



SAGUENAY-ST. LAWRENCE  
**MARINE PARK**

# Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park expansion project

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Information  
Document



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**Prepared by:**

Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park  
expansion project team

Nathael Bergeron (Parks Canada)

Chloé Bonnette (Sépaq)

Yana Desautels (Parks Canada)

Martin Desrosiers (Parks Canada)

Laurence Pagé (Parks Canada)

Mathieu St-Onge (MELCCFP)

**Mapping:**

Corinne Trubiano (Parks Canada)

# Table of contents

<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1 Marine Protected Areas: Context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 Presentation of Project Initiators</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 History of the Creation of the Marine Park	9
3.2 Noteworthy Achievements	11
<b>4 History of Expansion Project</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5 Presentation of Proposed Marine Park Expansion</b>	<b>16</b>
5.1 Proposed Expansion Area	17
5.2 Conservation Tools	22
<b>6 Commitments</b>	<b>30</b>
6.1 Better Understanding for Better Protection	30
6.2 Acting in Consultation	32
6.3 Promoting Partnerships	33
6.4 Liaising with Local Communities	33
6.5 Involving More Local Representatives in Governance	34
<b>7 Sharing An Opinion</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>8 Next Steps</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix I. Consulted Stakeholders</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendix II. Preliminary Area Under Study</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Learn more</b>	<b>41</b>

# List of Acronyms

<b>DFO</b>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada	<b>MMON</b>	Marine Mammal Observation Network
<b>ECCC</b>	Environment and Climate Change Canada	<b>RCM</b>	Regional County Municipality
<b>GREMM</b>	Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals	<b>Sépaq</b>	Société des établissements de plein air du Québec
<b>G2T3M</b>	Working Group on Marine Traffic and Protection of Marine Mammals	<b>TRPAP</b>	Territorial reserve for protected area purposes
<b>ISMER</b>	Rimouski Institute of Ocean Sciences	<b>UQAR</b>	Université du Québec à Rimouski
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature	<b>UQO</b>	Université du Québec en Outaouais
<b>MAR</b>	Marine Activities in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations	<b>ZIP</b>	<i>Zone d'intervention prioritaire</i> , or area of primary concern
<b>MELCCFP</b>	Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec		

# Acknowledgements

The Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park (hereafter, the “Marine Park”) expansion project team receives advice and guidance from members of the Marine Park coordination committee, which comprises a number of representatives of local, regional and Indigenous communities.

## Representatives of the scientific community

**Émilien Pelletier**, professor emeritus, Rimouski Institute of Ocean Sciences (ISMER), Université du Québec à Rimouski (UQAR)  
**Clément Chion**, Professor, PhD, Department of Natural Sciences, Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO)

## Representatives of the Essipit Innu First Nation

**Martin Dufour**, Chief, Essipit Innu First Nation  
**Donald Bouchard**, maritime activity coordinator, Essipit Innu First Nation

## Representatives of the Wolastoqiyik Wamspekek First Nation

**Laurence Maher**, policy and legal affairs advisor, Wolastoqiyik Wamspekek First Nation  
**Bruno Thériault**, director of natural resources and territory, Wolastoqiyik Wamspekek First Nation

## RCM representatives, La Haute-Côte-Nord

**Richard Therrien**, mayor of Tadoussac  
**Kevin Bédard**, land management department head, La Haute-Côte-Nord RCM

## RCM representatives, Charlevoix-Est

**Donald Kenny**, mayor of Baie-Sainte-Catherine  
**Stéphane Charest**, head of land management and forestry, Charlevoix-Est RCM

## RCM representatives, Fjord-du-Saguenay

**Philôme La France**, mayor of Petit-Saguenay  
**Steeve Lemire**, land management coordinator, Fjord-du-Saguenay RCM

## RCM representatives, Les Basques, Rivière-du-Loup and Kamouraska

**Claude Dahl**, general director / secretary-treasurer, Les Basques RCM  
**Michel Lagacé**, prefect, Rivière-du-Loup RCM

Since 2022, committee members have been helping to move the project forward. We thank them for their dedication.

The expansion project team would also like to commend the work of the Saguenay-Charlevoix ZIP committee, the Sud-de-l'Estuaire ZIP committee and the Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP committee for gathering information on the territorial reserves for protected area purposes (TRPAP) established in the estuary by the Government of Quebec in 2020 in anticipation of a permanent legal designation. In 2021-2022, the three committees held discussions with local stakeholders and coastal communities. The environmental and socio-economic profiles described during these consultations represented an important source of information for the proposed expansion of the Marine Park.

Lastly, over the past year, meetings have been held with representatives of roughly 230 organizations to discuss the proposed expansion. Regional county municipalities (RCMs) and municipalities, First Nations, tourism and economic players, as well as representatives of the scientific community have generously offered their time to foster constructive exchanges and allow the project to move toward the public consultations stage.

# 1

## Marine Protected Areas: Context

The protection of land areas has a long history, whereas that of marine environments is more recent. Throughout the world, marine protected areas (MPAs) are viewed as a valuable tool for the conservation and discovery of marine environments.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a marine protected area as **“a clearly defined geographic space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”**<sup>1</sup>

Marine protected areas can offer environmental, social and economic benefits. They help maintain biodiversity, restore ecosystems and ensure the sustainable management of fish resources. MPAs mitigate the effects of the climate change while enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and adjacent communities. They can encourage sustainable tourism and leisure activities, in addition to protecting resources of cultural or spiritual value. Lastly, MPAs spawn research and promote educational activities.

<sup>1</sup> IUCN (2012). [When is a marine protected area really a marine protected area.](#) [Consulted online on 2024-10-10]

<sup>2</sup> ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE CANADA (2024). [Canadian protected and conserved areas database.](#) [Consulted online on 2024-10-10]

<sup>3</sup> MINISTÈRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT, DE LA LUTTE CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS (2024). [Marine protected areas in Québec.](#) [Consulted online on 2024-10-10]

### Marine Protected Areas in Quebec and Canada

In order to contribute to the conservation objective of 30% of marine territory by 2030, the governments of Canada and Quebec are actively working to establish a network of marine protected areas. The Government of Canada has adopted the Federal Marine Protected Areas Strategy, which is spearheaded by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). In Quebec, the two governments have been working together since 2018 under the Canada-Quebec Collaborative Agreement to Establish a Network of Marine Protected Areas in Quebec. The different types of marine protected areas vary in their objectives and the activities that can be practised within their boundaries.

Across Canada, approximately 15% of marine and coastal areas<sup>2</sup> are currently protected (842,849 km<sup>2</sup>), whereas in Quebec, this figure is 10%<sup>3</sup> (16,140 km<sup>2</sup>). At the federal level, these areas are essentially managed by three distinct entities: DFO, Parks Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). In Quebec, marine protected areas may be managed by the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec (MELCCFP) or jointly with the Government of Canada. Certain privately-owned coastal areas or islands are also protected.



# 2

## Presentation of Project Initiators

The expansion project is being led by the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada. The governments are represented by the following two organizations:

*Environnement,  
Lutte contre  
les changements  
climatiques,  
Faune et Parcs*

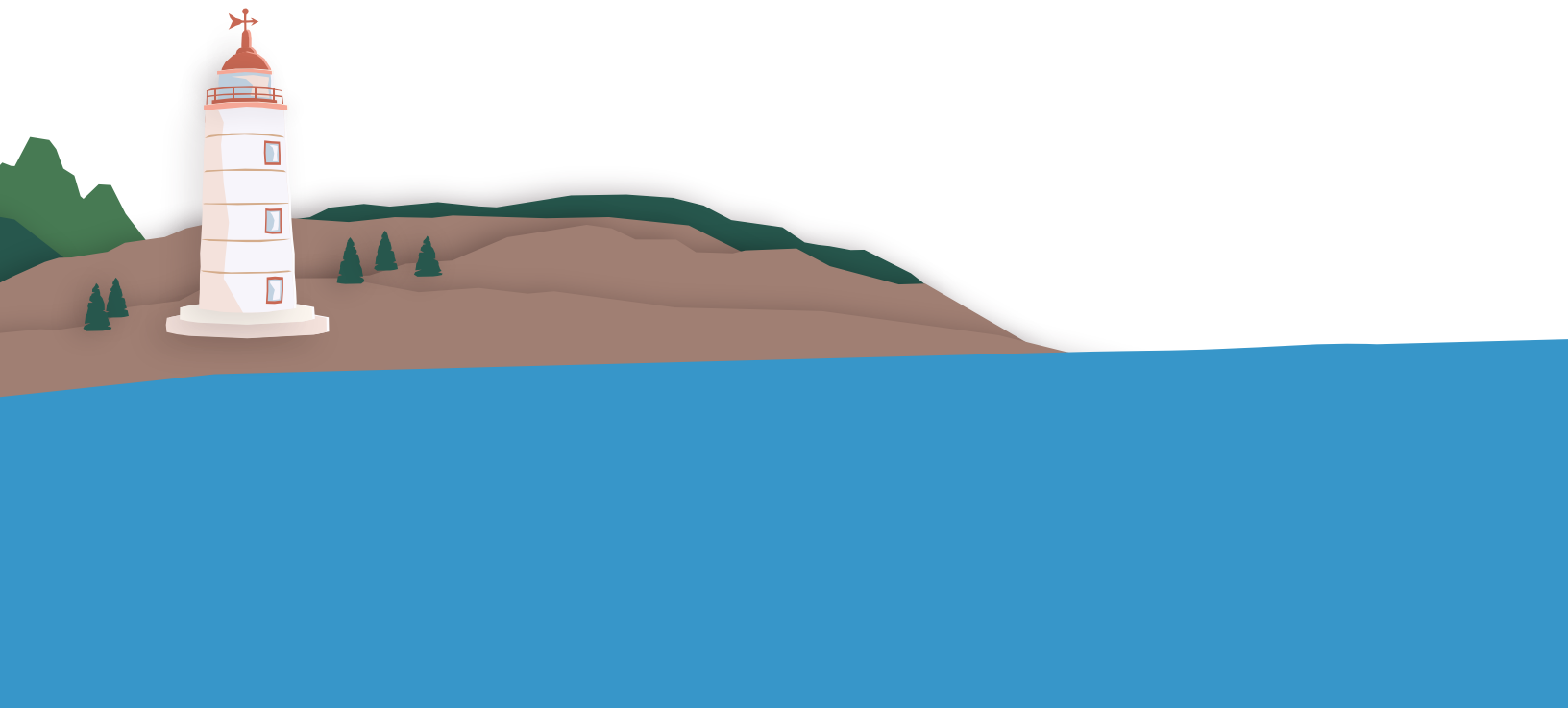


Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada

The mission of the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec (MELCCFP) is to protect the environment, ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, and play a key role in the climate transition with a view to sustainability in order to contribute to the priority issues of Quebec society.

On behalf of the people of Canada, Parks Canada protects and presents nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage while fostering public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.



# 3

## Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park

The St. Lawrence River is a fundamental component of both Quebec's and Canada's cultural, environmental and economic identities. The need to better protect and promote this watercourse has long been recognized by both governments as well as by regional stakeholders that have an interest in marine conservation and resource management in the St. Lawrence as well as how the latter is used. Since 1988, the Canadian and Quebec governments have been working together to conserve, restore, protect and promote the river in accordance with the St. Lawrence Action Plan. The creation of the Marine Park notably stems from the implementation of this plan.

### 3.1 History of the Creation of the Marine Park

The idea to create this marine protected area at the confluence of the Saguenay Fjord and the St. Lawrence Estuary dates back to the 1980s, when a number of research pioneers in the field of marine environments began to take a greater interest in the population of St. Lawrence belugas, the health of which was showing worrying signs. At the time, beluga carcasses on the shores of the St. Lawrence were showing high levels of contamination that were causing fatal cancers. This difficult reality sparked a collective awareness that in turn led to a significant level of public engagement.

In 1988, the Coalition pour le parc marin du Saguenay-Saint-Laurent, an umbrella group of 27 regional associations from Charlevoix, La Haute-Côte-Nord and Saguenay, is created. That same year, the International Forum for the Future of the Beluga brings together over 200 individuals in Tadoussac. The creation of a Marine Park is retained as one of the main strategies to implement in order to facilitate the recovery of this population.

In 1990, in Tadoussac, the governments of Canada and Quebec sign an historic agreement with a view to establishing the "Saguenay Marine Park." In doing so, they recognized the importance and the urgency of protecting the marine environment at the confluence of the Saguenay River and the St. Lawrence Estuary for current and future generations. The ensuing public consultations lead to a proposal for a protected area spanning 746 km<sup>2</sup>. The overwhelming majority of briefs received are in favour of the project, but request that the protected area be larger.

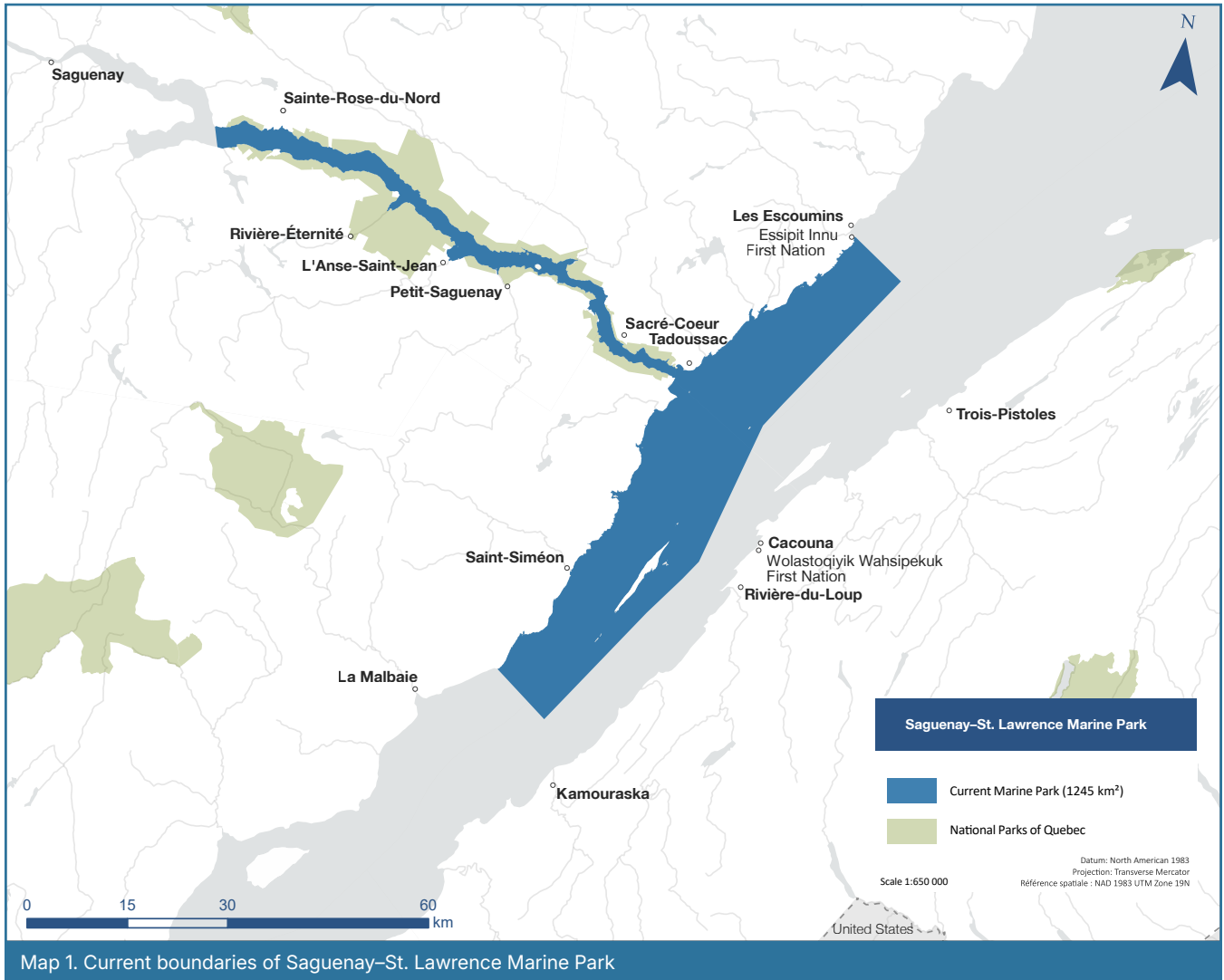
In 1993, the governments officially announce that the Marine Park would be expanded to 1,245 km<sup>2</sup>. Public consultations on the development of the Marine Park serve as a basis for the first management plan, which is submitted by planners in 1995.

The laws officially clearing the way for the creation of the Marine Park enter into force in 1998, making this the first marine protected area in Quebec and one of the first in all of Canada. The Marine Park's model is unique, as it was created based on a distinct set of laws. Most notably, these laws define the boundaries, mandate, administrative framework and governance structures. The Marine Park is managed by Parks Canada, MELCCFP and the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq). The laws of the Marine Park also provide for the creation of a coordination committee. This committee is a participatory governance entity unique to the Marine Park.

**The Marine Park's mandate** is, for present and future generations, to strengthen the protection of ecosystems of a representative portion of the Saguenay Fjord and the St. Lawrence Estuary for conservation purposes while promoting its use for educational, recreational and scientific purposes.

It brings together representatives of different backgrounds (RCMs, First Nations, scientific community, etc.) who meet approximately three times a year to discuss the orientations of the Marine Park.

The Marine Park corresponds to a Category VI marine protected area, as defined by IUCN. This is a marine area that combines the protection of natural ecosystems and cultural values with the sustainable use of renewable natural resources. In this context, several types of users share this area, access to which is free of charge.



## 3.2 Noteworthy Achievements

The history of the Marine Park is as much marked by conservation-related achievements as it is by discovery and education. Examples of such achievements include:

- **The creation and continuous involvement of the Marine Park coordination committee**

Unique to the Marine Park, the coordination committee is an entity that involves regional players in the governance of the marine protected area. Since it was first established in 1996, the committee has held 107 meetings in which approximately 100 members from various backgrounds have participated over the years. Over the years, the involvement and support of the coordination committee have been a determining factor in the Marine Park's achievements.

- **A network of discovery activities**

Shortly after the Marine Park was created, its managers teamed up with local players to offer on- and offshore discovery activities. Today, thanks to these partnerships, a wide array of activities are available to visitors and local communities to encourage them to discover the natural and cultural treasures of the Marine Park. Every year, an estimated one million people visit the waters and shores of the Marine Park. Through their communications tools, Parks Canada and Sépaq contribute to the promotion of these recreational activities and tourism attractions.

- **Regulations for the Marine Park**

In 2002, the Marine Activities in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations (MAR) were adopted. Established in collaboration with regional stakeholders and users, this is one of the Marine Park's most important conservation tools. The MAR govern water activities with the aim of bolstering the protection of marine wildlife. Fifteen years after it was adopted, this conservation tool was revised in 2017 in order to better protect marine ecosystems in general and the St. Lawrence beluga in particular.

- **Scientific monitoring for heightened protection**

Long before the Marine Park was created, researchers were drawn to these waters on account of their rich and unique ecosystems. The establishment of the Marine Park was a catalyst for scientific research, which became one of the key elements in its management. The findings obtained through scientific monitoring serve as a basis for assessing the state of health of the Marine Park, better understanding its ecosystems and implementing suitable protection measures.

## Protection Measures for Whales

*Through its collaborations with local stakeholders, the Marine Park has managed to enhance the protection of ecosystems in a complex environment characterized by a large number and wide variety of human activities.*

**2013:** In collaboration with stakeholders involved in the shipping industry, implementation of voluntary slowdown measures by the shipping industry in the Lower Estuary with the aim of lowering the risk of collisions with cetaceans.

**2017:** Slowdown zone established at the mouth of the Saguenay Fjord.

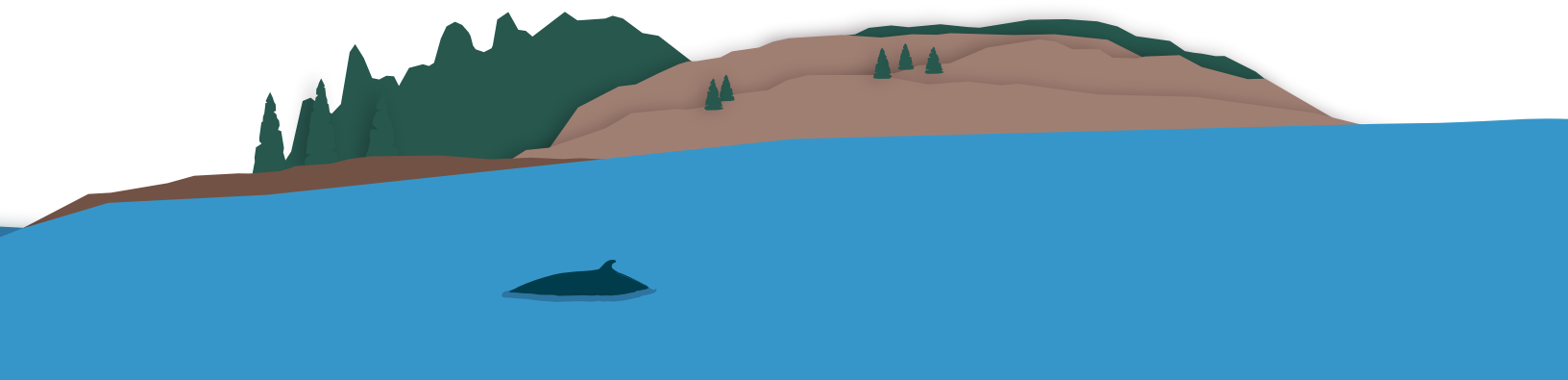
**2018:** Temporary no-boating zone (the first of its kind in Canada) established in bay Sainte-Marguerite for the protection of the St. Lawrence beluga.

**2019:** To further protect belugas, whale-watching cruises are excluded from the Upper Estuary section of the Marine Park.

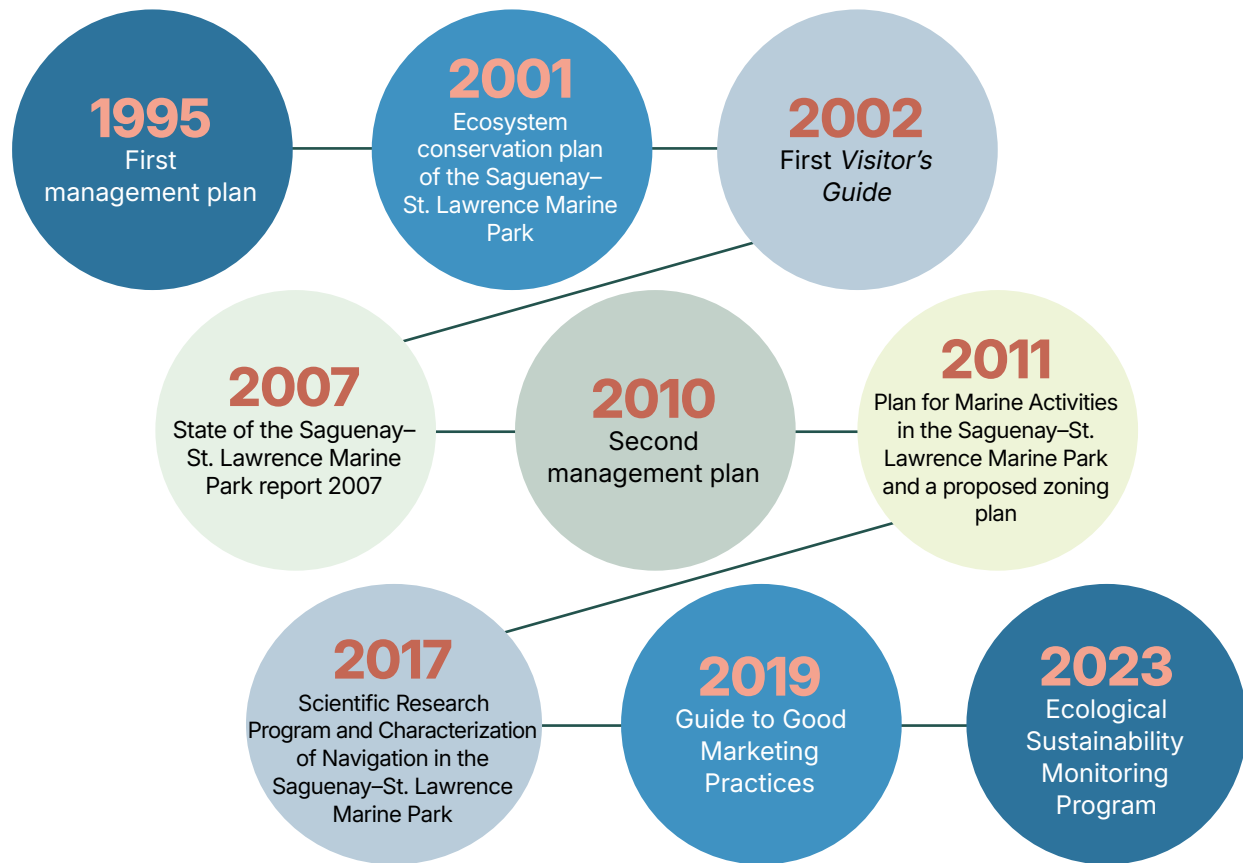
## Strong Partnerships

Over the years, Marine Park managers have teamed up with organizations of various types. Examples of such collaborations are described below.

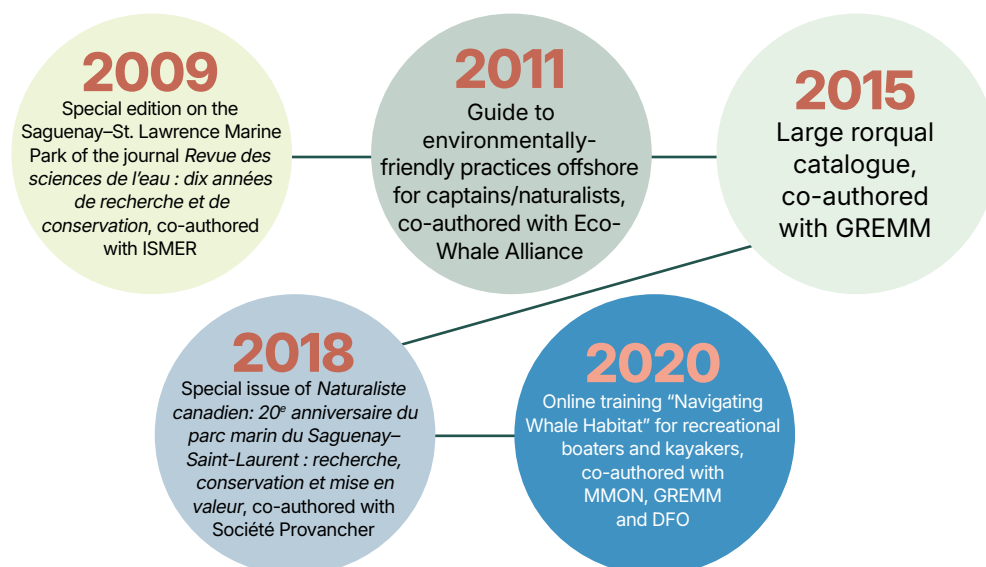
- **Eco-Whale Alliance:** Founded in 2010, this voluntary initiative sets its sights on the highest standards for whale-watching excursions. Members include whale-watching companies operating in the Marine Park, the Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals (GREMM), Parks Canada and Sépaq. Members of the Alliance strive for continuous improvement to ensure the sustainable development of whale-watching activities in the Marine Park and minimize the impacts thereof.
- **Annual awareness campaign “Show you care, keep your distance”:** Carried out since 2016 in partnership with the MMON, GREMM and DFO, this campaign is designed to protect belugas. Offshore patrols as well as a number of communication and representation actions at local events are jointly carried out to promote a code of conduct in the presence of this endangered species.
- **Window on Belugas project:** Initiated in 2018, this project is led by GREMM in partnership with MMON, the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk First Nation, DFO, Parks Canada, Sépaq and Ocean Wise. Window on Belugas is a network of onshore beluga observation sites. The project consists of three sites in the heart of critical beluga habitat: the Baie-Sainte-Marguerite sector in Parc national du Fjord-du-Saguenay, Parks Canada's Pointe-Noire Interpretation and Observation Centre, and the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk First Nation's Putep 't-awt beluga observation site in Cacouna.
- **Indigenous Guardians programs:** Since 2022, two programs have been developed with Indigenous communities residing in the vicinity of the Marine Park, i.e. the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk First Nation and the Essipit Innu First Nation. Each program is designed in accordance with the objectives and fields of activity of the respective communities. The initiatives that stem from these programs jointly developed with Parks Canada notably aim to promote traditional knowledge and a better understanding of ancestral territories in order to help protect the Marine Park.



# Noteworthy Publications by the Marine Park



# Noteworthy Co-authored Publications



# 4

## History of Expansion Project

After the Marine Park was established, a number of provincial and federal initiatives were implemented in order to continue protecting the St. Lawrence River. In 1998, Fisheries and Oceans Canada's St. Lawrence Estuary Marine Protection Area project was launched. The project essentially aims to contribute to the long-term protection of marine mammals of the St. Lawrence Estuary as well as their habitats and food resources. In 2019, DFO and MELCCFP have made this a joint project under the Canada-Quebec Cooperation Agreement for the Establishment of a Network of Marine Protected Areas in Quebec.

Then, in 2020, the Government of Quebec designates six territorial reserves for protected area purposes (TRPAP) in the St. Lawrence Estuary pending their granting of legal protection status. In order to prepare for a permanent designation, ZIP (zone d'intervention prioritaire, or area of primary concern) committees of the corresponding regions are tasked with compiling all existing environmental data and holding consultations in 2021-2022 to better understand how the said TRPAPs are used and to take stock of concerns with regard to these spaces.<sup>4</sup>

In parallel to these initiatives, there remains a keen interest in better protecting the St. Lawrence Estuary. For example, the Conseil du Saint-Laurent (TCR), which oversees the Upper Estuary South regional round-table (Table de concertation régionale du sud de l'estuaire moyen), adopted in its regional integrated management plan for 2021-2031 an objective of "reinforcing the network of government-managed protected areas" to preserve ecosystem biodiversity and integrity. Additionally, many coastal and insular municipalities as well as RCMs have formulated development plans in which coastal and marine environments play a critical role in the blossoming of local culture and tourism.

<sup>4</sup> [MINISTÈRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT, DE LA LUTTE CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS DU QUÉBEC \(2024\). \*Marine protected areas in Québec\*. \[Consulted online on 2024-08-06\]](#)

### Better Protecting the Estuary by Expanding the Marine Park

In July 2022, the Marine Park coordination committee proposes that the governments consider the possibility of expanding its boundaries. The committee deems that the Marine Park model, which served its purpose for 25 years, would be able to effectively protect a larger swath of the estuary while keeping with the regional ecotourism dynamic. In December of the same year at the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montréal, Collectif COP15, an alliance of 104 Quebec-based organizations, publicly supports the idea of expanding the Marine Park.

The idea of expanding the Marine Park has been evoked for years. In fact, it is identified as a priority action item in the 2010 management plan.

On March 10, 2023, Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, as well as the Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec, Mr. Benoit Charette, announce their joint intention to undertake steps to expand the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park.

Following this announcement, an agreement on the expansion of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park is signed between Canada and Quebec in September 2023. This agreement defines the terms of collaboration between the two governments for carrying out the project.

In sum, the Marine Park expansion project is a concrete proposal to preserve marine environments, address threats to biodiversity and ensure that the area can continue to be used for years to come. The project initiators ensure that the expansion project is carried out in respect of stakeholder interests by taking into account currently available scientific and local knowledge.

The laws constituting the Marine Park provide that the limits may be modified by decree if the following two main conditions are met:

- An agreement has been reached between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada; and
- The public and particularly the coordination committee have been jointly consulted.



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# 5

## Presentation of Proposed Marine Park Expansion

Since Fall 2023, targeted consultations have been held in which the expansion project has been presented to representatives of approximately 230 organizations (see Appendix 1: “Consulted Stakeholders”). One conclusion is clear: There is a strong consensus that protection of the estuary needs to be strengthened, and expanding the Marine Park would be one of the means of achieving this. The planned expansion is an opportunity to:

- **Increase** protection for belugas, rorquals and coastal herbaceous areas;
- **Promote** discovery and educational activities related to the St. Lawrence River; and
- **Support** the maintenance and development of a sustainable tourism offering for the St. Lawrence.

The targeted consultations have led to a proposed configuration for the expanded Marine Park, which is being presented in the context of these public consultations. Appendix 2 presents the preliminary area under study that was presented at the targeted consultations. The geographic area proposed for the expansion represents the most balanced scenario between the protection of ecosystems and the interests expressed by stakeholders at the targeted consultations.



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## 5.1 Proposed Expansion Area

It is in the St. Lawrence Estuary that the Marine Park is set to expand. Some 400 km long and up to 350 m deep, this estuary is one of the largest and deepest in the world. While the current Marine Park lies roughly in the middle of the estuary on an axis parallel to the St. Lawrence, the proposed expansion would extend the park's boundaries to the river's south shore, reaching the administrative regions of Chaudière-Appalaches and Bas-Saint-Laurent, from the municipality of Saint-Jean-Port-Joli to Parc national du Bic. On the river's north shore, according to this proposal, the Marine Park would extend within the two administrative regions already bordering the park in its current configuration, i.e. Capitale-Nationale and Côte-Nord. The proposed expansion extends from the municipality of Petite-

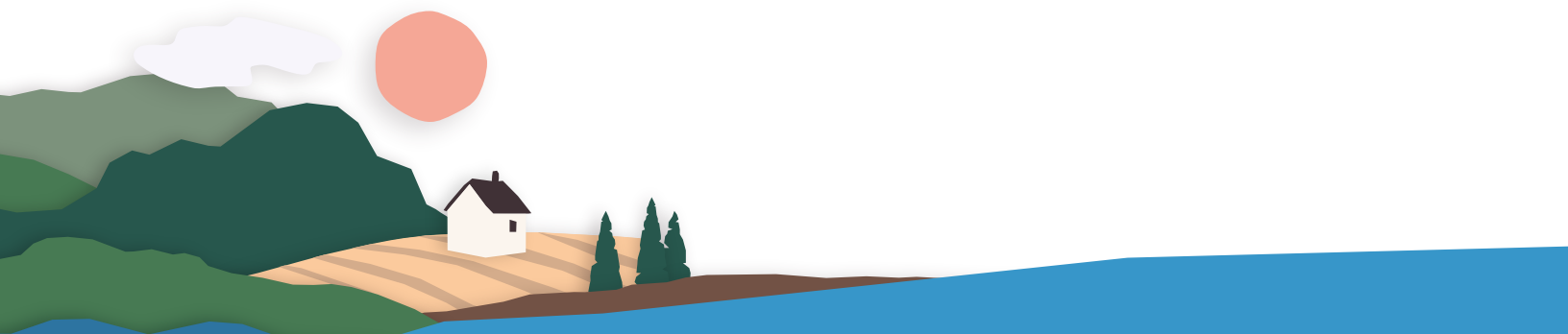
Rivière-Saint-François to Boisvert Point in the municipality of Longue-Rive.

The percentage of the estuary protected by the Marine Park would increase from 10% to approximately 35%.

The expansion project involves 4 administrative regions, 8 RCMs and 27 coastal municipalities. The Wolastoqiyik Wamspekek First Nation community would border the expanded Marine Park, in the same way that the Essipit Innu First Nation community does under the park's current boundaries. When combined with the current Marine Park, the expanded park would concern a total of 37 municipalities and 2 adjacent Indigenous communities. The number of citizens residing in a municipality bordering the Marine Park would rise from 19,000 to over 125,500.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1. Administrative regions and RCMs concerned by expansion project**

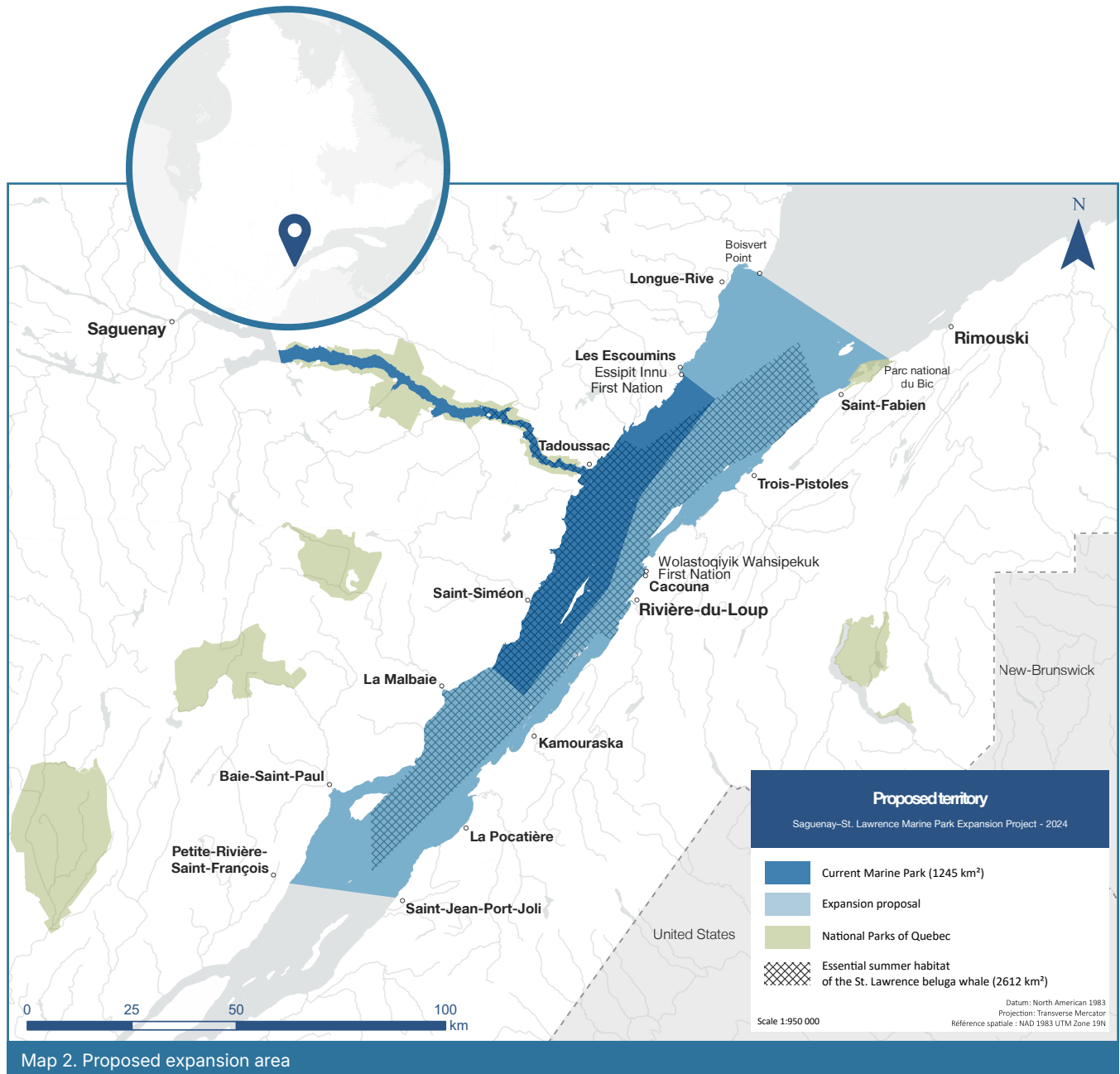
Administrative region	RCM
Côte-Nord	La Haute-Côte-Nord
Capitale-Nationale	Charlevoix
	Charlevoix-Est
Chaudière-Appalaches	L'Islet
Bas-Saint-Laurent	Kamouraska
	Rivière-du-Loup
	Les Basques
	Rimouski-Neigette



<sup>5</sup> [MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES MUNICIPALES ET DE L'HABITATION DU QUÉBEC \(2024\). Cartes du découpage administratif du Québec. \[Consulted online on 2024-08-05\]. Québec, Canada.](#)

The proposed expansion would add 3,242 km<sup>2</sup> to the Marine Park's current surface area of 1,245 km<sup>2</sup>. **The expansion would thus bring the Marine Park's total surface area to 4,487 km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. 3.6 times its current size.** The proposal adds 578 linear kilometres of coastline to the 404 km already present under its current boundaries.

As is the case for the current Marine Park, the planned expansion includes the water column and the seabeds. The area extends to the normal high-water marks, i.e. the maritime boundary delimitation of Quebec public lands. Islands, private property and maritime infrastructure (ports and marinas) are excluded from the proposal. For maritime facilities that do not have a submerged shore lot, a 25 m radius exclusion around infrastructure is planned.



## Elements of Ecological Interest

In the estuary, the salt waters of the Atlantic mix with the fresh waters of the St. Lawrence, giving rise to a mosaic of habitats that support a wide array of fauna and flora. The territory proposed for the enlargement represents a tremendous ecological treasure. Although a number of elements are of ecological interest, the project would especially help strengthen protection for belugas, rorquals and coastal herbaceous areas. The targeted expansion area includes:

- The beluga's entire critical summer habitat;
- Important feeding grounds for rorquals; and
- Fragile coastal habitats such as salt marshes and eelgrass beds.

### 1. Beluga



© T. Cadilhac

The St. Lawrence is home to the southernmost population of belugas on the planet. The beluga is also the only species of cetacean that inhabits the St. Lawrence year-round. This population is designated "Threatened" by the Government of Quebec and "Endangered" by the Government of Canada. In 2012, as required under the Species at Risk Act, DFO published a recovery strategy for this population. The species' critical summer habitat was subsequently designated based on the best scientific knowledge available at the time. Critical habitat is defined as "the habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of a species." One of the measures identified in this program is a study of the feasibility of extending the boundaries of the Marine Park.

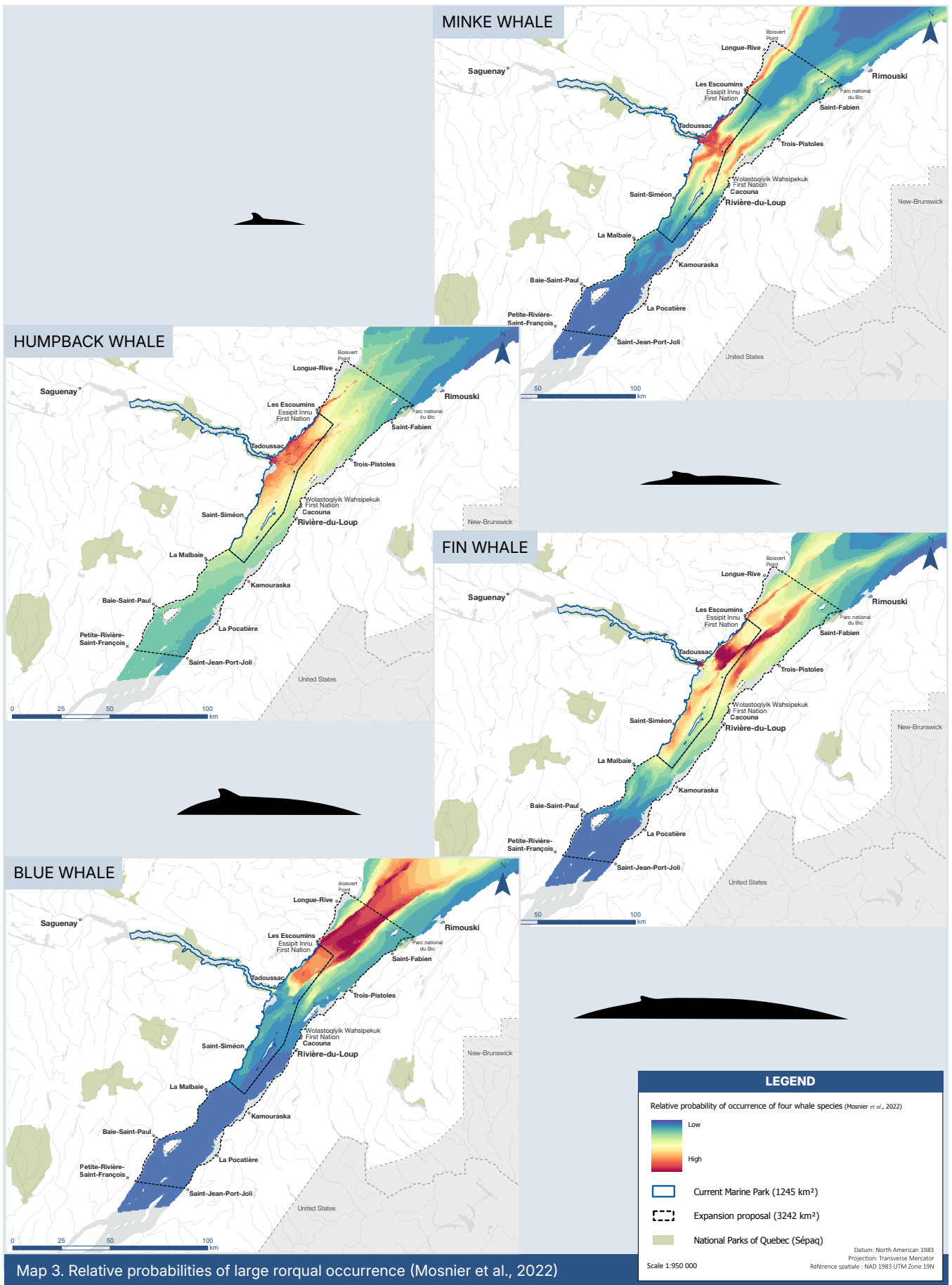
Currently, 37% of this critical habitat lies within Marine Park boundaries. As illustrated in Map 2, the expansion would bring the beluga's entire critical summer habitat into the boundaries of the Marine Park, extend the systematic monitoring effort and increase protection for the species, notably in the Upper Estuary, where females care for their young. Of all the threats hampering the recovery of this population, human disturbance and underwater noise are the ones for which short-term solutions are the most realistic. Marine Park managers have at their disposal a number of tools to mitigate these threats. Expanding the scope of these tools across the beluga's entire critical summer habitat would enhance the protection of one of the Marine Park's most iconic species.

### 2. Rorquals



© J. Praud

Every summer, four species of rorquals travel thousands of kilometres to feed in the estuary's cold, nutrient-rich waters off the coasts of Quebec's Côte-Nord region. Blue whales, fin whales, humpback whales and minke whales frequent a significant portion of the current Marine Park as well as a sector lying farther east beginning in Les Escoumins. This is notably the case for the blue whale, which is considered "Endangered" by the Government of Canada. Extending the Marine Park to Boisvert Point in Longue-Rive would take in the feeding grounds regularly used by these species of rorquals (Map 3). The conservation tools available to Marine Park managers would help reduce disturbance to rorquals in these sectors. Additionally, this would correspond to the action items identified in the fin whale and blue whale management plans produced by DFO in 2018 and 2009, respectively.



Map 3. Relative probabilities of large rorqual occurrence (Mosnier et al., 2022)

### 3. Coastal Herbaceous Areas

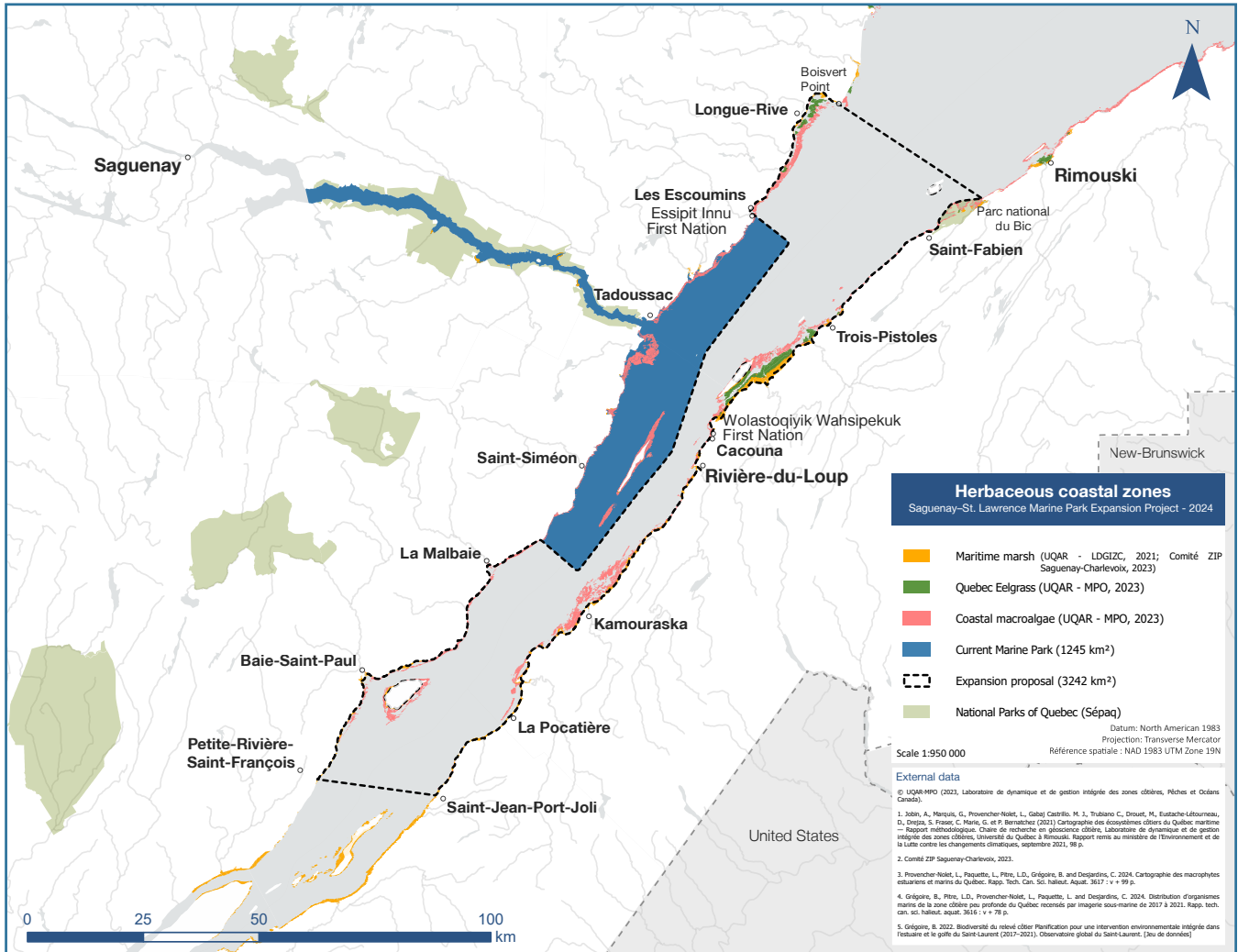
While not overly plentiful in the current Marine Park, coastal herbaceous areas are well represented in the waters of the proposed expansion. The Kamouraska, L'Isle-Verte, L'Isle-aux-Coudres and Longue-Rive sectors are particularly rich in this type of habitat. Exposed to the rhythm of the tides, coastal herbaceous areas are home to diverse and abundant fauna and flora. These areas represent breeding and feeding grounds for many types of

fish, which in turn are consumed by a number of predatory species such as the beluga. For many species of birds, these areas also provide choice habitat for nesting, feeding and resting. In fact, the region contains several protected land areas for the conservation of avifauna.



© A. Mainguy — Little lighthouse of Saint-André-de-Kamouraska

In the context of climate change and its increasing impacts on coastal ecosystems and communities, coastal herbaceous areas help cushion pounding waves, thereby limiting coastal erosion and stabilizing the soil, in addition to acting as a genuine carbon sink. This “blue carbon” prevents the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, helping to regulate the climate and by the same token mitigating a significant threat to biodiversity. Being sensitive to anthropogenic disturbance, coastal herbaceous areas would benefit from being integrated into the Marine Park, which would help ensure their preservation.



Map 4. Coastal herbaceous areas

To learn more about the proposed area, see the document [Project Site Profile](#).

## 5.2 Conservation Tools

A wide variety of tools are used to protect the Marine Park, some of which are legally binding, while others are voluntary. They are presented below to provide an overview of the tools that might be applicable in an expanded Marine Park.

### 5.2.1 Laws Concerning the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park

As co-managers, the governments of Canada and Quebec have each adopted their own legislation for the Marine Park.

Quebec’s Act respecting the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park sets out the provincial government’s

exercise of powers with regard to the Marine Park. In order to ensure the protection of the Marine Park, the following activities are prohibited under this law:

- Prospecting, utilization, harnessing or harvesting of resources for mining or energy production purposes; and
- Laying of oil or gas pipelines or power lines.

The federal Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Act describes the Government of Canada’s exercise of powers for the Marine Park in complementarity with other existing federal legislation. The MAR stem from this law and it was adopted in 2002 and revised in 2017.

### 5.2.2 Marine Activities in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations

The MAR govern a wide range of activities practised in the marine protected area.<sup>6</sup> Parks Canada is responsible for enforcing these regulations, which were developed in collaboration with users and regional stakeholders. These regulations aim to reduce the impact of human activities on marine wildlife. Additionally, they help maintain a high-quality visitor experience.

The MAR would apply to the expanded Marine Park.

More precisely, these regulations describe how to conduct oneself in the Marine Park, notably in the presence of marine mammals. They define which activities require permits and which ones are prohibited. They also protect certain sensitive habitats within the Marine Park.

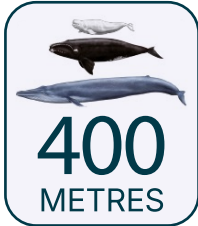


© P.-P. Nadeau—Cap-à-l'Égale Port of Refuge

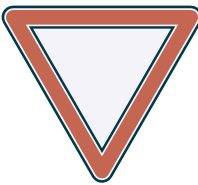
## Navigation



All users, including the shipping industry, must abide by the 25-knot speed limit within the park. Speed limits aim to reduce the risk of collision with whales and limit noise disturbance within their habitat.



Whether for recreation or for commercial activities, operators of motorboats, sailboats or human-powered watercraft must maintain their distance in the presence of whales, namely 400 m for species at risk such as the beluga, North Atlantic right whale and blue whale, and 200 m for other species such as the minke whale and humpback whale.



Give way to the whales

Within the Marine Park, it is forbidden to act in a manner that could kill, injure or disturb a marine mammal. Examples of disturbing a marine mammal notably include:

- Feeding or touching it;
- Splitting up a group of marine mammals or getting in between an adult marine mammal and its calf; and
- Positioning the boat so as to corner a whale or group of whales between the craft and the coast or encircling the animal(s) between multiple boats.

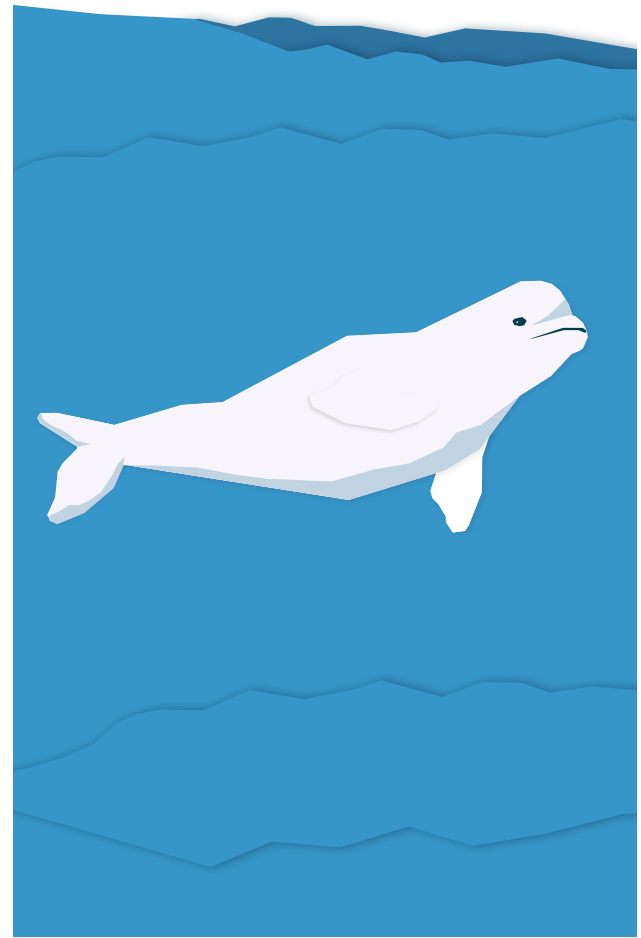
<sup>6</sup> In the event of a discrepancy, the text of the [Marine Activities in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations](#) shall prevail over the information contained in this document.



## Additional Protection for Belugas

Should one or more belugas appear in proximity to a watercraft, the latter's operator shall move away while maintaining a constant direction and speed until they are at least 400 m away from the animal(s).

Watercraft operators (human-powered watercraft excluded) that find themselves less than 0.5 nautical miles (926 m) from a beluga shall not remain stationary. Rather, they shall move away at a constant speed of no less than 5 knots and no more than 10 knots.



## Prohibited Activities

In order to boost the protection of ecosystems and maintain a quality experience for visitors and local residents alike, certain activities are prohibited. Such activities are summarized in the table below.

**Table 2. Activities prohibited by MAR**

Activities prohibited by MAR	Justification
Personal watercraft	High risk of collisions with marine mammals due to rapid and irregular movement.  Helps maintain a quality experience for Marine Park visitors and local citizens.
Hovercraft	Impacts on marine wildlife (birds, seals, whales), especially due to noise and the physical presence of the motor above the animals.  Helps maintain a quality experience for Marine Park visitors and local citizens.
Towed water sports using a motorized engine	High risk of collisions with marine mammals given that the operator of the watercraft is focused on the person being towed.
Drone and aircraft flights below 2,000 feet (609.6 m)	Impacts on marine wildlife (birds, seals, whales), especially due to noise and the physical presence of the motor above the animals.  Helps maintain a quality experience for Marine Park visitors and local citizens.
Commercial service related to the hunting of migratory game birds	Reduction of impacts of hunting on wild bird populations.

## Activities requiring a permit

Certain activities carried out in the Marine Park require a permit from Parks Canada. The permit ensures that the activity will be conducted in coherence with the park's mandate. The table below summarizes the activities that require a permit.

**Table 3. Activities requiring a permit**

Activities requiring a permit
Commercial excursion (cruise, guided sea kayaking, sailing school, etc.)
Scientific research
Ferry and shuttle service
International cruise
Special activity (film shoot, sporting event, aircraft flight, etc.)

Boat operators and guides that practise an activity requiring an offshore excursion permit must hold an attestation issued by the Marine Park. To obtain this document, they must complete a training and pass an annual exam. Offered at no cost by Parks Canada, the training is adjusted to the needs of permit-holding companies. In addition to addressing regulatory aspects, a large portion of the training is also dedicated to the presentation of the Marine Park and its rich ecosystems. This

is an opportunity for boat operators and guides to get in touch with Marine Park experts, including scientists and park wardens. This training ensures that captains and guides operating in the park are familiar with all applicable regulations. It also provides visitors with a richer experience.

Every year in early summer, Parks Canada employees travel to the Marine Park to offer training to boat operators and guides. In 2023, in addition to online trainings, in-person trainings were offered in Tadoussac, L'Anse-Saint-Jean, Saguenay and Rivière-du-Loup. A total of 162 individuals completed the training and passed their annual exam allowing them to exercise their activities in the Marine Park.

The MAR describe specific codes of conduct to observe when watching marine mammals. For example, the maximum number of vessels permitted around a whale or group of whales is limited, as is observation time. The number of commercial whale-watching permits is limited to 53. For other categories, there are no limits to the number of permits granted. However, each request is analyzed, and permits are issued with conditions that take into account the protection of ecosystems.



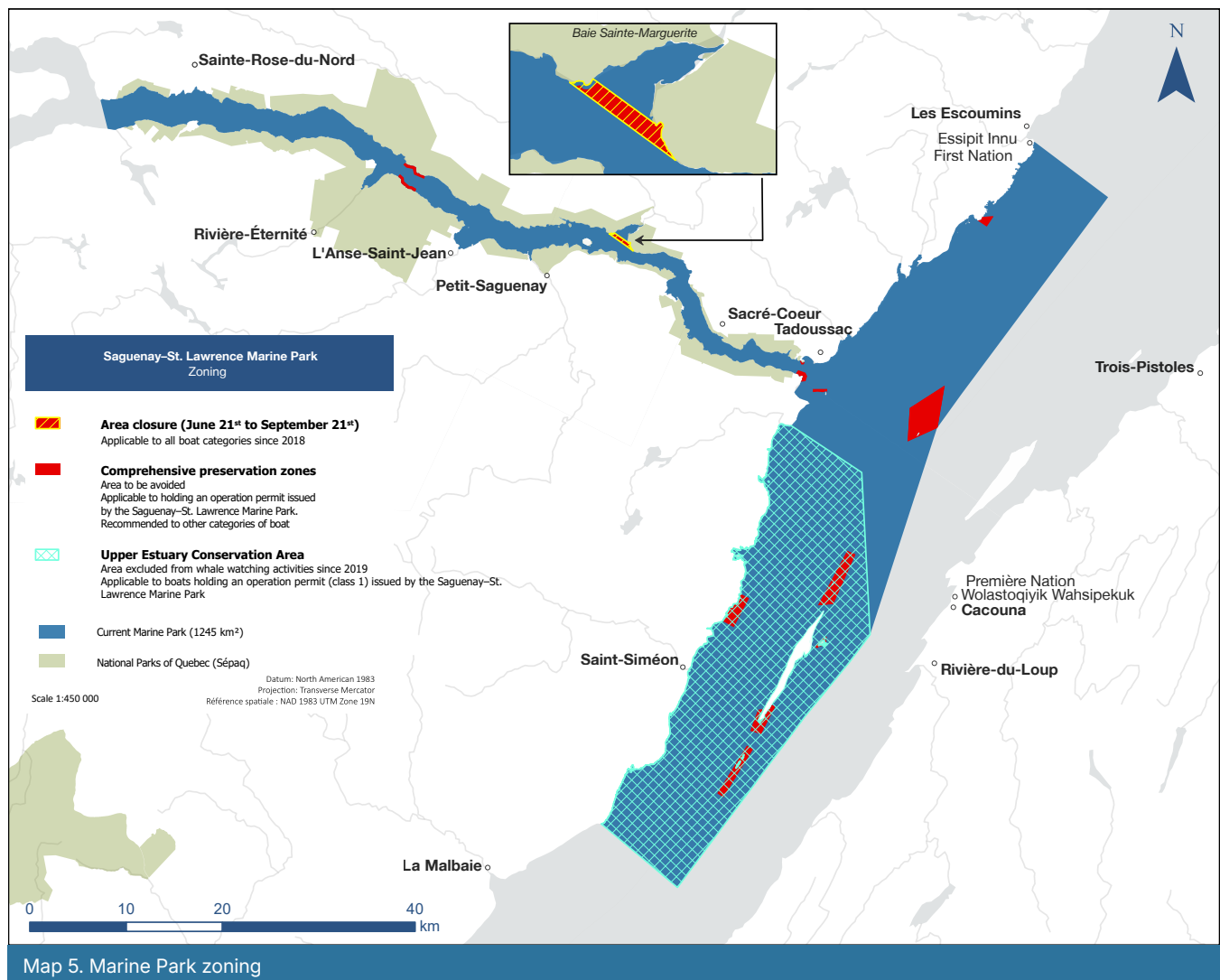
© T. Cadilhac

## Zoning

Zoning is a tool used to categorize the types of activities allowed in different parts of the protected area depending on how sensitive the respective ecosystems are. In an initial zoning proposal for the current Marine Park, sensitive zones were identified based on knowledge acquired through various research projects. In this context, it is recommended to avoid operating boat in certain sectors for a variety of reasons (e.g. nesting or haul-out sites, beluga concentration areas, or a usage conflict with land-based observation sites).

Currently, this zoning is voluntary for recreational boaters and mandatory for permit holders as per their permit conditions. Establishing a zoning plan will be a priority when the new management plan for the expanded Marine Park will be developed. This exercise is planned once the expanded park boundaries will be defined with public participation in order to take into account the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the area covered by the larger park.

The MAR also allow for the establishment of temporary no-boating zones such as the one in bay Sainte-Marguerite, in the Saguenay Fjord. During the summer months, watercraft of all types are prohibited from entering this bay, which is heavily frequented by belugas, especially females and their calves. The objective is to offer this species a peaceful sanctuary so that it can carry out its vital activities such as resting, feeding and caring for young. Such measures are implemented in coordination with the user groups concerned.



## Upper Estuary Conservation Sector

In summer, about a quarter of the St. Lawrence beluga population resides in the Upper Estuary off the coasts of Charlevoix. With its shallower, warmer waters and abundant prey, this part of the St. Lawrence Estuary is heavily used by female belugas and their calves. Since 2019, 44% of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park has been off-limits to commercial whale-watching excursions following the establishment of a conservation sector in the Upper Estuary. This measure was implemented thanks to the involvement and participation of the commercial whale-watching industry and coastal communities. It is formalized in the permit conditions of these companies.

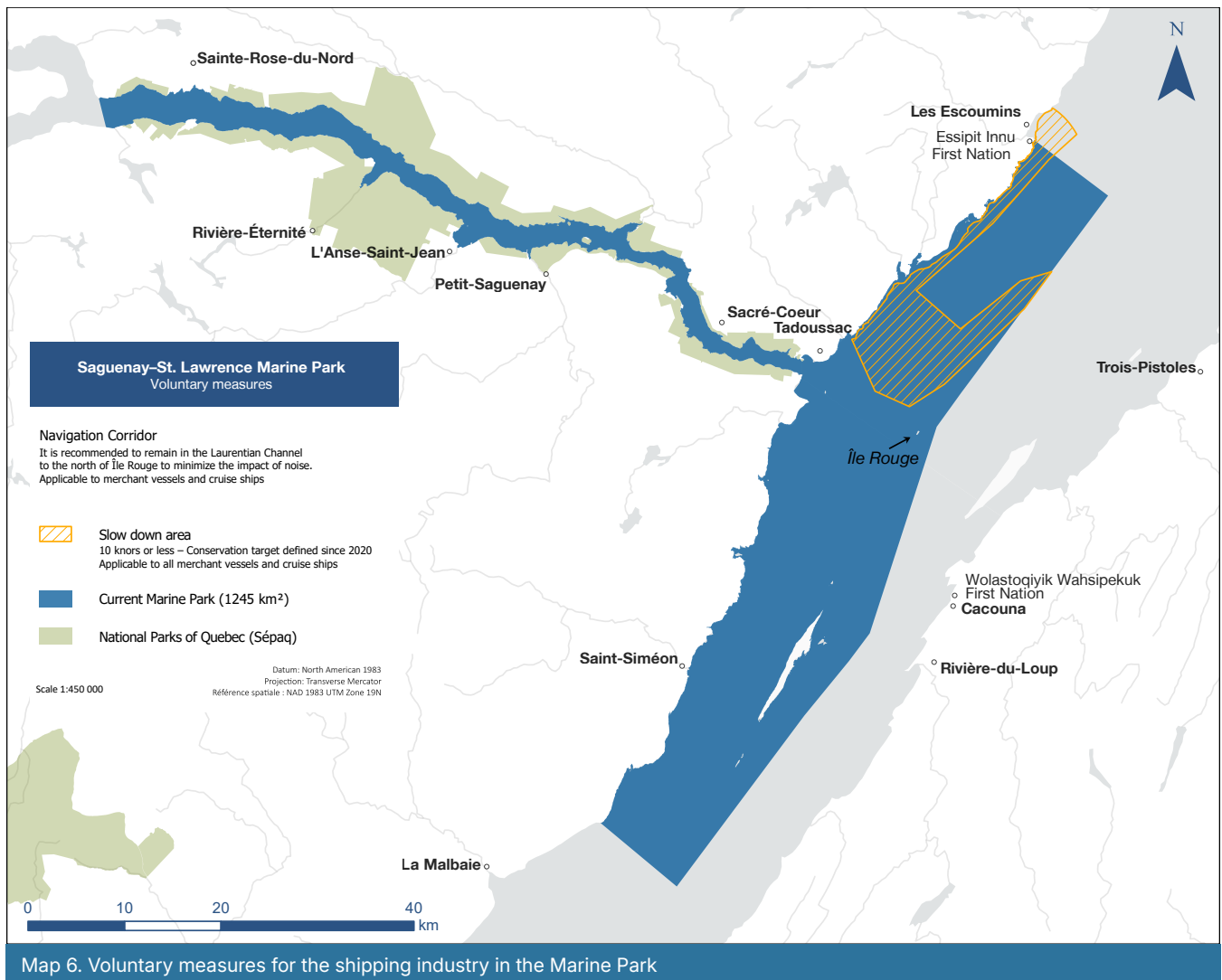
## Awareness and Enforcement of Regulations

Enforcing the Regulations is the responsibility of a park warden team. Patrolling the park's waters and shorelines, these park wardens educate users on how to conduct themselves within the park. In a context in which not everyone understands where the Marine Park begins and ends, awareness raising is the preferred approach. Notwithstanding the foregoing, park rangers do have the authority to issue statements of offence, if necessary.

Outreach teams support the park wardens by conducting water patrols and marina visits. They meet with recreational boaters and kayakers to inform them about the regulations in place and answer their questions.



© A. Cossette



Map 6. Voluntary measures for the shipping industry in the Marine Park

### 5.2.3 Voluntary Measures

One of the voluntary measures successfully implemented in the Marine Park was developed by the Working Group on Marine Traffic and Protection of Marine Mammals (G2T3M). Co-chaired by Parks Canada and DFO, this group is composed of organizations from the academic, government, shipping, and marine conservation and protection sectors. Since 2013, the shipping industry has voluntarily committed to limit the speed of its vessels to 10 knots between May 1 and October 31 within the feeding grounds of large rorquals off the shores of La Haute-Côte-Nord region. To develop these measures, G2T3M used a science-based approach and took into account activity constraints as well as maritime safety. Thanks to the remarkable cooperation of ship operators and pilots, the average transit speed has fallen from

14.2 knots when the measure is not in effect to 10.8 knots when it is, which bodes well for significantly lowering the risks of collisions with whales.



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### 5.2.4 Other Laws and Regulations

Other laws and regulations are also applicable in the Marine Park; they are the responsibility of the ministries that draft them. Recreational and commercial fishing, shellfish harvesting, and shipping are examples of activities allowed within the Marine Park and subject to the same regulations as elsewhere in the St. Lawrence. Achieving the Marine Park's objectives is contingent on efficient

collaboration with those ministries that have a role to play in the management of such activities and in marine conservation. In addition, since 2017, destroying a beluga whale's critical habitat has been prohibited under the Species at Risk Act. The table below outlines a summary portrait of these activities and the ministries responsible for them.

**Table 4. Ministries responsible for certain activities in the Marine Park**

Activity	Ministry responsible
Recreational hunting	ECCC
	MELCCFP
Recreational fishing	DFO
	MELCCFP
Shellfish harvesting	ECCC
	DFO
	Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
	Health Canada
Commercial fishing	DFO
	Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ)
	MELCCFP
Shipping	Transport Canada
Dredging	MELCCFP
	DFO



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# 6

## Commitments

In hindsight, after 25 years of existence, five keys to success have helped forge the Marine Park's current identity:

1. Better understanding for better protection;
2. Acting in consultation;
3. Promoting partnerships;
4. Liaising with local communities; and
5. Involving more local representatives in governance.

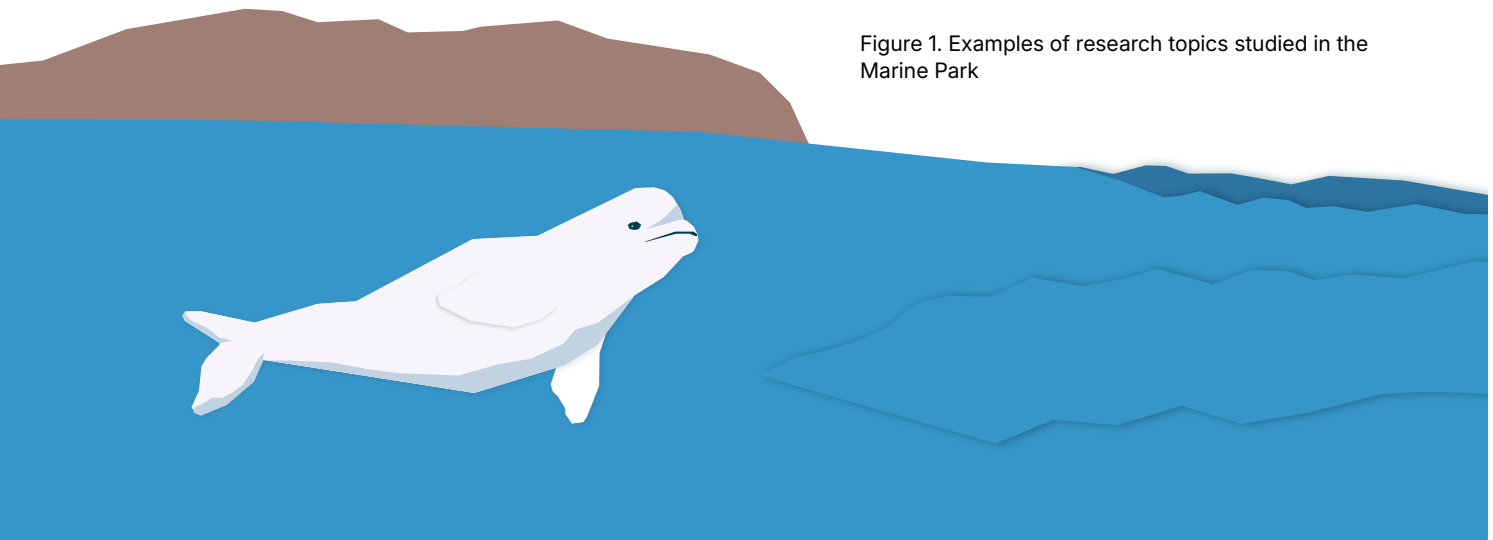
Park managers would build on this experience to administrate the expansion. To provide an idea of the orientations of the expanded Marine Park, each key to success is accompanied by a commitment by the managers for this expansion.

### 6.1 Better Understanding for Better Protection

For researchers, the Marine Park is a genuine open-air laboratory. The scientific research that organizations conduct here contributes to a better understanding of the park's ecosystems and how the area is used. Every year, between 70 and 80 research projects are carried out in the Marine Park by universities, government and non-government organizations, Indigenous communities and research groups. The Marine Park team may collaborate with researchers in different ways, notably by collecting data or loaning out equipment. Thanks to a high diversity of ecosystems, scientists can focus their studies on any of a number of topics.

*Seals* *Cultural landscapes*  
*Acoustics* *Seabirds* *Whales*  
*Invasive aquatic species* *Coastal habitats*  
*Ecotourism* *Oceanography* *Navigation*  
*Underwater archaeology*  
*Sediment* *Fish*  
*Invertebrates* *Contaminants*

Figure 1. Examples of research topics studied in the Marine Park



Scientific activities are also carried out by the Marine Park's conservation teams. Objectives of the Marine Park include managing maritime activities in a sustainable manner as well as protecting species diversity, habitats and ecological processes, including acquiring a better understanding of how the latter are being affected by climate change. In order to gauge progress and track the effectiveness of the adopted conservation measures, an ecological sustainability monitoring program has been developed. The program, which is constantly evolving, is being carried out with a number of partners. It comprises a series of monitoring efforts that fall into one of three themes:

**Table 5. List of indicators of the ecological sustainability monitoring program of the Marine Park**

	Indicator	Partner(s)
<b>Environmental quality</b>	Toxic algae	DFO
	Physical and chemical conditions of water	DFO
	Invasive aquatic species	DFO
	Acoustic landscape	UQAR, UQO
	Contaminants	ECCC, DFO
	Microplastics	UQAR
<b>Habitats and species</b>	Salt marshes and erosion	
	Beluga	DFO, GREMM, Sépaq, MMON
	Pelagic prey	
	Coastal birds and Barrow's goldeneye	Tadoussac Bird Observatory, Rimouski Bird Observatory, Essipit Innu First Nation
	Harbour seals	Sépaq
	Rorquals	GREMM
<b>Use of marine environment</b>	Ice fishing	DFO, Sépaq
	Offshore whale watching	MMON
	Maritime transport and navigation activities	Canadian Coast Guard, G2T3M, MMON, Sépaq

In addition to nurturing a multitude of educational and discovery activities, the knowledge gained through various monitoring initiatives and scientific research represents the main pillar of development for the Marine Park's conservation measures.



© T. Cadilhac

### Our Commitment

Park managers would undertake to promote research, notably through partnerships with organizations that are already active in the region. The Marine Park's ecological sustainability monitoring program would be adjusted to better track the evolution of ecosystems in the expanded Marine Park with the aim of better protecting them.

### Shore-based Observation of Belugas and Boating/Shipping Activities

For over 20 years, scientists have been observing belugas from the shores of the Marine Park in order to better understand how key sectors are used both by belugas and by watercraft. They record information on the whales (species, number, distance, presence of young and behaviour) and any watercraft present (type and activity), in addition to geolocating them. Three observation sites are located on the north shore of the Marine Park: the mouth of the Saguenay Fjord (1998), bay Sainte-Marguerite (2003) and the Marine Environment Discovery Centre (2020). Since 2014, thanks to a collaboration with MMON, two observation sites have been present on the south shore, namely in Cacouna and Rivière-du-Loup. The knowledge acquired through these scientific efforts has been instrumental in the adoption of conservation measures such as a slowdown zone in the mouth of the Saguenay and the creation of an acoustic sanctuary in bay Sainte-Marguerite.



© M. Dupuis

## 6.2 Acting in Consultation

Consultation is the basis of the Marine Park's success, as it is thanks to close collaboration with local stakeholders, especially the park's users, that it has been possible to bolster the protection of the park's ecosystems. By establishing dialogue, managers gain a better understanding of how the area is used as well as user concerns. A marine park is different from a land-based national park in that there are no entrance kiosks where users can enquire on the rules and regulations in effect. Developing conservation measures in coordination with local stakeholders facilitates the implementation of sustainable, effective and consensual solutions. The most important conservation gains in the Marine Park have been made using this approach.

Protecting the marine environment also requires the involvement of ministries whose jurisdictions and responsibilities continue to apply beyond the legislative and regulatory frameworks of the Marine Park. Achieving the Marine Park's objectives is contingent on efficient collaboration with those ministries that have a role to play in marine conservation.

The management of commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishing for marine species within the Marine Park is an example of close collaboration between Parks Canada and DFO. The latter may consider the use of complementary conservation measures for these activities should specific issues be identified in the Marine Park. Decisions related to fishing activities will be made while taking into account the goals and objectives of the marine protected area as well as other relevant elements.

### Our Commitment

Marine Park managers would rely on consultation and consensus building to develop and implement new conservation measures as required. The zoning plan, the adoption of new voluntary measures and the protection of sensitive habitats are examples of measures that might be developed with local stakeholders. Collaboration with ministries and organizations having responsibilities in the area would be increased.

## EXAMPLE OF CONSULTATION

### Creating a Sanctuary for Belugas

Located in the Saguenay Fjord, a “beluga committee” comprising park users and local organizations was established by the Marine Park in 2006. Thanks to the work of this committee, voluntary measures were put into place in bay Sainte-Marguerite in 2008. Ten years later, these measures were reviewed and improved together with users and scientists with a view to recognizing the bay as being legally off-limits to watercraft between June 21 to September 21. Bay Sainte-Marguerite owes its conservation success first and foremost to those stakeholders who collaborated on its protection by sharing their expertise and support for the measure. Since 2018, rerouting boats has had a noticeable effect on the distribution of belugas and the expanse of their habitat. The maximal rate of boat presence in the bay has dropped from 40% (before 2018) to less than 5% since 2022.

## EXAMPLE OF PARTNERSHIP

### A Network of Partners to Discover the Marine Park

Whether on the water or along its shores, discovering the Marine Park hinges on a multitude of partners. Offshore excursions are run by companies that offer a diverse array of activities, from guided sea kayaking trips to whale watching on board a Zodiac. Shore-based discovery is also supported by a network of partners associated with the Marine Park that allow visitors to connect with the marine environment through educational and recreational activities. A total of 22 sites can be found across the regions bordering the current Marine Park. Experiences are diverse: museums, onshore whale watching, hiking, historic sites, picnic areas and contemplation of unique landscapes. Learn more: [marinepark.qc.ca/visiter-visit/](https://marinepark.qc.ca/visiter-visit/).

## 6.3 Promoting Partnerships

Partnerships are of great importance for the Marine Park, as its development is intricately linked to the success of the collaborations with a variety of organizations. From the moment the Marine Park was established, the governments chose to work in tandem with regional organizations. The Marine Park’s rich diversity of partners translates into a wide range of expertise that can be leveraged for the sake of conservation, education and discovery. Whether for scientific, educational or tourism-related projects, the many partnerships forged over the years have contributed to the evolution of the Marine Park and represent one of its main pillars.

### Our Commitment

Managers would continue to prioritize the partnership model in the expanded Marine Park. Scientific and educational activities as well as the tourism offering would extend into the expanded park, notably through partnerships with organizations already established in the region. Building on the public’s familiarity with Sépaq and Parks Canada, the expansion of the Marine Park would be an opportunity to promote discovery and educational activities related to the river while supporting the maintenance and development of a sustainable tourism offering that revolves around the St. Lawrence.

## 6.4 Liaising with Local Communities

The Marine Park teams are very present in the communities bordering its current boundaries. Approximately 30 employees work for the Marine Park year-round and are established in La Haute-Côte-Nord, Charlevoix and Saguenay regions. In summer, about 15 seasonal employees join the team for the tourist season. Setting up the Marine Park teams has had positive social and economic benefits for these communities.

The presence of teams in the villages in and around the Marine Park makes it possible to liaise with communities, users and visitors.



Within the Marine Park, whether on the water or along its shores, employees meet with and raise awareness of local citizens and carry out educational activities such as beach clean-ups or educational booths at local events. Marine Park employees keep users abreast of the regulations in force and ensure that they are complied with. This presence, both offshore and onshore, is of utmost importance in a marine protected area. It encourages residents and visitors to sign on to the Marine Park’s mission to protect.

### Our Commitment

The presence of a marine protected area adjacent to riverside communities would be an asset for preserving the quality of the marine environment and landscapes. Marine Park teams would be involved with local communities on both shores of the St. Lawrence Estuary. Marine Park activities would be adjusted to the territory and its stakeholders, as well as to any issues and opportunities that might arise.

### EXAMPLE OF LIAISING WITH COMMUNITIES

#### Engaging with local communities

Every summer, Parks Canada and Sépaq teams criss-cross the Marine Park and its shores to meet with and talk to communities, users and visitors. One of their objectives is to raise awareness of the presence of the protected area and how best to conduct oneself in the Marine Park. In 2023, 1,218 individuals were approached on the water and were informed of existing regulations in the Marine Park. Beach clean-ups are also organized with local schools and communities. En 2023, six elementary schools from around Charlevoix, La Haute-Côte-Nord and Saguenay regions participated in beach clean-ups. During these clean-up activities, nearly half a tonne of trash was collected.

In addition to individual meetings, the Marine Park’s digital tools are also used to conduct public outreach. Every year, the Marine Park website receives approximately 100,000 visitors. The park’s Facebook page has nearly 13,000 subscribers. As part of an educational partnership established in 2020 with École en réseau, some 50,000 elementary school students have attended virtual workshops that aim to showcase the richness and exceptional character of the Marine Park’s ecosystems.

## 6.5 Involving More Local Representatives in Governance

The Marine Park lies in the heart of a living space inhabited and used by thousands of people, including First Nations communities and a number of municipal and tourism-related organizations. The participation of these stakeholders in the management of the marine protected area is an essential element to its success. It is for this reason that a participatory governance entity was set up in 1996: the Marine Park coordination committee. The role of this committee is defined in the Marine Park’s founding legislation.

The mandate of the coordination committee is to track the implementation of the management plan. It can also make recommendations to the government entities that manage the Marine Park. Through meetings that take place three or four times a year, members are kept informed of the progress of the various actions being carried out in the Marine Park. Members can also contribute to various actions and discussions. Further, the meetings held by the coordination committee are an opportunity for representatives to present the achievements of their respective organizations.

**Table 6. Current composition of the Marine Park coordination committee**

Organization	Number of representatives
Fjord-du-Saguenay RCM	1
Charlevoix-Est RCM	1
La-Haute-Côte-Nord RCM	1
Les Basques, Rivière-du-Loup and Kamouraska* RCMs	1
Essipit Innu First Nation	1
Wolastoqiyik Wampanoag First Nation	1
Scientific community	1
Interpretation and education sector	1
Government of Canada	1
Government of Quebec	1

\* In its current configuration, the Marine Park encompasses the maritime portions of Fjord-du-Saguenay, Charlevoix-Est and La Haute-Côte-Nord RCMs. The three RCMs of the Bas-Saint-Laurent region border the Marine Park, hence the designation of a single representative for these three jurisdictions.

The coordination committee may also create advisory committees on specific topics. In fact, since Fall 2023, there has been an advisory committee on the expansion project. The members of the advisory committee have a comprehensive understanding of the proposed area. Their recommendations contribute to the smooth development of the project.

**Our Commitment**

The makeup of the coordination committee would be adjusted to adequately represent the new reality of the expanded Marine Park. Newly concerned RCMs following the park’s expansion would be entitled to a seat on the committee. Representatives of non-government organizations would also be added to the committee. Further, advisory committees could be created on specific themes such as structuring of the visitor experience or enhancement of the scientific research program.

**EXAMPLE OF INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES IN GOVERNANCE**

**Role of Advisory Committees in the Creation of the Marine Park**

Behind the creation of the Marine Park stand approximately 100 individuals from the municipal, environmental and government sectors, non-profit organizations and the Essipit Innu First Nation. At the dawn of this great adventure, everything had to be developed from scratch. Advisory committees were formed to establish ways of functioning, notably with regard to reception, signage and marketing, the build-out of facilities and infrastructure, Marine Park themes and interpretation, as well as ecosystem management and research. These committees gave rise to a number of achievements such as the structuring of the Discovery Network and the publication of an ecosystem conservation plan. The contribution of regional stakeholders to these advisory committees has been a key element of success in the creation of the Marine Park.

# 7

## Sharing An Opinion

Public consultations for the proposed Marine Park expansion are intended for any individual who wishes to participate, regardless of his or her motivation or geographic location in Quebec or Canada. Views on the project can be expressed in any of a number of ways.

### 1. Online questionnaire

Members of the public are encouraged to express their views on the Marine Park expansion project by completing the online [questionnaire](#). Answers to the survey will be processed anonymously.

### 2. Brief

For organizations or individuals who wish to submit a brief, it is possible to do it online. Briefs will be made public on the Marine Park website once public consultations have concluded. Briefs must be free of any offensive or slanderous language. They must not infringe on copyright, privacy rights or image rights.

#### What is a brief?

A brief is a means of expressing an opinion on the project in a manner that best suits the individual. It may be of varying length and may or may not include images. It is not reserved for experts or academics.

### 3. Public participation events in the communities

Five participatory events will be held in municipalities located in proximity to the targeted expansion area. Each event will begin in the late afternoon with kiosks staffed by the Marine Park team that will allow participants to discuss the project at their leisure and according to their areas of interest. Later in the evening, there will be an information session and a Q&A period.

For further details on these consultative events, visit the following link:

<https://parcmarin.qc.ca/consultations/home>

All feedback received during the public consultations will be analyzed and used to identify opportunities and issues related to the expansion project. This feedback will support the recommendation that will form the basis of the final decision of the two governments as to whether or not the project can go forward.



# 8

## Next Steps

In Winter 2025, the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park expansion project team will submit a public consultations report to the two ministers responsible for the dossier, namely Quebec's Minister of the Environment, the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada. The two governments will then be able to take a joint, well-informed decision on the proposed expansion.

The Marine Park would only be officially expanded after the entry into force of i) a decree adopted by the Quebec Council of Ministers and ii) a decree adopted by the Governor in Council for the Government of Canada. These decrees are prepared on the recommendation of the relevant ministers.

To move forward with the expansion of the Marine Park, drafting a new management plan would be one of the first actions initiated and would be undertaken as soon as possible. The management plan will present a long-term vision for the Marine Park as well as management guidelines. Based on the issues identified, strategies and objectives would be defined in all the Marine Park's areas of intervention. This is a strategic plan that would inform the Marine Park's management decisions and activities for the next seven years. The public would be encouraged to participate in the development of this plan by making its ideas and vision for the future of the Marine Park heard. Comments voiced by participants in the current public consultations that relate not to the new boundaries being proposed but rather to how the expanded Marine Park would be managed will be recorded and taken into consideration when preparing the new management plan.



© T. Cadilhac — Least sandpiper

# Appendix I. Consulted Stakeholders

Stakeholder category	Number of stakeholders met
RCMs	11
Municipalities	68
First Nations	4
Environmental organizations	17
Recreation and tourism organizations	14
Commercial fishers of species under federal jurisdiction	26
Commercial fishers of species under provincial jurisdiction	12
Economic organizations and commercial users	13
Ports and maritime transport	11
Members of Discovery Network	14
Organizations related to boating	7
Permit holders in current Marine Park	4
Future permit holders	8
Research	7
Quebec ministries and government organizations	9
Canadian ministries and government organizations	3

# Appendix II. Preliminary Area Under Study

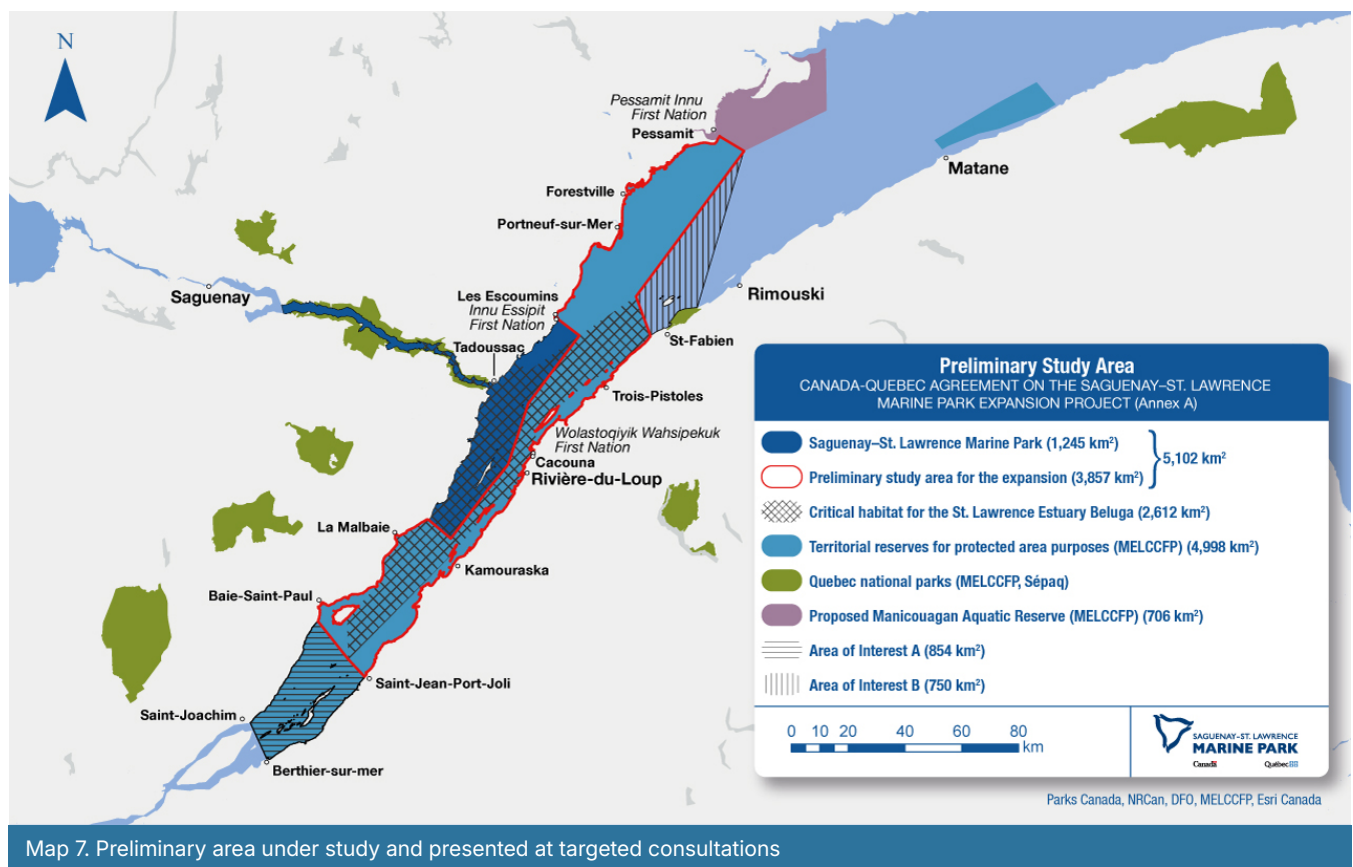
Since Fall 2023, the proposed expansion of the Marine Park has been the subject of targeted consultations with approximately 230 organizations (First Nations, RCMs, commercial fishers, tourism, economic and environmental players, etc.). At these meetings, the organizations were able to voice their views of the preliminary configuration under study, which is illustrated below.

This preliminary area under study is primarily based on work jointly carried out by DFO and MELCCFP with a view to establishing a marine protected area in the estuary and on the territorial reserves for protected area purposes (TRPAP) to which a temporary administrative protection status was

granted by the Government of Quebec in 2020. These estuary waters were identified as priorities for the governments' marine conservation efforts with a view to protecting:

- At-risk marine mammal species and their habitats;
- At-risk fish species and their habitats; and
- Forage species that are consumed by marine mammals and their habitats.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [MINISTÈRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT, DE LA LUTTE CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS \(2024\). Marine protected areas in Québec. \[Consulted online on 2024-08-08\]](#)



Map 7. Preliminary area under study and presented at targeted consultations

Following the targeted consultations, three main findings emerged:

**1. Include Battures aux Loups Marins and the municipality of Petite-Rivière-Saint-François**

Prime gathering places for seals and birds, the tidal flats known as Battures aux Loups Marins were identified by environmental groups that felt that they should be included. In parallel, Charlevoix RCM adopted a resolution requesting the inclusion of the municipality of Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, in which case the park would encompass the RCM's entire shoreline.

**2. Remove part of the TRPAP from La Haute-Côte-Nord sector<sup>8</sup>**

Limiting the expansion to Boisvert Point notably implies the exclusion of an area of more intense commercial fishing activities that use mobile bottom-contacting gear.

**3. Connect the Marine Park to Bic National Park**

The possibility of connecting the Marine Park to Bic National Park offers a new opportunity to discover and enjoy the Marine Park through Quebec's network of national parks. This area is also important for seals and seabirds.

The concerns and possibilities heard by the expansion team at these meetings were used to develop the configuration retained and proposed at the public consultations. The proposal thus takes into account both environmental protection needs and the social and economic considerations of the adjacent regions.

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<sup>8</sup> Portions of the TRPAP not included in the expansion project would retain their temporary protection status as well as their inclusion in the register of protected areas. These areas will be considered for other proposed marine protected areas.



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# Learn more

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