

# Review of 2009 Camping Season

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Tourism and Parks

Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment  
Government of the Northwest Territories

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) Tourism and Parks division made changes in the following areas to its Territorial Parks program in 2009:

1. General fee Increases;
2. The Online Reservation System; and
3. Seasonal use changes

The changes were based on consultation undertaken during the summer of 2008. The impact of the changes and campground user feedback are discussed below.

### 1.1 General Fee Increases

The 2009 operating season saw a significant increase in camping fees, the first such increase in nine years. The fees for walk in tenting, powered and non-powered camping sites increased across the board.

There was also a revision of day-use fees in 2009. This included clarification of day-use categories (as vehicle entry permits), a price increase for day-use and the introduction of group day-use permits (daily vehicle entry permits for groups of 9 or more).

### 1.2 Online Reservation System

The online reservation system was piloted in the summer of 2005 for the three North Slave Region parks. Since then it has expanded territorially to include the following eleven parks with campgrounds.

- |                |              |                 |            |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Dehcho:      | Blackstone   | Fort Simpson    | Sambaa Deh |
| • Inuvik:      | Happy Valley | Jak Park        |            |
| • North Slave: | Fred Henne   | Prelude Lake    | Reid Lake  |
| • South Slave: | Hay River    | Queen Elizabeth | Twin Falls |

The system website, [www.campingnwt.ca](http://www.campingnwt.ca) is administered through a contract with Cold Mountain Computing. Users can access maps of parks, pictures and descriptions of campsites and then reserve and pay for specific sites and dates online.

In 2009, Cold Mountain Computing was funded through an allocation from each nightly camping fee (whether reserved or not) and kitchen shelter fee for all parks on the online reservation system.

### **1.3 Seasonal Use Changes**

A lottery draw for seasonal sites at Reid Lake and Prelude Lake Territorial parks remained in place for the 2009 season. However, the full season was divided into two extended stay segments of two months duration and a price increase was introduced.

## **2.0 Feedback from Stakeholders**

The following findings are based on the Parks Satisfaction Survey which was developed and distributed by the Tourism and Parks division in 2009 and comments from other stakeholders.

A total of 172 people responded to the Territory-wide survey which included questions on value for camping fees paid and utilisation of the online reservation system. The survey also invited comments on changes that would have made the respondents stay a better one.

### **2.1 General Fee Increase**

Question 1 of the survey asked respondents to rank various aspects of their camping experience as either very good, good, average, poor, very poor to non-applicable. This included how they felt about "*Value for camping fees paid*". A total of 78% responded good or very good.

Respondents were also provided space to qualitatively answer the open-ended question, "*What could we have done to make your stay better*"? Only two respondents of the 172 commented they found the price increase too much.

Park use fees appeared a minor concern for visitors on how to make their stay better. People mentioned showers, bugs, highway condition, generators and security far more often than fees.

Overall, there seems to be little resistance to the price increase. For the most part, users are comfortable with paying the set rates; however, one thing for Parks to look at

for the future is to provide more services for the prices charged. The division is addressing this issue by upgrading or adding services such as showers, playgrounds and expanded interpretive services.

Parks will examine concerns raised that are in our control such as the use of generators and provisions for park security.

## 2.3 Online Reservation System

Park users used the Online Reservation System to book 3,323 reservations during the 2009 operating season, a 71% increase in the number of reservations since 2007. The 2009 total includes 3,150 reservations for campsites and 173 for kitchen shelters.

The results from the Parks Satisfaction Survey support this growth in usage. Respondents were asked what method they preferred to use to research a campsite and then make and pay for a reservation.

- 58% prefer to research campsites online
- 43% prefer to make a reservation online
- 45% prefer to pay for a reservation online

Usage of the online reservation system is expected to continue to increase as it becomes more widely marketed and more people become experienced with it.

Respondents were also provided space to qualitatively answer the open-ended question, “*What could we have done to make your stay better*”? In regards to the online reservation system, only five negative comments were made.

Some Parks contractors provided input on the online reservation system. Overall, contractors were pleased with it although they offered several general suggestions to improve the site.

- Make the website more user-friendly
- Website should be open for viewing all year
- Front page has no welcoming appeal
- Font and colouring is hard to discern

## 2.4 Extended Stay Sites

The North Slave Region of Tourism and Parks held its annual extended stay lottery in early May 2009. Although turnout was lower than in previous years, winners were pleased with the results as the availability of 80 permits improved the odds of winning.

Of the 29 people entering ballots in 2009, 22 indicated they wished to enter the second draw (Prelude Lake 10, Reid Lake 12). Given that there were 80 permits available everyone was given the option to obtain a second extended stay permit for \$500. The remaining 7 chose to purchase just one extended stay permit (Prelude Lake 4; Reid Lake 3).

Although extended stay sites were not mentioned in the survey, campers did take advantage of the “*What could we do to make your stay better*” section of the Parks Satisfaction Survey to comment on their opinions of the program. Four respondents out of the 172 wished to see further changes to the extended stay program.

Other issues were mentioned more frequently such as showers, bugs, security, highway conditions and generators.

## 3.0 2009 Permit Usage

The 2009 season started memorably with a snow storm that blanketed the Territory on Friday May 15, opening day for most Territorial parks.

Despite an inauspicious start, parks users made good use of the rest of the season. Tables 1 and 2 below details the number of permits issued throughout the Territory for 2009.

<b>Table 1: 2009 Camping Permits</b>									
	Electrical	Non-Electrical	Tent Site	1/2 Season Camping Permits	Total Camping Permits	Total Number of Nights	Average Length of Stay	Total Visits	Average Party Size
<b>Dehcho Region</b>									
Blackstone Territorial Park	0	236	0	0	<b>236</b>	245	1.0	647	2.7
Fort Simpson Territorial Park	211	106	0	0	<b>317</b>	447	1.4	733	2.3
Sambaa Deh Territorial Park	0	212	0	0	<b>212</b>	298	1.4	455	2.1
<b>Dehcho Total Permits</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>554</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1835</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Inuvik Region</b>									
Gwich'in Territorial Park	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>	1	1.0	2	2.0
Happy Valley Territorial Park	395	227	124	0	<b>746</b>	1207	1.6	1650	2.2
Jak Territorial Park	62	181	0	0	<b>243</b>	327	1.3	732	3.0
Nitainlaih Territorial Park	0	168	0	0	<b>168</b>	185	1.1	381	2.3
<b>Inuvik Total Permits</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1158</b>	<b>1720</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2765</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>North Slave Region</b>									
Fred Henne Territorial Park	1321	877	189	0	<b>2387</b>	6173	2.6	7857	3.3
Prelude Lake Territorial Park	0	473	57	24	<b>554</b>	2802	5.3	1787	3.4
Reid Lake Territorial Park	0	304	63	27	<b>394</b>	2407	6.6	1117	3.0
<b>North Slave Total Permits</b>	<b>1321</b>	<b>1654</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>3335</b>	<b>11382</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>10761</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>South Slave Region</b>									
60th Parallel Territorial Park	0	182	0	0	<b>182</b>	226	1.2	434	2.4
Escarpment Creek	0	0	7	0	<b>7</b>	14	2.0	285	40.7
Fort Providence Park	0	670	0	0	<b>670</b>	1123	1.7	2059	3.1
Hay River Territorial Park	775	158	0	0	<b>933</b>	1834	2.0	2513	2.7
Lady Evelyn Falls Territorial Park	280	82	0	0	<b>362</b>	509	1.4	931	2.6
Little Buffalo River Crossing	0	135	0	0	<b>135</b>	370	2.7	455	3.4
Queen Elizabeth Territorial Park	120	72	0	0	<b>192</b>	301	1.6	486	2.5
Twin Falls Territorial Park	681	2	0	0	<b>683</b>	936	1.4	1950	2.9
<b>South Slave Total Permits</b>	<b>1856</b>	<b>1301</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3164</b>	<b>5313</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>9113</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>NWT Total Permits</b>	<b>3845</b>	<b>4086</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>8422</b>	<b>19405</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>24474</b>	<b>2.9</b>

<b>Table 2: 2009 Day Use and Kitchen Shelter Permits</b>					
	2009 Day Use Permits				2009 Kitchen Shelter Permits
	Day Use - 1-8 people	Day Use - 9-15 people	Day Use - 16+ people	Seasonal Day Use	
<b>Dehcho Region</b>					
Blackstone Territorial Park	19	0	0	33	14
Fort Simpson Territorial Park	3	1	0	2	4
Sambaa Deh Territorial Park	8	0	0	0	0
<b>Dehcho Total Permits</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Inuvik Region</b>					
Gwich'in Territorial Park	0	0	0	0	0
Happy Valley Territorial Park	1	0	0	0	0
Jak Territorial Park	29	1	2	4	11
Nitainlaih Territorial Park	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Inuvik Total Permits</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>North Slave Region</b>					
Fred Henne Territorial Park	0	0	0	0	96
Prelude Lake Territorial Park	197	0	0	139	0
Reid Lake Territorial Park	65	0	0	24	1
<b>North Slave Total Permits</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>South Slave Region</b>					
60th Parallel Territorial Park	12	0	0	1	0
Escarpment Creek	0	0	0	0	0
Fort Providence Park	10	0	0	0	0
Hay River Territorial Park	1	1	0	1	6
Lady Evelyn Falls Territorial Park	7	0	0	0	0
Little Buffalo River Crossing	0	0	0	0	0
Queen Elizabeth Territorial Park	1	1	0	2	15
Twin Falls Territorial Park	57	1	0	0	11
<b>South Slave Total Permits</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>NWT Total Permits</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>158</b>

## 4.0 North Slave Region Specific Changes

The North Slave Region had a successful season in 2009. Park staff and park contractors did an excellent job in assuring visitors had an enjoyable camping experience. An increased enforcement presence lessened the number of incidents adding to the enjoyment.

The North Slave Region has undertaken several major capital projects this year including:

- Completion of Loop C at Reid Lake which adds eighteen additional camp sites,
- Installation of playground equipment at Prelude Lake, and
- Rebuilding of the marina at Prelude Lake

With the injection of funding from the federal Infrastructure Stimulus Fund the North Slave region was able to enhance and expand upon planned capital projects. This undertaking allowed for the renewal and upgrading of existing facilities as well as adding new infrastructure and equipment, all making the parks more attractive and inviting for visitors. These projects included:

- The complete renovation of the interior and exterior of the Fred Henne shower building.
- Improvements to hiking trails at Cameron River Falls (the addition of approximately 250 feet of boardwalk and 150 feet of staircases over rocky outcrops), Cameron River Ramparts and Prospector's Trail (fourteen boardwalks totalling approximately 800 linear feet).
- Refurbishment of Wayside Park facilities, addition of playground equipment (Madeline Lake and Yellowknife River), docks (Madeline Lake and Yellowknife River), brush clearing and general landscaping.
- The Yellowknife River Day Use Area saw a re-design of the picnic area and parking lot with the addition of a group picnic area. A maintenance garage was also constructed at the North Slave equipment compound.
- Ground work has also begun on a new kitchen/picnic shelter at North Arm Park for completion by April 30, 2010.



## **5.1 Recommendations General Fee Increase**

Not applicable.

## **5.2 Online Reservation System**

The online reservation system needs to be enhanced for parks operators, visitor and GNWT staff. This could include:

- Making maps easier to download;
- Adding fields to the database to improve the ability to gather statistics; and
- Improving contactor training.

## **5.3 Extended Stay Sites**

The North Slave Region has reviewed the extended stay site program and is recommending the following changes for the 2010 season:

- The addition of 18 premium sites at loop C in Reid Lake Territorial Park has increased the capacity of the park to approximately 76 sites. This is sufficient to allow for the addition of 10 sites for extended stay camping for a total of 30 sites. The additional sites will be allocated from loop A and loop B.
- Some campers have indicated a preference for full season extended stay sites. To accommodate this, the 10 additional sites at Reid Lake will be offered for full season extended stay camping.
- Reid Lake would then have 10 full season and 40 half season extended stay permits available. Prelude Lake would continue to have 40 half season extended stay permits. The full season permits would be priced at \$1000 and half season permits would remain at the current price of \$500 per permit. In total 90 extended stay permits would be available compared to the current total of 80.