

**NAWPA COMMITTEE  
MARINE WILDERNESS & PROTECTED AREAS WORKING GROUP**

**CASE STUDY OF MPA ESTABLISHMENT – SAGUENAY-ST. LAWRENCE MARINE PARK; PARKS  
CANADA AGENCY AND QUEBEC MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT,  
WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
(CONFLUENCE OF SAGUENAY FJORD AND ST LAWRENCE RIVER, QUEBEC, CANADA)**



**KEY MESSAGE**

*Establishment of Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park was strongly supported by local people because it would enhance the protection of the marine environment, including an iconic species at risk, and provide significant economic benefits. Political support to proceed was achieved more quickly than in many other MPAs in Canada, in part because there were no concerns about fisheries being displaced.*

**BENEFITS**

- The marine park protects an outstanding example of Atlantic Ocean biodiversity, in an area that is remarkable for the combination of oceanographic and seabed morphological features that generate strong upwelling and mixing of waters that contribute to the richness of the area. The marine productivity of the park is most apparent in the numbers of large whale species that are summer residents, in addition to the year-round at risk population of beluga whales whose numbers were declining.
- The marine park has become the most visited whale-watching destination in Canada. Annual visitation has averaged 1.1 million to the marine park and adjacent provincial terrestrial park over the last decade, with an estimated economic benefit of about \$161.7 million (2007 figure). Visitation over 2010-11 accounted for 9% of visitation to all Parks Canada national parks and marine protected areas. Revenues to government equate to \$3.16 for every dollar spent on managing the park (2007 figure).

**CRITICAL STEPS**

- Establishment of the marine park was fostered by (i) mounting awareness of the threats to an at-risk population of an iconic whale, and (ii) high local interest in the economic benefits of establishing a park.
- Political direction was required in 1990 to achieve an establishment agreement that circumvented a requirement under Parks Canada legislation that the provincially owned seabed be transferred to Canada.
- New mirror federal and provincial statutes adopted in 1998 reflect this understanding and confirm the intent of both governments to manage the marine park in a coordinated manner.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Establishment of the marine park succeeded because there were clear reasons for proceeding, including the presence of a threatened and emblematic whale population, and because there were foreseen significant local economic and employment benefits while also protecting the marine environment. This combination of factors led to broad local support for park establishment.

- The scale of commercial fishing was modest, so concerns that a marine park would foreclose fishing were minimal in comparison to MPA proposals elsewhere in North America.
- Achieving inter-governmental political support to establish the marine park was not a protracted process.

**FACT SHEET**  
**SAGUENAY-ST. LAWRENCE MARINE PARK**  
**CONFLUENCE OF SAGUENAY FJORD AND ST LAWRENCE RIVER, QUEBEC, CANADA**

**Name:** Saguenay-St Lawrence Marine Park

**Location:** Saguenay Fjord, and the St Lawrence River upstream and downstream from the confluence of the fjord and river, in Quebec

**Size:** 1,246 sq km (481 sq mi)

**Year Established:** 1990 (federal-provincial agreement)/1998 (federal and provincial legislation)

**Purpose:** To protect and conserve for all time a representative area in the St Lawrence Estuary marine regions for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people of Canada and the world

**Status:** Legislatively protected under the federal *Loi sur le parc marin du Saguenay - St-Laurent (Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park Act)* and the provincial *Loi sur le parc marin du Saguenay - St-Laurent* (mirror statutes)

**History:**

- 1970s-80s – Growing public awareness and concern about the environmental degradation of the Saguenay Fjord and of the impacts of pollution and other human activities on the local, relict population of beluga whale. The state of the beluga population became a catalyst.
- 1985-88 – In the course of conducting a feasibility study for the creation of a marine park, strong support emerged in numerous public meetings and in submissions from regional coalitions, tourism associations and environmental organizations.
- 1988 – The St. Lawrence Action Plan was announced by the federal government to reduce pollution in the Saguenay Fjord and St Lawrence River, with creation of a Saguenay Fjord marine park also among its objectives.
- 1990 – Canada and Quebec signed an agreement to jointly establish the marine park, to consult the public on proposed boundaries and to develop legislative and regulatory measures required to respect the jurisdictions of each government.
- 1993 – Following public consultation, a revised park boundary was announced, incorporating an area of 1,246 sq km in lieu of the previously proposed area of 746 sq km, and extending further out into the St Lawrence River estuary than initially projected.
- 1996 – The first management plan was released following extensive public consultation in communities throughout the region.
- 1998 – Mirror federal and provincial laws were enacted to establish the marine park. This was required to circumvent provincial unwillingness to transfer provincial jurisdiction over the seabed to Canada, and is unique to this MPA.

- 2010 – A revised management plan with improved zoning was released.