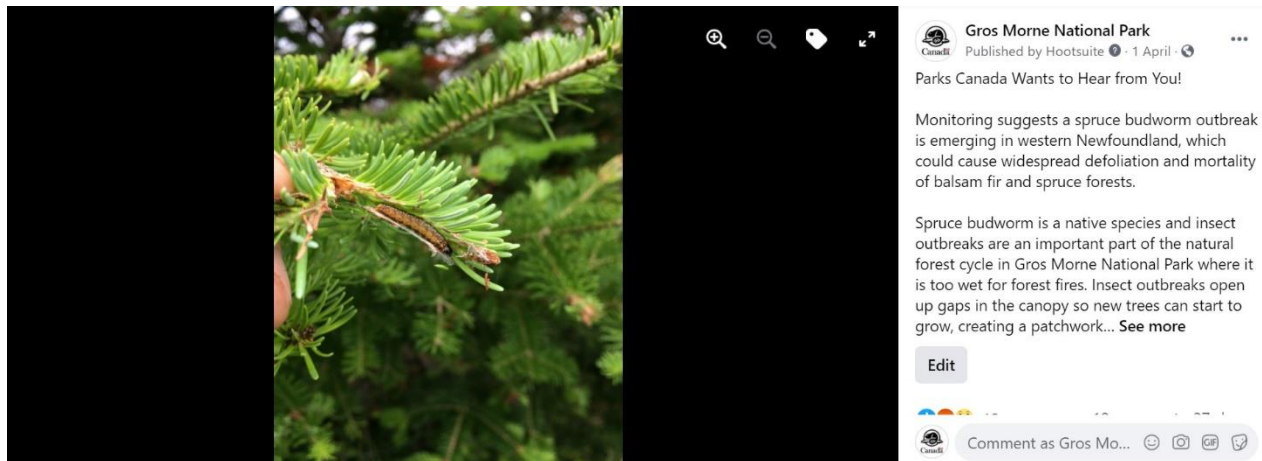
What We Heard: Gros Morne National Park and Spruce Budworm

The public is invited to email their feedback to pc.grosmorneconsultations.pc@canada.ca by April 18, 2021. For further information on this public consultation process, including dates and times of public information sessions, please visit: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/grosmorne-sb>.


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Facebook posts (2):



What We Heard: Gros Morne National Park and Spruce Budworm



Gros Morne National Park
Published by Hootsuite · 12 April ·

REMINDER: Parks Canada Wants to Hear from You!

The public is invited to email their feedback to pc.grosormeconsultations.pc@canada.ca by April 18, 2021:

Monitoring suggests a spruce budworm outbreak is emerging in western Newfoundland, which could cause widespread defoliation and mortality of balsam fir and spruce forests.

Spruce budworm is a native species and insect outbreaks are an important part of the natural forest cycle in Gros Morne National Park where it is too w... [See more](#)

Comment as Gros Mo...

Public Service Announcement on area community radio:



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Parks Canada Wants to Hear from You!

The provincial government has asked Parks Canada to include Gros Morne National Park in the province's Early Intervention Control Program for spruce budworm starting in 2021.

Parks Canada would like to hear how you could be affected by a decision to allow, or not allow, spraying for spruce budworm in Gros Morne National Park.

Parks Canada will hold three virtual public information sessions:

- April 12 at 7 pm (in English)
- April 13 at 3:30 pm (in English and French)
- April 14 at 10:30 am (in English)

To register, please email pc.grosmorneconsultations.pc@canada.ca.

For more information, please visit: parks canada.gc.ca/grosmorne-sb.

Parcs Canada veut connaître votre opinion

Le gouvernement provincial a demandé à Parcs Canada de permettre au parc national du Gros-Morne d'être inclus dans un programme d'intervention précoce contre la tordeuse des bourgeons de l'épinette à partir de 2021.

Parcs Canada aimerait savoir comment vous seriez touché par une décision d'autoriser, ou non, la pulvérisation contre la tordeuse des bourgeons de l'épinette dans le parc national du Gros-Morne.

Parcs Canada organise trois séances d'information publiques :

- Le 12 avril à 19h (séance en anglais)
- Le 13 avril à 15h30 (séance bilingue)
- Le 14 avril à 10h30 (séance en anglais)

Pour vous inscrire, veuillez nous envoyer un courriel à :
pc.grosmorneconsultations.pc@canada.ca.

Pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter
parks canada.gc.ca/grosmorne-tbe.

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