

Notices

Notice

Natural Heritage Conservation Act
(R.S.Q., c. C-61.01)

Temporary protection status as a proposed ecological reserve assigned to the greater part of the islands in the Outaouais river known by the name “Îles Finlay”

Notice is hereby given, in accordance with sections 29 and 38 of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act (R.S.Q., c. C-61.01) that:

(1) the Minister of the Environment, by Minister's Order September 9 2004, assigned temporary protection status as a proposed ecological reserve to the greater part of the islands in the Outaouais river known by the name “Îles Finlay” for a period of 4 years to begin on the date of publication of this notice in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*;

(2) the proposed Finlay islands ecological reserve concerns the portion of islands 52 and 54 in Waltham township higher than 106.68 metres above mean sea level. Located on the Outaouais river and covering an area of approximately 94 hectares, the proposed ecological reserve forms part of the territory of Municipalité de Waltham, Municipalité régionale de comté de Pontiac;

(3) the permanent protection status of “ecological reserve” envisaged for the territory is consistent with the temporary protection status already assigned, the granting of such permanent protection status being governed by the Natural Heritage Conservation Act;

(4) permanent protection status will not be granted to the land before 60 days have elapsed following the publication of this notice in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*, a period of time during which any interested person may send comments to Léopold Gaudreau, Direction du patrimoine écologique et du développement durable, ministère de l'Environnement, at the address provided in paragraph 5;

(5) a copy of the plan of the proposed ecological reserve may be obtained on payment of a fee by contacting Léopold Gaudreau, Direction du patrimoine écologique et du développement durable, ministère de l'Environnement, 675, René-Lévesque Est, 4^e étage,

boîte 21, Québec (Québec) G1R 5V7; telephone: (418) 521-3907, extension 4783; fax: (418) 646-6169; e-mail: leopold.gaudreau@menv.gouv.qc.ca

MADELEINE PAULIN,
Deputy Minister

CONSERVATION PLAN FOR THE PROPOSED FINLAY ISLANDS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

June 2004

1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The boundaries and location of the proposed Finlay islands ecological reserve are shown on the map in the Schedule.

The proposed Finlay islands ecological reserve concerns the upper portion of two islands in the Outaouais river, namely the portion with an elevation higher than 106.68 metres above mean sea level. The islands (islands 52 and 54 of Waltham township), which form part of the territory of Municipalité de Waltham in Municipalité régionale de comté de Pontiac, are known by the name “Îles Finlay”.

The proposed Finlay islands ecological reserve covers an area of approximately 94 hectares.

1.2. Ecological overview

The proposed ecological reserve forms part of the Ottawa Plain (provisional name) natural region which lies within the natural province of the St. Lawrence Lowlands.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The land of the proposed ecological reserve lies within the sugar maple-bitternut hickory bioclimatic domain. It is characterized by a moderate, subhumid climate with a long growing season. The average temperature is 4.5°C, average annual precipitation is 1,065 millimetres and the average growing season is approximately 201 days.

Geology: The basement rocks of the islands are formed of Ordovician rocks including limestone, dolomite, mudrock and sandstone. The basement rocks have no influence on the soils or vegetation because they are covered by Quaternary fluvial deposits of sand, gravel and clay. On the southern island, the wind is believed to have caused the deposits to shift to form an eolian deposit which then became colonized by vegetation.

Archaeology: There has been no archaeological work on the Finlay islands to date. The islands present an enormous archaeological potential, however, because the Outaouais river is a major waterway which provided an east-west transportation link for generations of Amerindians. Archaeological research carried out in recent years has shown the potential of the Aux Allumettes island area slightly west of the Finlay islands. There is evidence on these sites of very early settlement dating back to the prehistoric Native period known as the Archaic Laurentian period (6,500 years before present). Archaeological sites all along the river are also evidence of this early settlement. The archaeological sites that may be discovered in the area will be extremely fragile because they are generally close to the surface and as a result any disturbance of the soil could partially or completely destroy them.

Vegetation: Silver maple predominates at the edge of the marshy areas where the soils are subject to seasonal flooding. Red ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) and American elm (*Ulmus americana*) are frequently found in these forest communities while the herbaceous layer is formed exclusively of sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*).

The silver maple stands give way to red oak stands slightly upslope on the sites which are not affected by annual flooding. The latter forest community is largely dominant, covering over three quarter of the Finlay islands.

Stands of bur oak are found further upslope. The main companion species in the oak stand are silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) and basswood (*Tilia americana*).

Pine stands are found in the better-drained areas, including the eolian deposit. These stands are on the southern island. White pine (*Pinus strobus*), red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) and jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) are the dominant species in these softwood forest communities along with a range of other pioneering species.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

At least five threatened or vulnerable plant species and that could be so designated have been inventoried on the Finlay islands to date. They are the white oak (*Quercus alba*), woolly hudsonia (*Hudsonia tomentosa*), *Cyperus lupulinus subsp. macilentus*, *Sporobolus cryptandrus* and *Polygonella articulata*. These plants have all been observed on the eolian dune deposit found on the southern island. The habitat of a sixth plant species that is part of the group of threatened or vulnerable species, *Gratiola aurea*, has also been reported on the dry beaches of both the Finlay islands.

The Finlay islands have considerable wildlife potential because of two species of turtle, namely the spiny softshell (*Apalone spinifera*), designated as threatened, and the map turtle (*Graptemys geographica*) which is found on the list of wildlife species that may be threatened or vulnerable. The presence of the map turtle on the islands was reported in the 1990s.

1.3. Occupation and land uses

The land is public property and no rights have been granted within the boundaries of the proposed ecological reserve.

2. Protection status

Ecological reserve status would allow the pursuit of integral preservation of a representative sample of the large sand-covered islands characteristic of the Outaouais river.

3. Activities within the reserve

The activities carried on within the boundaries of the proposed Finlay islands ecological reserve are governed by the Natural Heritage Conservation Act (R.S.Q., c. C-61.01).

This conservation plan does not specify any prohibited activity other than those prohibited in a proposed ecological reserve by the Act; nor does it authorize any other activities, or set any additional constraints on the activities permitted by the Act.

3.1. Prohibited activities

For reference purposes, it is important to note that under the Natural Heritage Conservation Act, the main activities prohibited in an area designated as a proposed ecological reserve are:

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- mining, gas and petroleum exploration, brine and underground reservoir exploration, prospecting, and digging or boring where those activities necessitate stripping, the digging of trenches, excavation or deforestation;
- forest management within the meaning of section 3 of the Forest Act (R.S.Q., c. F-4.1);
- the development of hydraulic resources and any production of energy on a commercial or industrial basis;
- any new allocation of a right to occupy land for vacation resort purposes;
- earthwork or construction work.

3.2. Activities governed by other statutes

All activities likely to be carried on within the boundaries of the proposed Finlay islands ecological reserve remain governed by the other applicable legislative and regulatory provisions, including those that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. The carrying on of certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations applicable within the boundaries of the proposed ecological reserve.

A special legal framework may, in particular, govern permitted and prohibited activities in connection with the development of wildlife resources (measures contained in the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife (R.S.Q., c. C-61.1)) and archaeological research (measures contained primarily in the Cultural Property Act (R.S.Q., c. B-4)).

3.3. Supervision of activities

The Minister of the Environment is responsible for the application of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act, and is therefore responsible for the proposed ecological reserves and ecological reserves established under that Act. The Minister will supervise and monitor the measures contained in the Act with regard to permitted activities in protected areas. In addition, the Minister has authority over these lands which form part of the domain of the State.

4. Permanent protection status

The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is “ecological reserve” status under the Natural Heritage Conservation Act.

SCHEDULE

