

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES A PROBLEM

Area residents seeking access to Point Riche barrens

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PORT AU CHOIX — Parks Canada is looking for ways to provide access to the barrens

on Point Riche, while maintaining the integrity of the national historic site.

Geoff Hancock, manager of three national historic sites in the region, says a prohibition

order placed on the site in 2001 is designed to restrict the use of off-road vehicles in the area, not curtail traditional activities such as bird hunting and berry-picking.

The barrens have been identified as a habitat for rare plant species of *Braya*, especially Fernald's *Braya* which has threatened status.

"One of the biggest threats to the plant is the off-roading that takes place in the park," he states.

Parks Canada recently met with several groups and individuals to talk about their concerns with the prohibition that was put in place. Mr. Hancock says the meeting was positive and suggests people are willing to work together to resolve the issues.

Another meeting is planned soon to determine where vehicles could possibly access the site.

Russell Hynes, who spoke on behalf of bird hunters, told park officials that "hunters are not destroying anything." He

adds that traditional users, including hunters, berry-pickers, sealers, fishermen, trappers and hikers, want to retain access to the site.

Larry Flouman expressed concerns at the meeting about barricades which have been placed around the site, causing people to look for ways to access the grounds.

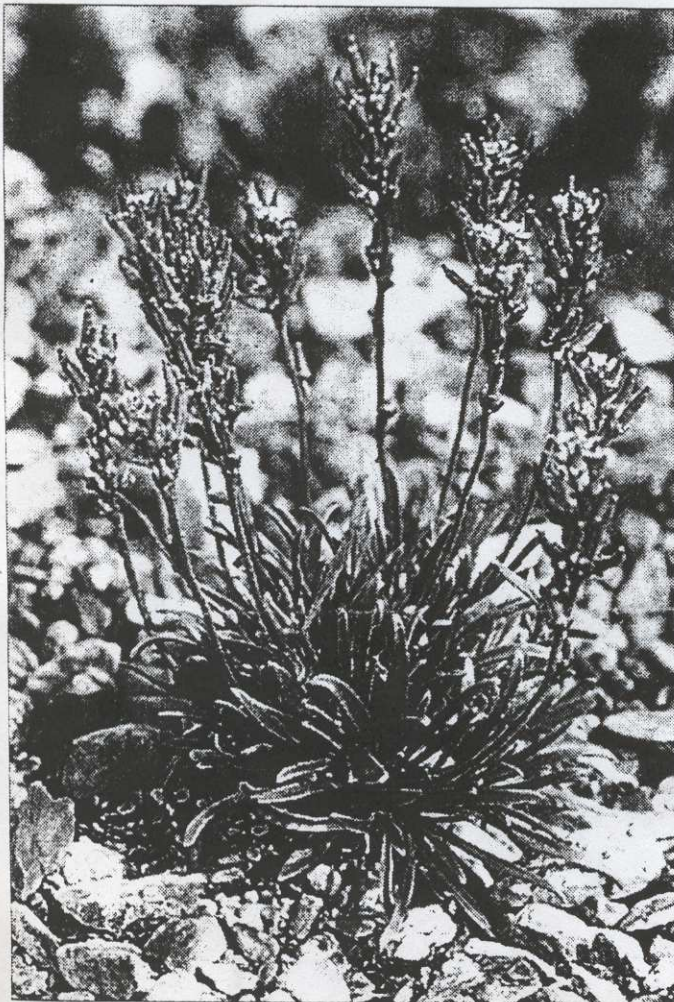
"Lobster fishermen must have access to the seashore in order to access gear which may be driven onto the shore during storms," says the fisherman. "Something should be done to allow fishermen to travel on the old road around the shore."

Sylvia Gould, a member of the town's heritage committee, says tourists have expressed outrage at the destruction being done to the landscape by earth-moving equipment and off-road users.

She adds that Parks Canada must maintain the traditional rights of residents, while ensuring the preservation of plants and other resources.

"We use areas in the park, we berry-pick, beach-comb, my partner duck-hunts, and we spend our holiday money here in Port au Choix," she states.

She adds that a toll-free number should be put into place so that people can call anonymously when they spot off-road users.



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Parks Canada wants to protect Fernald's *Braya*, a plant which has threatened status. The Point Riche barrens have been identified as a habitat for the plant.

(Parks Canada photo)