

Regional Natural Parks of France and Heritage Regions of Canada: Two New Approaches for Developing Sustainable Tourism Attractions

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Tourists all over the world are looking for experiences that give them a sense of the unique character of the place they are visiting. They are seeking to learn about the people, their customs and lifestyles, the landscapes and the local architecture.

In the international market, the importance of a unique experience where the tourist discovers first hand the local heritage is underlined in many research studies. But then, how is it possible to turn a large rural area into a tourism attraction, without spending millions of dollars, without alienating the local people and without threatening the natural environment?

Regional Natural Parks in France and Heritage Regions in Canada are two approaches which have demonstrated that this is possible.

Regional Natural Parks, "Parcs naturels regionaux", and Heritage Regions are essentially large inhabited rural areas where local residents pull together to protect their cultural and natural heritage and use it as the basis for economic revitalization. Cultural tourism is one of these economic engines. The resident's ultimate objective is to maintain or improve the area's quality of life.

The concept of local and regional revitalization through self-help, bottom-up, incremental change began to emerge in the 1960's at a time when, both in Europe and in North America, government's answer to regional decline and depopulation was the regrouping of small farms and local industries into regional service centres, or the quick fix

injection of new life through the implantation of new large industries with absolutely no roots in the local economy. These governmental approaches negated the essence of regional life: the one family farm, the small fishing or lumber industry, people proud of their traditions and way of life, people who had a good understanding of their natural and built environment and knew how to live in harmony with it. During this time, the tourism industry's answer to developing attractions was to build large roads, modern hotels and expensive restaurants in quaint heritage areas or to create new attractions such as Heritage Villages or attractions Parks.

This is when soft regional conservation and revitalization approaches began to shape up in Europe such as the Ecomuseum, the Parcs naturels regionaux or various schemes to revitalize the downtown of small communities. During the same period, comparable approaches were initiated in Canada.

To better understand how these new approaches work, I would like to share with you the experience of one Natural Regional Park from France, the Livradois-Forez, and one Heritage Region from Canada, the Lanark County Heritage Region. They will give you an idea of what these regions have been able to accomplish in a relatively short period of time, with relatively small budgets to become important tourism destinations while keeping their local flavour and sense of place. I will then describe the French and Canadian programs which have made these projects possible.

FRANCE: LIVRADOIS-FOREZ, REGIONAL NATURAL PARK GENERAL INFORMATION

Location

This "Parc naturel regional" is located in South central France in a region called Auvergne.

Total Area

The territory's area is: 303,457 hectares.

Population

There are 111,735 inhabitants living in 166 communities.

Creation

This Park was created officially in 1984.

Management

It is managed by a Board made up of 25 Mayors from local communities, 6 regional advisors and 12 general or technical advisors.

Budget

The annual operating budget is approximately 2 million dollars.



Livradois-Forez

Undulating hills, green pastures and forests, vast agricultural plains, this park is made up of several distinct homelands, each with its own history and tradition. Agriculture, lumber and strong craft traditions plunging their roots back to the Middle Ages are the back bone of this beautiful "Parc naturel regional".

The park's creation did not come about because its residents realized that it was an outstanding area with unique features. They simply recognized that the area was rapidly deteriorating and thought that the creation of a parc naturel regional would turn things around for them. So, they just went ahead, agreed on an overall common objective and got the project going.

The Park's Charter was signed by an official representative of each participating community and adopted at the time of the Park's official creation. The Park's boundaries correspond exactly to the participating communities boundaries.

The Livradois-Forez Charter basically defines the territory, the conservation goals, the economic development and cultural objectives for a period of 10 years. It also specifies the management structure and how much each level of government will contribute financially to the project.

Financial Resources

With an overall annual budget of approximately two million dollars, the Livradois-Forez Park can undertake significant activities. Its revenues essentially come from the following sources:

- (a) \$60,000 from a tax per capita paid by the communities;
- (b) \$500,000 from the Departmental Government, on the basis of approved projects;
- (c) \$800,000 from the Regional Government, on the basis of approved projects;
- (d) \$600,000 from the National Government, on the basis of approved projects.

Expenses are concentrated in the following areas:

- 21% for environment conservation
- 21% for tourism development
- 20% for cultural activities
- 24% for Supporting crafts and new businesses
- 14% for forest management and development

Every employee contributes actively to the preparation of projects to be submitted annually to the various levels of government. Essentially, the months of October/November are spent preparing projects. December/January are spent presenting the various ideas to government agencies, getting approval and preparing the annual budget. February/March is program preparation time and then, the season begins. This cycle repeats itself every year.

Major Thrust

The major thrust of this Park is economic development, but it is conceived in a holistic way. Most government departments tend to develop programs in hierarchy of single purpose discrete entities: industrial programs from the Department of Industry, agricultural programs from the Department of agriculture, crafts programs from the Department of Crafts and Commerce, and so on. The programs of the Park, on the other hand, are conceived in an integrated way. This means that the Park's programs cross over the fields of responsibilities of several departments. For example, the Park will develop and manage a "Trades Route" program which involve developing existing or new trades (Trades and Commerce Dept.) on the basis of local cultural or natural resources (Dept. of Cultural Affairs or Agriculture), with the help of appropriate road signs (Dept. of Transport) for the benefit of local residents and visitors (Departments of Tourism, Education and Employment).

Tourism

Everyone involved in the Park's management agrees that tourism is the essential element of an economic development strategy for the Park. Consequently, tourism products marketing and commercialization continues at full speed.

Here are some of the 1989 products:

- * Lodging catalog (15,000 copies of which 5,000 were sent through a direct mail campaign);

- * ads in newspapers and specialized magazines;
- * new hiking, horseback riding and mountain bike trails;
- * hosting of newspaper reporters and tour operators;
- * participation to various trade shows;
 - * publication of a new guide for organized tours;
- * training sessions were held for festival and special activity organizers. The object was to increase their professionalism and the quality of the events.

CULTURE

Cultural Animation

Cultural animation is a key element for a dynamic program. Residents and newcomers' awareness to their region constantly needs to be fed through cultural activities. It is through such activities that traditions and the region's unique cultural features are shared between residents and visitors. It is obvious that residents cannot share with visitors what they do not know about themselves and their region.

In Livradois-Forez, agreements were signed with the Department of Cultural Affairs for activities in the field of theatre, music, literature, and general education.

The Park made an inventory of all museums on its territory. Development studies were undertaken for four specific museums.

During the last two years, the Park purchased or received by way of donation, books of all nature pertaining to the region. To date, 500 works have been collected for the benefit of students, researchers, elected officials and associations.

The Park financially supports theatrical groups which perform in classrooms. The actors meet with teachers and agree on the play. Since 1985, 150 schools, 300 classes and 6,000 children have benefited from this program.

Oral history

Oral history is very much part of what makes a region unique. It is part of what we call the "non-physical" heritage. The best way to share oral history is by organizing story-telling sessions open to the public.

The Livradois-Forez Librarian's Association decided last year to organize a session on story-telling. They did not expect to have the success that they had. Thirty story-tellers registered. Two one-day sessions had to be organized for the public and one special one-day session for teachers.

Oral tradition is obviously experiencing a new life in the Livradois-Forez. Inspired by this first experience, the Librarian's Association is planning new sessions for the coming year.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the main engine of economic development. Sixty per cent of Livradois-Forez farmers are over 50 years of age. The situation is serious. The agricultural landscape is obviously going to change dramatically during the next decade.

What to do ?

Firstly, the Park's agricultural committee created a mechanism to monitor change and gather accurate data.

Secondly, the Park's policy for financial support was changed. Except in a few specific cases for which previous agreements had been signed, it was decided that there would be no more direct financial support to farmers. All financial support would now go to economic diversification efforts and training: "Before, we were telling the farmers that they had to be more productive. Now, we are telling them the contrary!"

Diversification efforts are focusing on the production, transformation and commercialization of new products such as medicinal plants, cheeses, new varieties of fruits and even developing vacation farms.

During 1990, 21 farmers or non-profit associations received direct financial support for diversification activities. Here are some examples of training seminars organized during this year :

- * Seminar on How to welcome visitors in a rural environment
- * Seminar on Small fruits
- * Seminar on Economic Diversification in the community of Thiers

Forestry

There are 140,000 hectares of forest in the Livradois-Forez Park, of which 15,000 hectares belong to the State or various communities.

The remaining portion, approximately 125,000 hectares, belongs to some 70,000 different private owners of which two-thirds do not live in the area! This of course, is a major headache for the Park.

It is very difficult to keep a forest clean and well managed in those circumstances. For example, when a strong wind damages trees, it takes a long time to locate the specific landowner to whom this portion of forest belongs, and when he has been located, it is very difficult to get him to do something to correct whatever damage has been done.

There are approximately 100 saw mills in the Park; twenty of them hire more than 10 employees while the rest are one or two persons operations.

The existing national legislation on reforestation creates a problem for local authorities. If a farmer decides to reforest his land, he is entitled to special grants to do so, and will be exempt of taxes for 30 years on this land! This causes the overall rural landscape to change dramatically and deprives small communities of their major source of income : their tax revenues.

As an example of economic development effort, the Park has helped in the creation of a new industry specializing in small diameter timber. It is now quite prosperous.

Communication and public participation

This is an essential component of community development. The residents must be kept informed of the Park's activities and must participate regularly in general activities which make them feel part of the action.

The Project's newsletter is sent free of charge to every elected official. There is no individual subscription to the newsletter.

Most activities which require public participation are initiated by the Park's permanent staff, but coordinated by the local elected official. An example here would be the organization of a cleaning up operation in a particular area once the tourist season is over : the program is organized by the Park's staff but the volunteers will be recruited by the elected officials in every community.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Opportunities

The Park published a directory of businesses which need to be taken over because their owner is aging or simply moving on to another region. The Park advertises in papers and magazines that if someone wishes to find a good business opportunity in this region, they should first contact the Park's headquarters.

A Cheque for Advice

Legal advice, marketing studies and financing options are necessary prior to creating a new business or taking over an existing one. Those studies are expensive and too often, merchants or businessmen will try to save their investment capital by not having those studies done.

The Park has come up with a new idea; it is called "A Cheque for Advice". If you wish to start a new business or take over an existing one in the region, you can buy for \$50.00 cheques for professional services which are worth \$250.00. When you seek legal advice or ask an accountant to look at financing options for your project, you can pay for those services with these cheques. There is a limit of 5 cheques per person.

Permanent Centers for Initiation to the Environment

The French government supports financially 40 Permanent Centers for Initiation to the Environment. There are 3 such centers in Auvergne. They act as:

- * tools for training youth and the general public;
- * partners in local development;
- * tourism attractions.

Their role is to initiate to the environment, develop capacities for observation, and give basic analysis principles enabling the development of a responsible attitude towards the environment and a new concept of citizenship.

Hunters

Hunters have created their own associations. They have exclusive rights to hunt certain species. One of these associations has undertaken the task of saving the local partridge which had almost disappeared. Hunting was suspended and intensive reproduction began. Now there are some 500 partridge couples in the Park.

Trades Route

In 1984, the park adopted a plan for agricultural diversification. Craftsmen and tradesmen had already begun to settle in the area and all of them wanted to be better known and improve their situation.

The Park agreed to help them market themselves but only if they would first regroup themselves in an association because the Park didn't want to deal with them on a one-to-one-basis.

This initiative resulted in the creation of an association of thirty craftsmen and tradesmen. It has been active during the past three years. A full colour poster was printed and widely distributed. It shows the location of all participating craftsmen and their particular crafts. Each member has signed a binding agreement with the new Association whereby he agrees;

- (a) to respect existing sanitary standards especially for agricultural products;

(b) host visitors in his workshop, even if he has a very modest establishment;

) to demonstrate his know-how.

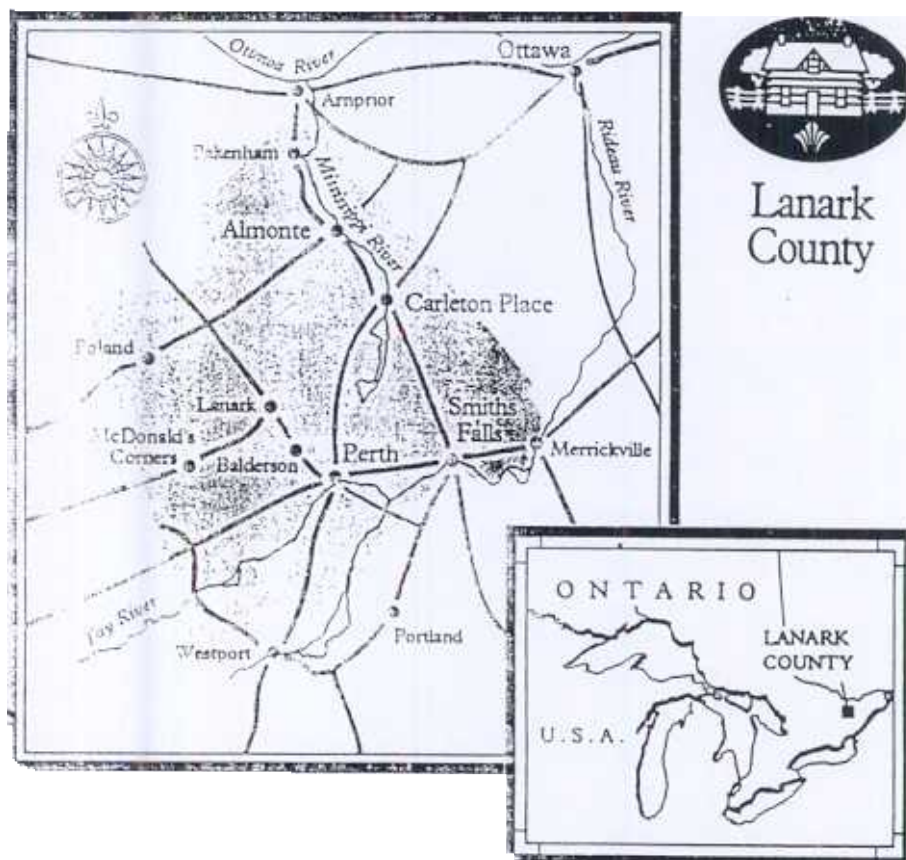
With the help of the Department of Transport, special signs identifying the Trades Route have been installed.

CANADA: LANARK COUNTY HERITAGE REGION

An Overview of the Region

Lanark County is a 45-minute drive west of Ottawa. It encompasses an area of approximately 6400 square kilometers

The region has approximately 53,000 full-time residents in 1991, representing a growth rate of 6 per cent since 1988. There are more than 9,500 school children and approximately 12,700 aged 55 and over. It is estimated by Statistics Canada that the annual income of residents is approximately \$22,300 compared to the provincial average of \$24,000 per year. The services sector accounts for the largest industry at 29.5% of the region's industries followed by manufacturing which accounts for 19.5%. Tourism visitation, estimated by the Lanark County Heritage Region Project, is more than 400,000 persons per year.



and 18 municipalities. The region is well known for its rich natural beauty (woodlands, rolling countryside, rivers, and lakes), built heritage (picturesque communities, 150-year-old stone mills, houses, shops, and churches), history (the region was settled by 19th-century British military, farmers and millers), and local customs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 1989-1991

During the first three years of the Lanark County Heritage Region Project, numerous accomplishments were made. They appear under six headings: organization, resource identification and protection, education, economic development, design, and marketing.

Economic development

The Project trained residents who were developing entrepreneurial skills. It lobbied government agencies that could offer regional development support.

- * The project assisted in lobbying for the establishment of new accommodation facilities for the County. One major Inn, estimated to be more than a \$3 million investment, located in the region.
- * The Project, through developing a series of County-wide special events, in one year brought about one million dollars of new retail and tourism revenues to the region.
- * The Project brought bed and breakfast owners together for first-ever meetings. They produced a brochure. Twenty-three establishments were listed. 6,000 copies of the brochure were published and distributed through the project office, Bed & Breakfast and information centres. The activities led to 4 new Bed & Breakfast being established, investments estimated at more than \$500,000.
- * The Project began promoting local goods and services in the County, by initiating a County product logo. The logo has the potential to appear on more than 200 local products.
- * The Project was a major force behind the Festival of the Maples. In 1991 the event became for the first time ever a month-long and county-wide celebration. Of the 14 Maple producers who participated, several reported that the event increased their sales by 15%. More than 15,000 visitors participated in the celebration, generating more than \$300,000 for the local regional economy.
- * The Project promoted the first ever Falls Colours Festival which achieved newspaper coverage in the Toronto Star and Ottawa Citizen papers travel section. As well, the Festival was part of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism's marketing campaign.
- * The Project acted as a major catalyst in marketing the region to tourists by establishing a County tourism information center in the Project office, in conjunction with the Eastern Ontario Travel Association. More than 4,000 people visited the Project office in 1991.
- * The project received more than \$44,000 worth of free media coverage. This included more than 75 weekly articles that were published in the county's five community newspapers, reaching 35,000 households each week. The Project also attracted more than 1 hour of television and radio coverage, including CBC Radio, CTV, and MacLean-Hunter TV.
- * The Project was involved in promoting more than 60 festivals. In a 12-month period alone, the Project supported 30 special events. These included: Heritage Rendezvous, National Heritage Week, Festival of the Maples, Sugar Bush Tours, Maple Trivia Contest, 4-H Club: Our Heritage, Merrickville Antique Show, National Forest Week Events, Nissan International Dinking on the Rideau Marathon, Carleton Place and Beckwith Historical Society Fundraiser, Almonte Lobsterfest, 150th anniversary of Lanark County: Our

Marketing

The project marketed the region as a single, identifiable destination for tourists. It associated the region with its products. It targeted and contacted markets for selected heritage goods and services. It sponsored and promoted special events. It created publicity.

- * The Project was a major backer of Come On Home to Lanark, the 150th anniversary of the founding of the county. Forty activities attracted double the average number of annual visitors to the region for a total of more than 30,000 visitors during the summer peak season, and revenues of \$600,000 for tourist and retail operations.

Attic, Cameron Country Bluegrass Jamboree, Come on Home to my Garden Tour, Perth Antique Show and Sale, Perth Wildlife reserve open house, Almonte Ice Cream Festival, Great Canadian Lamb Race, 1991 Dairy Princess, Canada Day celebrations, Mississippi River Daze, Boyd's Settlement Homecoming, Pioneer Fiddling and Step Dancing Festival, Lanark County, Pakenham Victorian Festival, Traditional Woodworkers Exhibitions, Lanark County Ploughing Match, Opening of the Rideau Canal Museum, Lanark County Fall Colours, The Pumpkin Caper, Santa Claus Parade, Christmas at the Mill of Kintail, and Almonte's Light Up the Town Spectacular.

Heritage Resource Identification and Protection

Early in the process, the Project undertook the identification of unique local resources: the vegetation, wildlife, geology, topography, scenic vistas, water resources, prehistoric sites, archaeological areas, vintage structures, industrial heritage, transportation routes, artifacts, ethnic origins, traditions, folkways, and customs. Once the resources were identified, efforts were made to safeguard and enhance them.

- * The Project hosted 12 Heritage Nights where residents identified heritage and economic resources and opportunities. These events attracted on average more than 40 people per night, impacting more than 480 County residents.
- * The Project compiled a 75 page catalogue of heritage resources.
- * The Project supported the protection of the built heritage such as the Thomas Block in Perth, Mississippi Hotel and Town Hall Auditorium in Carleton Place, the Naismith (inventor of Basketball), Homestead outside of Almonte, and Almonte's old Post Office.
- * The Project supported the protection of natural heritage. It backed, for example, the Friends of

the Mississippi, the Friends of the Rideau, Rivers and Wetlands, Mississippi Field Naturalists, and other organizations in their campaign to protect the region's important rivers and natural features.

Education and Training

- * The Project encouraged local schools to become involved in the Country's heritage. It reintroduced First Nations culture to the region and to schools for the first time since the settlers arrived circa 1820. At the Festival of the Maples it involved school children in conservation issues and local traditions. In all, more than 500 school children participated in the Project's special events.
- * The Project helped organize and promote workshops on Bed and Breakfast developments, artisans as entrepreneurs, and quality customer service. More than 200 residents and 50 businesses participated in the Project's workshops over the three years.
- * The Project helped more than 100 students at 3 post-secondary institutions. It provided opportunities for students attending courses in design, tourism management, leisure and recreation, and heritage.

Design

The Project focused on the visual aspects of the region. It helped raise awareness of the importance of the preservation of landscapes and streetscapes.

- * Designed and implemented a road signage program for the entire system of By-way tours. More than 150 signs were produced with the assistance of the Project which will mark as tour routes more than 1,000 kilometers of roadway.
- * The Project developed a corporate logo. It attached the logo to signs and literature. The Project also designed numerous brochures, such as: a Bed & Breakfast brochure, Festival of Maples Sugar Bush Tour pamphlet and the Discover Lanark Lore brochure.

- * The Project held a number of design workshops: the town of Almonte involved selected merchants in facade improvements; the village of Lanark promoted design to local BIA members; and design projects were undertaken with the Algonquin College Heritage Carpentry Program.

Organization

From the start, Lanark County viewed organization as it's most important undertaking. The Project office, various organizations, committees, business people, public officials, the voluntary sector, special-interest groups, and other regional partners came together in unprecedented numbers. Out of this collaboration emerged a vision for the Region and a plan for achieving it.

- * A formal three-year Heritage Regions Project agreement was signed. The partners: the Federal Department of Communications, and the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, the Lanark County Tourism Association (representing the residents), the County of Lanark,

and Heritage Canada. The project was launched with 7 kick-off events throughout the County. The events, which were held over a two-month period, attracted more than 500 residents and marked the commencement of a pledge to work in a spirit of harmony to support the project over it's three years. A declaration was signed at this event by 24 representatives of municipalities, townships, and key organizations.

- * More than 700 community meetings featured the Project as part of their agendas. Of the 700 meetings, the Project's office staff attended more than 400 community meetings over the three years.
- * The Project helped develop a network of partners of more than 150 County municipal and community organizations. As well, the Project created a Who's Who directory: names, addresses, telephone numbers of key contacts. The directory was distributed to municipal governments and local organizations.
- * The Project launched a newsletter that had a circulation of 400.



THE PROGRAMS WHICH MAKE REGIONAL NATURAL PARKS AND HERITAGE REGIONS POSSIBLE

France: Regional Natural Parks

In France, the *Parcs naturels regionaux* concept goes back to a symposium on rural development held in Lurs Provence, in 1966. In a common voice, the environmentalists demanded that more be done to preserve the French territory than the simple creation of isolated natural parks. At that time, these parks represented approximately one percent of the total territory, while the rest was abandoned to concrete and asphalt. Actually, it was the whole country in rapid mutation which was crying for help. Six months later, the law creating the *Parcs naturels regionaux* was adopted. It stated that these areas were territories which needed to be protected and organized because they represented a particular interest for the quality of their natural and cultural heritage. The law enabled these regions to tap into important national and regional funding to support local volunteer efforts in achieving conservation and revitalization goals. This concept was planned to regenerate the area in an environmentally sensitive way and maintain it as a desirable place to live and work. It focuses on the protection and development of a region's natural and cultural resources to avoid sacrificing this wealth to out of control economic development.

The *Parcs naturels regionaux* contain precious heritage resources. Fortunately, they escape broad modern commercial trends and the classical economic laws of supply and demand because, for a large part, they are **immaterial** or **non-physical**. Nevertheless, we cannot live without them anymore. We need solid roots to draw the force and the wisdom to build our future as much as we need clean air and pure water. These roots draw their sap in history, culture, know-how and way-of-life of our various regions. These rare and treasured values are fragile and endangered by urban civilization.

To maintain our way-of-life and our identity, it is important to respect and pay attention to the things we cherish and to the people whose love and friendship we wish to maintain.

What is a Natural Regional Park?

It is essentially the label given by the French government to a specific territory. It is an official recognition by the state of a precisely defined area, with an administrative structure and program which entitles it to access guaranteed funds each year through a bilateral agreement. This structure emerges from the base; it is the residents who decide voluntarily to join hands to adopt this particular approach and commit financial resources to it. The territory's boundaries correspond exactly to the boundaries of the communities which agree to be part of the Heritage Region.

The Objectives

Each Park or Heritage Region aims at protecting and developing a large inhabited rural area by:

- * safeguarding its cultural heritage, its landscapes, its fragile or endangered natural elements, its architectural heritage, its traditions;
- * developing economic activities compatible with environment protection and appropriate to the region;
- * promoting visitor reception and general public awareness while organizing educational, cultural or recreation activities.

To date, 25 Natural Regional Parks exist in France. Together, they cover approximately 8% of the total area of France. They represent 1,900 communities out of the 36,000 on the French territory. The smallest Heritage Region is 26,000 hectares while the largest ones may go as high as 350,000 hectares (one hectare = 10,000 square metres).

The Creation of a French Natural Regional Park

Concerned citizens and official representatives of communities in a particular region come together and

decide to adopt the revitalization approach promoted by the French Heritage Region concept. Together they have to convince the various levels of local, departmental and regional governments to go along with the concept. Then, they appoint a small task force to draft a constitutional Charter.

The Charter

The Charter becomes a morally binding document between the partners. The partners are generally the communities joining the Heritage Region and the departmental and regional governments. The Charter is morally binding because it cannot legally be opposed to a third party. It defines:

- * the Heritage Region's boundaries;
- * the management structure;
- * the program of activities, including capital investments such as acquiring a headquarters office, vehicles, road signs etc.
- * the sources of funding.

The Charter is signed by all parties and submitted to the Minister of the Environment requesting official recognition as a Natural Regional Park. The Minister will submit the request to some ten other Ministers (Transport, Education, Culture, Agriculture etc.) and together, they will all share in financing the project. The official label is granted for a period of 10 years. A revision of the Charter must be submitted after the first three years. At the end of the 10 years period, the Park must submit a new Charter with a revised or up-dated program, and the participating communities have to officially renew their commitment.

The process generally takes several years to complete but by the time the Charter is signed, there is generally broad agreement from the base, the residents and local politicians, as to what is expected both in terms of achievements and resources.

Who Decides?

A mixed syndicate is responsible for the Park's management. It is made up of (1) representatives from the communities in

te Region, (2) representatives from the regional governments and (3) representatives from cities outside the Region's boundaries but which benefit directly or indirectly from the Region's programs; they are called associated cities or gateways.

Socio-economic partners such as Chambers of commerce, industry, trade or agriculture, participate actively in defining the Park's programs.

Professional specialist and local service organizations are regularly consulted on programs and activities.

With What Means?

Most French Regional Natural Parks function with annual budgets of approximately two million dollars. The operational budget generally comes from the following sources:

- * the Regional government: 40%
- * the Departmental government: 27%
- * the Communities: 20%
- * the national Department of the Environment: 13%

To implement the Park's programs, the Mixed Syndicate hires a director and a permanent staff of 15 to 30 persons. Their activities are generally in three areas:

- (a) administrative services;
- (b) visitor reception and interpretation;
- (c) program implementation (e.g. economic development, scientific advisors, training and education, tourism development, architecture, museology etc.)

What Type of Activities are Carried Out?

Heritage experience development and education:

The Park is rich in history and tradition. It studies these ways-of-life, these customs and know-how in constant evolution.

This heritage is shared with the residents and visitors through:

- * exhibitions and animations;
- * museums and ecomuseums;
- * discovery routes.

The Regional Natural Park also supports restoration project for architectural heritage of historic significance (castles, churches) or of vernacular interest (rural houses, wash-houses, stations of the Cross).

Education to the environment is an important component of this approach. To raise the level of awareness of children and adults, the Parks organize educational outdoor sessions, nature or heritage classes, vacation camps, training sessions for teachers and interpreters.

Economic Development

With the support of professional organizations, the Parks support local development while ensuring that the quality of the environment is maintained.

- * They participate in the regeneration of various craft or industrial; activities and the revitalization of local businesses.
- * They look for new opportunities to commercialize local products.
- * They support the creation of new businesses by valorizing their Region's resources. They encourage production diversification, the sale of produce at the farms and the co-ordination of farmers to exploit abandoned farms. They train farmers in welcoming visitors and learning new crafts to help them increase their income.

Marketing

For marketing a Park and its products at regional, national and international level, an official logo is created and used by industry, business and craftsmen. The logo which is also a registered trademark, is used on regional products and produce and serves to reinforce the Park's identity.

Local Animation

Regional Natural Parks participate in village animation through the organization of festivals and, musical or theatrical activities.

To improve the quality of life in rural areas, they create libraries on wheels and inform the residents through local radio, newspapers or the Regions's Newsletter.

Visitor Reception

Regional Natural Parks attract many visitors. The Regions develop their heritage tourism potential by proposing recreational activities such as discovery routes, hiking trails and outdoor sport events. Activities designed to attract visitors are always organized in full cooperation with the tourism industry to ensure sufficient food and lodging facilities are available at the time of the events.

The Regional Natural Park's gateways or visitor reception centers also play an important role in welcoming visitors. These facilities are always designed to integrate themselves in the local environment. Often, they are located in restored historic buildings.

The National Federation:

The Federation des parcs naturels regionaux de France is located at 4, rue de Stockholm, Paris 75008, FRANCE
Tel.: 42.94.90.84

It is a coordinating body between all Regional Natural Parks and national institutions or associations directly or indirectly involved in activities having an impact on Regional Natural Parks.

It is concerned with the preparation or review of national legislation or policies which may impact on Regional Natural Parks.

It is a clearing house for information and support for the national network of Regional Natural Parks.

It promotes the concept of regional approach and organizes national meetings and symposiums.

It publishes a magazine entitled *Parcs* and offers various services to the general public.

The National Federation Bureau is the key to a concerted national effort and coordinated actions for the maintenance and development of this approach. It is also the focal point for the development of national standards which apply to all Regional Natural Parks.

CANADA: HERITAGE REGIONS

In Canada, the concept of preserving and developing large inhabited rural heritage areas through broad participation and coordination goes back to the early seventies with Parks Canada's ARC (Agreement for Recreation and Conservation) Programme. A few agreements were signed, such as the Red River Agreement in Manitoba and the Rideau-Trent-Severn Agreement in Ontario. They provided a means for coordinating preservation and development efforts from all levels of government. It was essentially a top-down approach and for several complex reasons, it did not withstand the test of time very well.

In the seventies, the European concept of Ecomuseum made its way into Canada, particularly in the province of Quebec. It was yet another approach designed to preserve and enhance the fragile and endangered heritage in large rural or urban areas. This approach emerged from the museum world and was essentially bottom-up. The basic philosophy of the ecomuseum approach is that the entire population in a territory becomes the curator of its heritage. Its heritage is everything in the area that makes it unique, whether it is natural, built, human or non-physical: flora, fauna, topographical features, whether, buildings, industries, people with particular skills or talents, even attitudes. There are presently twenty Ecomuseums in activity in Canada from coast to coast.

During the same period, Heritage Canada, a national non-governmental organization, located at 306 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, Ontario CANADA K2P 1S2, Tel.: (613) 237-1066, developed the Heritage Regions Approach.

The Heritage Regions Vision

There are hundreds of regions across Canada that are special because of their unique mix of natural, built, and cultural resources. In many of these regions, residents increasingly realize that they share a common and distinctive heritage. This awareness spurs them to seek ways to make the best uses of their resources.

The Heritage Regions Program was established to help the residents of such regions. It is based on two visions. At the local level, it envisions residents coming together to identify, protect, and enhance their natural and cultural heritage and to use it as the basis for economic revitalization. At the national level, it envisions the creation of a physical network of Heritage Regions across Canada, and an information network through which Heritage Regions support one another.

The Program's objectives

The Heritage Regions Program views heritage as a mix of ecological, economic, cultural, and social elements.

The objective of the Heritage Regions Program is to help partners revitalize their areas in ways that balance those elements:

- * *Ecological revitalization.*—Projects identify, enhance, and protect the natural heritage. They are sensitive to the delicate balance that must be struck when nature and development meet.
- * *Cultural revitalization.*—Projects promote such aspects of cultural heritage as archaeological sites, the built environment, history, and local traditions.
- * *Economic revitalization.*—Projects focus on sustainable development. Emphasis is placed upon local entrepreneurship, with most attention given to tourism and the development of other indigenous industries.

- * *Social revitalization.*—Projects promote activities which engender a sense of pride, identity, community and belonging.

The Principles

The Heritage Regions Approach is based upon several principles. Among them:

- * *A grassroots movement.*—The Heritage Regions approach is a people-based, community-driven undertaking. It believes the real experts on how a region should be revitalized are the people who live in it: they are the ones who should define what is valuable.
- * *Community vision.*—The region must develop its own vision, not merely accept one imposed from without. The community must share an understanding of local values, issues, and goals. It must provide a unified vision of the future and agree upon the initiatives that will achieve that vision.
- * *Community commitment.*—The success or failure of a Heritage Region hinges upon local attitude. A firm and serious commitment on the part of the local population is the essential ingredient in a Project's life. Commitment is expressed through the allocation of human and financial resources.
- * *Full-time management.*—Because the management of a region is a complex undertaking, it requires full-time management. This is achieved through the on-the-site presence of a professional coordinator.
- * *Incremental change.*—Quick-fix solutions almost never work in regions that took generations to develop. The Heritage Regions Approach supports community change but believes it should continue the natural evolution of the community: it should be carefully undertaken, low cost and incremental.
- * *Process.*—A living community is, by definition, in a constant state of becoming. Just as process is at the heart of community development, so process (as opposed to a one-time dramatic intervention) is an essential component of the heritage Regions' Approach. The process involves a number of distinct steps which must be taken over time.
- * *Comprehensive Approach.*—A region is a complex web of interdependencies. The Heritage Regions Approach reflects this state for it, too, is all-encompassing. It seeks a balance between all the ecological, cultural, social, and economic elements that make up the local environment.
- * *Entrepreneurship.*—Just as every region was first developed for business reasons (farming, mining, fishing, forestry) so Heritage Region are essentially entrepreneurial in nature. They are based upon business, upon a certain degree of risk-taking. Typically, new entrepreneurship in a Heritage Region focuses tourism or other locally-inspired industry.
- * *Support agencies.*—While the residents of a Heritage Region are the final arbiters of their value system and commitment, they succeed best when they take advantage of the world of experience beyond their borders. For that reason, Heritage Regions look to outside expertise, whether individuals, agencies, or entire networks. In this way, they achieve synergy, perspective, quick insights.
- * *Local Leadership.*—While Heritage Regions legitimately look to outside expertise in their launch stage, their long term success depends upon developing local leadership. This leadership ensures the on-going success of the process.

The Seven Point Approach

The revitalization of a Heritage Region follows a seven-point approach:

- (1) *Organization.*—The first and most essential step is organization, the interaction of participants: the coordinator, the committees, business people, public officials, the voluntary sector, special-interest groups, other regional partners, and the Heritage Regions Program. Out of this collaboration emerge both the vision for the Region and the plan for achieving it.
- (2) *Heritage Resource Identification.*—Among the first revitalization steps is the identification of unique local resources: the vegetation, wildlife, geology, topography, scenic vistas, water resources, prehistoric sites, archaeological areas, vintage structures, industrial heritage, transportation routes, artifacts, ethnic origins, traditions, folkways, and customs. Once these resources are identified, efforts are made to safeguard and enhance them.
- (3) *Education and Training.*—Education has two sides. One focuses upon training the leaders: the coordinator, the community heritage leaders, the entrepreneurs, the curators, the guides. In a broader sense, education also covers all the ways in which the region is explained to the local population also covers all the ways in which the region is explained to the local population and to visitors. This step covers everything from school programs to tourist travel.
- (4) *Economic Development.*—The Region encourages current businesses and pushes for the launch of new ones. It encourages the development of industry that is sympathetic to the environment. Entrepreneurship focuses upon indigenous industries (notably tourism) that maximize the region's resources and the capability of its residents. The Heritage Region Program trains residents who are developing entrepreneurial skills. It lobbies government agencies that can offer regional development support. It helps improve transportation and communication infrastructures.
- (5) *Design.*—This strategy focuses on the visual aspects of the region. It enhances landscapes and streetscapes. It enhances and preserves the character of buildings. It creates regional signs. It improves the gateways or entrances to the area. It encourages the use of local construction skills. It provides design guidelines.
- (6) *Marketing.*—The Heritage Region Program sells the region. It markets the area as a single, identifiable destination for both residents and tourists. It associates the region with its products. It targets and contracts markets for selected heritage goods and services. It develops a regional logo. It sponsors special events. It creates publicity.
- (7) *Monitoring and Evaluation.*—The Program monitors the progress of both individual projects and its own national activities. Data is collected both prior to the start of a Region and throughout its life. The data is monitored yearly to evaluate success. Among the indicators that are studied: business starts, employment statistics, tourism numbers, resident involvement.

