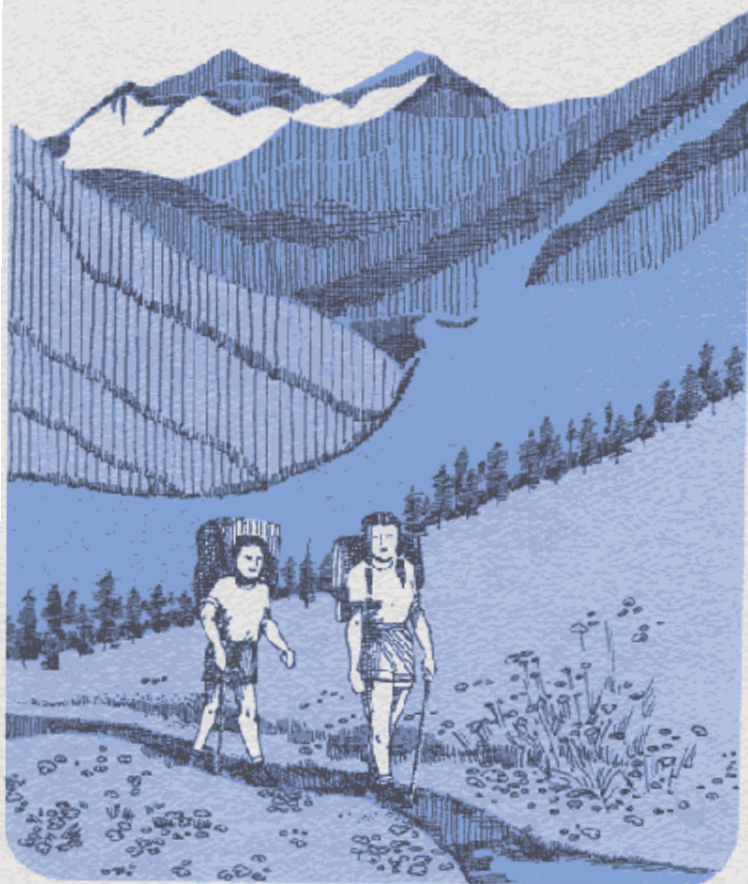


# MASTER PLAN



for Babine Mountains  
Recreation Area



Ministry of Environment  
Lands and Parks

Babine Mountains  
Recreation Area

# MASTER PLAN

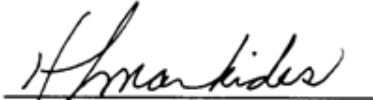
Prepared by  
Skeena District  
Northern B.C. Region  
Prince George, B.C.



Babine Mountains  
Recreation Area


# MASTER PLAN

Recommended:

  
District Manager  
Skeena District

Date: 18 DEC. 92

Approved:

  
Minister

Date: 28 DEC. 92

**Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data**

BC Parks. Skeena District.

Babine Mountains Recreation Area master plan

Cover title: Master plan for Babine Mountains Recreation Area  
ISBN 0-7726-1671-X

1. Recreation areas - British Columbia - Planning. 2. Recreation Areas - British Columbia - Management. 3. Parks- British Columbia - Planning. 4. Parks - British Columbia - Management. 5. Babine Mountains Recreation Area (B.C.) I. Title. II. Title : Master plan for Babine Mountains Recreation Area.

FC3815.B32 1992    333.7840971182    C93-092000-7  
F1089.1332 1992

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# Acknowledgements

This Master Plan was coordinated and written by Ken Zimmer, Visitor Services Coordinator for the Skeena District, under the direction of Hugh Markides, District Manager. Jim DeHart, Zone Manager of the Bulkley Zone, and Roger Norrish, Master Plan Coordinator in Victoria, provided much assistance and expertise. Other staff from the Zone, District and Regional offices and headquarters contributed to the preparation of this plan.

It relied heavily on input from the general public, concerned user groups, a public study team, commercial operators and other government agencies. The Ministries of Lands, Forests, Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and BC Environment all provided input and played an important consultational role.

Formal public meetings, an issues paper, questionnaire and numerous written submissions were all useful tools in gathering public opinion, experiences and recommendations for the plan. All of this occurred in conjunction with Parks staff assessments of the area's conservation and recreation values, as well as drawing on the Park Act, its associated regulations and existing Ministry policies.

Parks staff were greatly assisted in their task through the cooperation of the public study team that was assembled to provide comments and advice on key issues, and to help BC Parks obtain a better understanding of the public's needs and aspirations for the Recreation Area.

Special recognition is due to all members of the public study team for their commitment, patience and perseverance in volunteering their time to assist in the plan's development. They are:

J.B. Charlie, Einar Blix, George Loset, Rosamund Pojar, Bob Henderson, Gord Wolfe, Rosemary Fox, Ed Hinchliffe, Bryan Good, Linda Dandy, Frank Parker, Gary Quanstrom, Kim Hunter, Jim Davidson, Greg Meredith, Barry Smith, Mike O'Neill, Jack Moch, Dave Lefebure, Brian Fuhr, Richard Lalonde, Joe L'Orsa.

They came from the following groups:

B.V. Cross Country Ski Club, B.V. Backpackers Club, Driftwood Foundation, Bulkley Valley Naturalists, Commercial Operators, BC Environment, Sierra Club, B. V. Rod and Gun Club, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, Smithers Exploration Group, Smithers Snowmobile Club, Share Smithers, Northern Saddle Club, Town of Smithers, Ministry of Crown Lands, North by Northwest, Ministry of Forests (Bulkley District), B.C. Wildlife Federation, Nat'oot'een Native people, and they represented the community.



**Plate #1. View north over the Ganokwa Basin**



# Plan Highlights

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area was established to protect the alpine flora and fauna from unrestricted motor vehicle use, while allowing for backcountry recreation opportunities to continue. The Master Plan identifies both resource and visitor use guidelines that are intended to ensure that natural processes will predominate, and the essential qualities of a wilderness experience are protected.

## Resource Management

- Vegetative communities, and fish and wildlife populations (especially mountain goats) will be inventoried and monitored to ensure healthy and viable populations are maintained.
- Mineral exploration activities will be monitored and regulations enforced to ensure compliance with required conditions of operation.
- Recreation Area boundaries will be reviewed for possible enlargement along Driftwood, Reisetter and Harold Price Creeks to improve representation of the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains landscape. Some important criteria for consideration in the review of additions include: low elevation vegetation, wildlife habitats, and floodplain habitat and vegetation for the landscape elements, as well as preservation of visual aesthetics, access corridors, and areas of high recreation value.

## Visitor Services

- BC Parks will ensure that a seasonal variety of backcountry recreation opportunities such as hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, skiing and snowmobiling, are available.
- Recreation activities will be monitored, and visitor use and satisfaction statistics collected in an effort to evaluate impacts on the environment, and to intercept potential user conflicts or problems.
- Efforts will be made to increase public awareness, understanding and support for conservation of the Recreation Area's natural and cultural features.

## Facility Development and Maintenance

- Existing trails and shelters will be maintained. Some will be improved, as noted in the plan. Other primitive facilities may be required to help disperse use and prevent damage at high use sites.
- Improved information and signs will be developed for trailheads, along trails, at interpretive sites and in pamphlets. The use of on-site signs in the backcountry will be kept to a minimum.
- Public safety will be ensured at mineral exploration and minesite locations before any active recreational promotion takes place.

The Master Plan is committed to ongoing liaison with interested user groups. This will allow BC Parks to address concerns or conflicts as they might arise, and it will also assist with future revisions to the Master Plan. We encourage groups or users to contact us at any time.



**Plate #2. Study Team members contemplate the future of the Babine Mountains Recreation Area.**

# Introduction

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area was established in 1984 to protect a high elevation alpine area, its flora and fauna, and to limit further environmental damage. It is a readily accessible backcountry area located next to the Town of Smithers and a major transportation corridor and tourist route, the Yellowhead Highway.

The Recreation Area is home to a wide diversity of plant and animal species. It is also an important destination to many different user groups and individuals that utilize the area for a variety of recreation activities on a year-round basis.

The many activities enjoyed here are heavily dependent on the natural resources of the area. Proper management of these resources and recreation use is important to maintain the high quality and long-term viability of the resources and associated experiences.

## Purpose of the Plan

This Master Plan defines the role of the Recreation Area and establishes the objectives and desired actions for the future planning, development and management of the area and its resources. The plan also gives specific direction for several key issues such as horse management, mountain bike use, snowmobiling and commercial operations.

As an initial step in the Master Planning process, a Background Report was prepared that provides a basic inventory of the area's resources, developments, services and opportunities. This information is useful in gaining an understanding of the basis for the various objectives and actions identified in the plan, and would be helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the Recreation Area, or who are reviewing the Master Plan for the first time.

In addition, a chronological history of the Babine Mountains was prepared by Joe L'Orsa that provides a unique perspective on the area. Both reports are available from the BC Parks' District Office in Smithers.

## Planning Issues

### Role of the Recreation Area

This Master Plan redefines the role of the Recreation Area to include landscape representation of the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains. This greatly increases the significance of the Recreation Area within the park system since it is the only protected area representing this landscape.

A general role statement has been identified for the Recreation Area which calls for the conservation of the area's natural features and cultural heritage, and the continued provision of backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. The importance and value of its protected nature will increase with time as the surrounding land is modified to meet economic needs.

## **Recreation Area Boundary**

The current boundary encompasses an area of upper elevation alpine and sub-alpine, which provides only partial representation of the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains landscape. Several missing elements of this landscape are present in areas directly adjacent to the Recreation Area in an unmodified, natural state. The Master Plan recommends a course of action to improve the adequacy of the Recreation Area's landscape representation.

## **Management of Recreation Area Resources**

The Recreation Area designation was originally established over the Babine Mountains to protect the fragile alpine environment and its associated wildlife from damage through uncontrolled motor vehicle use. By established government policy, recreation areas will eventually undergo a change in status which allow them to become class 'A' provincial parks. The Master Plan identifies management guidelines that will deal with a number of complex resource issues. These guidelines will help preserve the scenic qualities and wilderness integrity of the Recreation Area.

## **Management and Development of Recreation Opportunities**

BC Parks mandate includes a responsibility to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the public, and the Babine Mountains Recreation Area meets this goal in its provision of outstanding backcountry opportunities, as well as ensuring access for local outdoor recreation activities. The Master Plan establishes the compatible recreation opportunities for the area by type of activity and most suitable location, particularly for snowmobiling, horseback riding and mountain biking, to minimize both environmental impacts and conflicts with other users.

## Background Summary

Officially designated as a Provincial Recreation Area in April 1984, the Babine Mountains are a relatively new addition to the Provincial Park System, although they do have a lengthy history of recreational use and mineral exploration. The area has been used for decades for hunting and fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and later, skiing and snowmobiling. However, as muscle-power gave way to motor-power, the fragile alpine environment began to suffer increasing damage from indiscriminate vehicle and A.T.V. use.

After many years of lobbying by users for some form of protection, the government established an Integrated Management Unit (I.M.U.) in 1976, under the direction of the Environment and Land Use Committee (E.L.U.C.). Its purpose was the protection of environmental and recreational values through the control of vehicle access to alpine areas. It was later determined that this Land Act control over vehicle use did not apply to mineral claim holders, and so the designation was subsequently changed to that of a provincial Recreation Area.

The Recreation Area covers over 32,400 hectares of the south Babine Mountain Range, which stands out as a dominant skyline feature on the eastern side of the Bulkley Valley. It comprises part of the larger Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains landscape, but is considered to give only partial representation since it lacks complete watersheds, low elevation vegetation and floodplain wildlife habitats.

Being close to Highway 16 and the Town of Smithers, the area has several old mineral exploration roads that provide easy access to alpine and sub-alpine environments, featuring a combination of towering peaks and glaciers, waterfalls, colourful lake basins and tarns, and extensive alpine meadows. These features, coupled with the long summer days and abundant winter snowfall, offer a wide variety of backcountry recreation activities on a year-round basis. The Recreation Area has special appeal for families and novice hikers through the provision of established trails, cabins and camping sites. It also has steeper, more remote areas that provide an attractive challenge to the experienced wilderness backpacker. The main activities in winter include cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ski mountaineering, and snowshoeing.

Viewing and photographic opportunities are also plentiful in the Recreation Area. It contains mountain goats, deer, moose and bear, smaller mammals, and an extensive bird population. In addition, early mining works and cabins now abandoned in the area lend historical and human interest to the landscape.

This portion of the Babine Mountains has a long history of mineral exploration and mining. Numerous mineral claims existed here when the Recreation Area was created and some are still valid. The Recreation Area is still open to mineral claim staking and some active exploration work is currently taking place. In particular, a copper deposit adjacent to Astlais Mountain (the Big Onion) is being investigated. In the meantime, field work for the last phase of a mineral potential evaluation has just been completed under the direction of the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. The results are being analyzed and compiled, and a public report is expected to be released in September, 1992. This could allow for a time-limited mineral exploration period to commence leading to park status for a major "core" area or the entire area.



**Plate #3. Abandoned adit at old Silver King minesite.**



# The Role of the Recreation Area

## Regional and Provincial Context

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area is located 12 km. northeast of Smithers, just a short drive off the Yellowhead Highway 16, one of northern British Columbia's main transportation routes. The area has provincial significance as the only representative example of the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains landscape that exists in the provincial park system. From a regional perspective, the Recreation Area is one of the most accessible backcountry areas in northern B.C., and it is also the only large backcountry park located close to Highway 16 between Mount Robson Park on the B.C./Alberta border and Prince Rupert on the Pacific coast. The Recreation Area's location next to Smithers, an important transportation centre, is attractive to both provincial and international visitors. It forms a major viewscape from the town and can be easily reached in a few minutes. This contrasts to the remoteness of most other wilderness parks in northern British Columbia, which are more difficult to reach.

For example, the closest wilderness Parks to the Babines are North Tweedsmuir Park to the south and the Gitnadoix Recreation Area to the west, both of which are water or air access only. There are several other smaller Provincial parks located in or near the Bulkley Valley that also provide a variety of recreation opportunities to residents and tourists alike. Tyhee Lake, Seeley Lake, Red Bluff, Ethel F. Wilson and Pendleton Bay all provide road access campgrounds, while Driftwood, Ross Lake, and Topley Landing cater to day-users.

The conservation of British Columbia's natural diversity through the protection of representative examples of the different landscapes and the provision of backcountry recreation opportunities are some of the major goals of the provincial park system in British Columbia. Its backcountry parks contribute significantly by promoting the Province's rugged natural beauty and by highlighting prominent tourism attractions.

The Recreation Area provides relatively safe backcountry opportunities for inexperienced hikers and backpackers. Its easily accessible alpine areas exhibit a diversity of natural features ranging from rugged peaks and glaciers to sparkling alpine lakes and colourful wild flower meadows, thus providing a variety of terrain for hiking and a wide assortment of scenic viewsapes.





**Plate #4. Hyland Lakes are readily accessible from the Cronin Creek Drainage.**

## Conservation Role

The Park Act directs that outstanding natural areas of the Province be protected for public enjoyment by our provincial park system. As a result, BC Parks has developed a set of conservation and recreation goals to guide in the development and management of this system. The Babine Mountains Recreation Area achieves several of these goals as follows:

- \* Conserves a partially representative example of the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains landscape.
- \* Ensures the long term integrity of the wilderness experience by protecting the scenic character and natural qualities of the area.
- \* Conserves representative examples of the Alpine Tundra and Englemann Spruce/Sub Alpine Fir biogeoclimatic sub-zones.
- \* Conserves a dominant scenic view in the Bulkley Valley.
- \* Preserves the Recreation Area's cultural features for the information, education and enjoyment of the public.
- \* Protects and conserves a notable population of mountain goats.

## Recreation Role

- \* Provides outstanding year-round backcountry recreation opportunities. Several trails allow hikers, hunters, backpackers, and horseback riders moderately easy access to the area's alpine environment. In the winter, cross-country skiers favour the Driftwood Creek approach to Silver King Basin, while snowmobilers enjoy Ganokwa Basin.
- \* Provides a readily accessible scenic area for visitors travelling Highway 16 and enhances the local tourism economy.
- \* The Recreation Area also provides significant local recreation opportunities, with the majority of use coming from the Bulkley Valley communities of Smithers, Houston and Hazelton. Its appeal is enhanced because users do not have to travel large distances to access it.

# Park Zoning

The Zoning System used by BC Parks separates areas into logical units for the application of uniform and consistent management objectives. (For a more detailed description of the zoning options please turn to Appendix B).

Based on these objectives, the Recreation Area's resources, role, use and other criteria of the Parks zoning system, the Babine Mountains Recreation Area has been divided into three zones. They are: A Natural Environment Zone in the south and Wilderness Recreation Zone in the north, and a Special Feature Zone located in Silver King Basin. (See Figure 2). The major zones recognize that the Recreation Area is a backcountry area with varying intensities of use, influenced mainly by access. The Special Feature Zone has been designated here to provide additional protection to significant native cultural features with high heritage values.

## Wilderness Recreation Zone

The objectives of this zone are to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment. The intention is to limit the means of access to non-mechanized methods (ie. foot, although horses may be permitted.) Helicopter drop-offs may be permitted at designated sites.

Facility development is minimal, allowing for trails, signs, designated camping sites, and sanitary facilities. It is oriented to protecting natural ecological processes largely uninfluenced by human activities, and managed to ensure low visitor use levels.

This zone encompasses the area north of Driftwood Creek, Mt. Cronin and Haystack Creek, up to the Recreation Area Boundary north of Two Bridge Lakes and Grassy Mountain.

## Natural Environment Zone

The objective of this zone is to protect scenic and ecological values, and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a natural setting.

The Natural Environment Zone permits low to moderate use and facility development, while minimizing impacts on park resources or visitor satisfaction.

This zoning also allows for separation of less compatible recreation activities and for the designation of trails for different forms of transportation that may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (eg. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails.)

In the Babines, the area south of Driftwood Creek, Mt. Cronin and Haystack Creek will be designated as Natural Environment Zone. The majority of the Recreation Area's trails, signs, cabins, and informal campsites, as well as the designated snowmobile area, are found in this zone.

## **Special Features Zone**

The objective of this zone is to preserve significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility or heritage value. It is usually small in size (less than 2,000 ha), with low use.

The area includes an early native (Wet'suwet'en) cremation and burial site, as well as a spiritual power spot. Although this area is generally identified as being in Silver King Basin, its exact location will not be publicized to help protect it from visitor impacts.

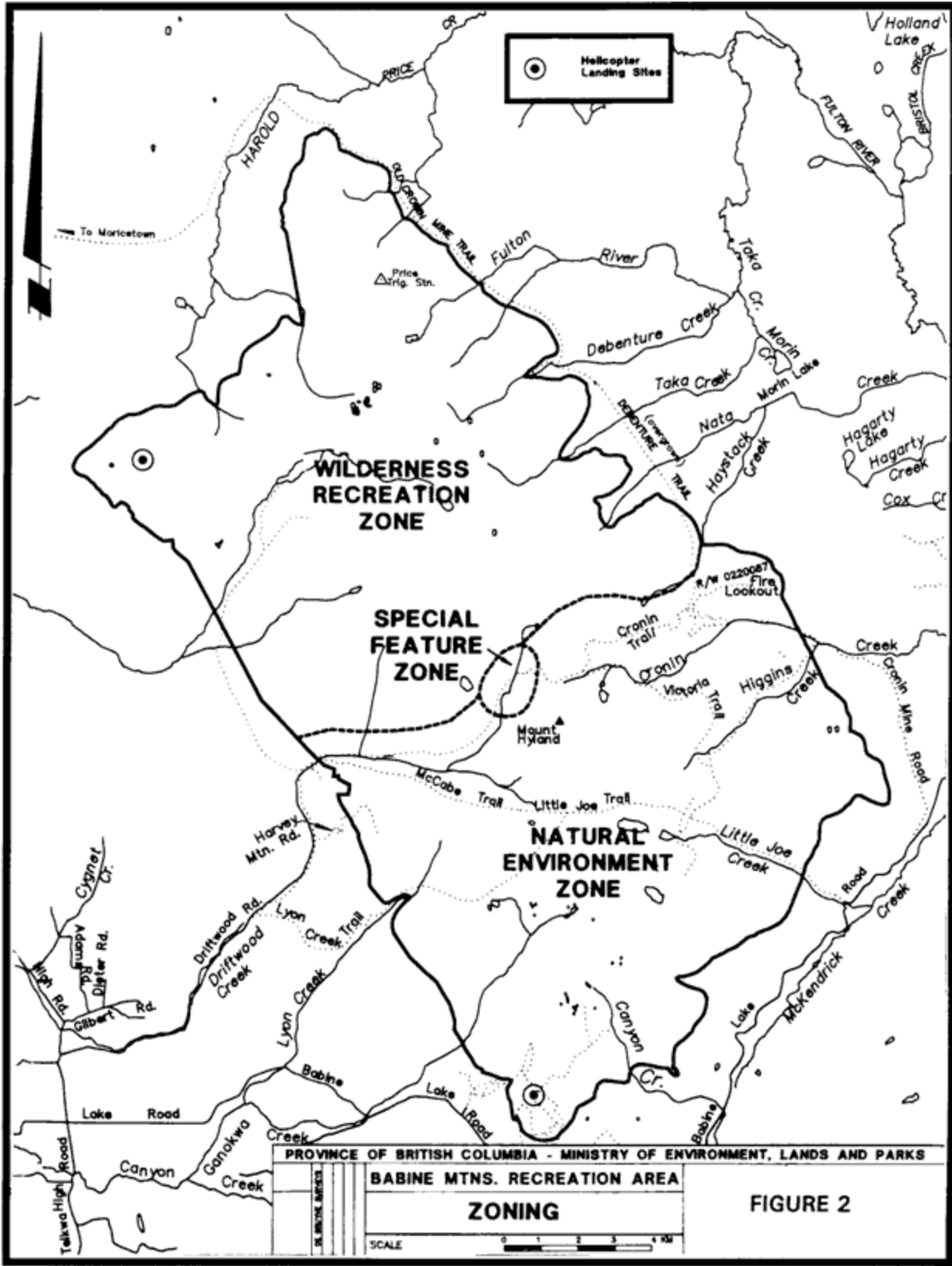


Figure 2. Babine Mountains Recreation Area Master Plan Zoning.

# Natural and Cultural Resource Management

The Babine Mountains were first afforded protection in 1976 with the creation of an Integrated Management Unit (I.M.U.) which sought to eliminate damage to the fragile alpine tundra by way of an A.T.V. and vehicle closure. This emphasis on maintaining the natural features and ecological communities intact continues to be of paramount importance to the public.

The resource management objectives and actions are directed toward protection of the natural features in order to maintain a quality environment and enhance public enjoyment and recreation. In addition, the division of the Recreation Area into the three zones will also help define the resource management objectives, and types and levels of activities appropriate for each.

There is also a need to recognize outside resource interests adjacent to the Recreation Area and co-ordinate park management decisions through ongoing liaison with these other interests.

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area shall be managed in a manner that will provide for the Province's fiduciary responsibility to aboriginal people. In particular, the master plan will take into account the traditional interests of affected aboriginal people with respect to their sustenance and ceremonial activities.

## Land

### Boundaries and Status

The current Recreation Area boundary floats between the 3,500 and 4,500 ft. contour lines and encompasses the core area of the previous Integrated Management Unit (I.M.U.) that was originally set up to limit the use of A.T.V.'s and 4-wheel drive vehicles in alpine areas. The overall boundary of the I.M.U. extended well beyond the existing Recreation Area boundary, taking in portions of Driftwood Creek, Reiserer Creek and the Harold Price Creek watersheds. The Recreation Area also falls within the territorial land claims of the Gitksan Wet'suwet'en and Nat'oot'een Native peoples.

In a recent review of the landscape representation afforded the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains by the Recreation Area, it was found that there was only partial representation of this landscape. Several key elements are missing. These include complete watersheds, low elevation vegetation, wildlife habitats, and flood plain habitats and vegetation.

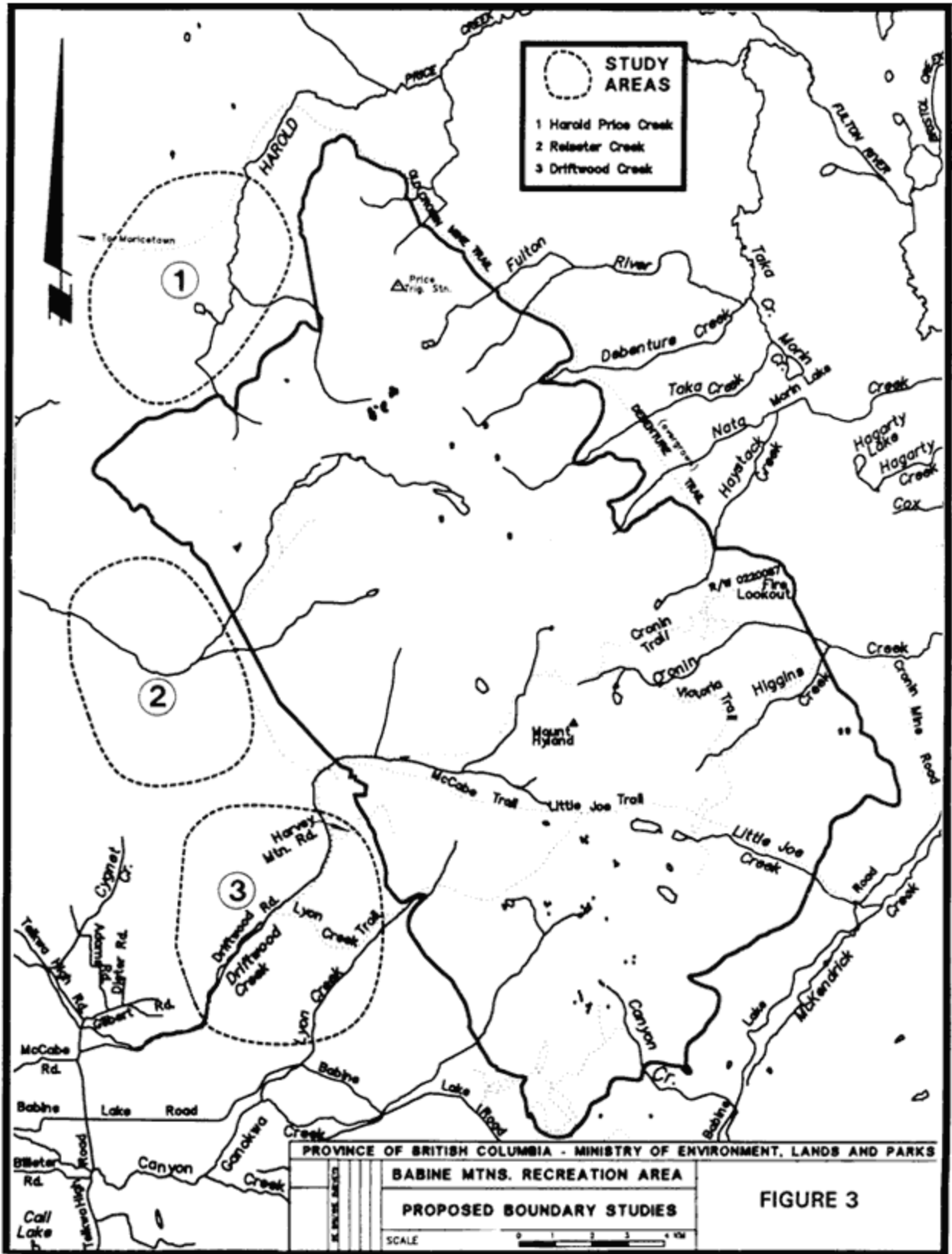


Figure 3. Babine Mountains Recreation Area Proposed Boundary Studies.

A Local Resource Use Plan is currently in the process of being prepared by the Ministry of Forests for the Driftwood and Reisetser Creek watersheds to determine to best use of the areas. This has resulted in a large amount of public support for the protection of these watersheds. Concerns have focused on having undisturbed public access to the Recreation Area.

By adding these watersheds to the Recreation Area, protection would be provided to popular hiking and skiing corridors that access the Recreation Area's trail system. Their addition would also ensure the conservation of low elevation wildlife habitats, the preservation of the water quality of the drainage, and the protection of the scenic integrity of the area's viewsapes. The most frequently suggested areas for addition include:

- Driftwood Creek / Reisetser Creek: These areas feature low elevation Engelmann Spruce / Sub-alpine Fir (ESSF) forests and associated plant communities, providing a range of low elevation
- wildlife habitats and making up an important component of the area's visual aesthetics. In addition, the existing trail systems are used extensively by hikers, horseback riders and skiers to access the Recreation Area.
- Harold Price Creek: This less heavily forested watershed has extensive open meadows that provide excellent terrain for cross-country skiing. It also provides some middle elevation vegetation and wildlife habitats for the larger mammals of the Recreation Area.

### **Objectives:**

To ensure the protection of the Recreation Area's natural features and ecological communities and to provide a variety of areas and opportunities for backcountry recreation.

To establish boundaries which incorporate the key missing elements of this landscape and provide more adequate representation of the Sub-Boreal Skeena Mountains landscape.

### **Actions:**

- \* Work with the Ministry of Forests, by co-chairing the L.R.U.P. process for the Driftwood - Reisetser area, to identify and evaluate boundary adjustments that will add the key missing landscape elements to the Recreation Area.



## Mineral Resources

All mineral exploration work proposals and reclamation plans submitted for the Babine Mountains Recreation Area are jointly reviewed by BC Parks and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. BC Parks is also involved in inspecting work sites to ensure compliance with reclamation permits.

Evaluation of the Recreation Area's mineral potential by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources is one of a series of steps necessary to allow the status of the Recreation Area to move towards Class 'A' provincial park designation.

The final phase of this evaluation is being conducted at this time. Results of the analysis should be completed in 1992 and available to the public. This would allow for the start of the time-limited exploration period necessary before proceeding with a change to Class 'A' park status for the core of the Recreation Area.

Numerous staked and crown-granted mineral claims pre-date the current Mineral Tenure Act. These may be acquired if they revert to the Crown or through negotiations with the claim holders. Claims staked subsequent to the creation of Section 19 of the current Mineral Tenure Act are open for exploration for a minimum of ten years and can be cancelled at the end of this period without compensation if no mineral values are identified. If values are identified, options could include extending the exploration period, or, if a mine is proposed, referring the matter to full review under the Mine Development Review Process.

### Objectives:

To allow mineral exploration and evaluation to continue as allowed by law, in such a manner as to minimize any impacts on the alpine environment, wildlife and recreation values.

To start the time-limited exploration period leading to Class 'A' park status.

### Actions:

- \* Mineral exploration and development activities will continue to be managed to protect the Recreation Area's resources and ecological values. Proposed mine development plans will be required to undergo full public review prior to approval. Resource Use and Reclamation Permits will be issued to mineral claim holders to permit access and mineral resource development within the Recreation Area.

- \* BC Parks and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources will continue to assess jointly any new exploration programs, and define terms and conditions appropriate to each new application. The sensitive nature of the alpine environment, its importance to interested user groups, and the potential levels of impact must be accorded full consideration in any notice of work plans.
- \* Following completion of the current assessment, to the satisfaction of the Chief Geologist, publish the Gazette notice to announce the start of time-limited mineral exploration.

## **Water**

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area encompasses the headwaters of 13 different creeks, as well as the start of the Fulton River system. (See Background Report 2.2.4.2 Creeks) These clean, fast flowing streams comprise an important source of fresh water for wildlife of the area and for other downstream users. Valley residents use the water from several of these creeks for both domestic and agricultural purposes. Water from the Recreation Area also makes its way into Babine Lake through the Fulton River Fish Hatchery.

### **Objectives:**

To protect the headwaters of the Fulton River and several other major creeks flowing from the southern Babine Mountains.

To maintain the unpolluted natural quality of waters in the Recreation Area for aesthetic, ecological and health reasons.

### **Actions:**

- \* Develop properly designed sanitary facilities at designated recreation sites to minimize the risk of contamination of the area's water.
- \* Co-operate closely with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and the Water Management Branch, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks to ensure that guidelines for water quality and quantity are identified on Notice of Work and Reclamation permits, and are adhered to.

## Vegetation

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area contains two distinct biogeoclimatic zones and lies close to two others (See Background Report, Sec. 2.3.1, Vegetation). The naturally evolving forest and plant communities that make up this area form the basis for a variety of wildlife habitats, and affect the diversity of species associated with them. The vegetation also accounts for a large part of the area's scenic and recreational appeal.

In maintaining the diversity of a complex forest ecosystem, natural processes such as fires, disease and insects all have a role to play. However, to protect other high resource values such as commercial forests on adjacent lands, recreation values and facilities, active management of these processes is required.

### Objectives:

To allow the established pattern of the area's naturally occurring forest community and plant associations to continue to evolve with management actions limited to fire and pest control.

To maintain native plant species and communities, with special attention on sensitive, rare threatened and endangered plants.

### Actions:

- \* Work with the Ministry of Forests to develop a comprehensive fire management plan to ensure the protection of facilities and resources within the Recreation Area and commercial forests outside the area. It should deal with issues such as: fire prevention, preparedness, the role of fire within the area, prescribed fire and acceptable fire suppression tactics to be employed.
- \* Review the fire control policy periodically to assess its impact on the vegetative communities over time.
- \* Disease and insect infestations will be monitored periodically to evaluate their level of activity, and control measures may be implemented when necessary. This may involve a program of selective tree removal.
- \* To ensure the continued protection of the fragile alpine vegetation, recreational use (ie. grazing horses, mountain bikes, camping) and mineral exploration activities will be carefully monitored and managed.

- \* Co-operate closely with the Ministry of Forests and the private sector in reviewing forest management plans that affect adjacent lands and routes leading to the Recreation Area, so existing aesthetic and recreational values are protected.
- \* Encourage scientific research related to vegetation with emphasis on sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered plants.

## **Wildlife**

The Recreation Area contains a diversity of habitats for wildlife. It provides food and cover for many different animal species, both on a seasonal and a year round basis. Mountain goats are probably the best known and most often seen animals within the Recreation Area, and are the only large mammals that make the area their permanent home. Black bear, grizzly bear, moose, deer, wolf and coyote all wander in and out of the area with the seasonal variations that affect their habitat requirements. (See Background Report, Sec. 2.3.2, Wildlife).

### **Objectives:**

To protect the existing natural diversity of wildlife species presently found in the Recreation Area, and to allow the establishment of other native species.

To protect wildlife habitats.

To provide for viewing of wildlife and other non-consumptive wildlife appreciation opportunities.

To provide for hunting opportunities in the Recreation Area on a sustainable basis.

To encourage scientific studies, inventories and research in the Recreation Area, with special emphasis on sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered wildlife species and those with direct management applications.

### **Actions:**

- \* Protect wildlife populations and habitats by minimizing impacts from Recreation Area developments, mineral exploration and recreational use, while allowing for wildlife viewing opportunities.
- \* Inventory and monitor wildlife populations and habitat (particularly mountain goat) on an ongoing basis to assess population dynamics. Conservative hunting levels will be set based on inventory data.



**Plate #5. The Recreation Area supports a notable population of mountain goats.**

- \* Investigate impacts of recreational activities (hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling) on mountain goat population.
- \* Work closely with the Ministry of Forests and the Wildlife Branch to establish common objectives for identifying habitat requirements and managing wildlife species that range through the Recreation Area and adjacent lands such as bear, moose, deer, etc.
- \* Trapline owners will be allowed to continue trapping under permit. However, as trapping is considered to be a non-conforming, commercial resource use that is inappropriate in a Class 'A' park or recreation area, BC Parks will endeavour to acquire trapping rights as they become available.
- \* Encourage scientific research related to wildlife with emphasis on sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered wildlife species.

## **Fish**

Lower Two Bridge Lake is the only lake within the Recreation Area that supports a year-round population of fish. The rainbow trout found here are numerous but small. Although the area is a favourite camping spot with hikers and horseback riders, it only receives low to moderate use.

### **Objectives:**

Maintain the natural, wild stock of rainbow trout in Lower Two Bridge Lake and Reisetser Creek to provide angling opportunities for visitors to the Recreation Area.

### **Actions:**

- \* Work closely with the Provincial Fisheries Branch to carry out periodic monitoring and evaluation on the health and viability of the Lower Two Bridge Lake fishery, and the impacts of angling pressure on it. Regulate as necessary.

## Cultural Resources

The Bulkley Valley was a natural travel corridor for Native people, explorers and fur traders. To the east, the Babine Mountains were a highly visible landmark that formed a natural boundary between the territories of the Wet'suwet'en and Nat'oot'een peoples. Both groups used the area pre-historically for hunting, trapping and some fishing, and as a trade route between the interior and the Pacific coast.

BC Parks is committed to consulting with aboriginal peoples who have an interest in the Babine Mountains Recreation Area as part of their land claims. Thus, we will continue to confer with both the Wet'suwet'en and Nat'oot'een people on proposed new developments to consider their interest and knowledge of the area and its natural and cultural resources.

Europeans first entered the Bulkley Valley in the 1820's, and construction of the Collins Overland Telegraph Line in the 1860's brought some settlement to the area. Sporadic prospecting had occurred in the Babines by the turn of the century and many of the Recreation Area's trails and locations now bear the names of those early pioneers. Evidence of the early mining activities is still present. The rich history of the Recreation Area is closely connected with that of the Bulkley Valley and could provide the basis for some interesting and educational interpretive information, signs and displays. Knowledge and appreciation of this history would add significantly to the visitors experience.

### Objectives:

To preserve the cultural resource values which relate to the Native and early non-Native exploration use of the Recreation Area.

To provide information and education on the Recreation Area's history.

### Actions:

- \* Continue to maintain direct contact with the Wet'suwet'en and Nat'oot'een Native people to determine the significance of the Babine Mountains Recreation Area to their culture and to consider their interest and knowledge of the area.
- \* Conduct a cultural resource inventory and identify specific sites and trails of particular significance and interest such as native sites, Silver King mine, Cronin mine, Axel Elmsted's cabin, Astlais Mountain (Big Onion), and the McCabe trail. Prepare appropriate educational signs and information for public interest and enjoyment.
- \* Manage Silver King cabin for accommodation rather than as a heritage feature (in consideration of its low heritage significance.)

- \* Allow all other structures and any mine sites to age naturally, and where appropriate, provide information on their history. Close abandoned mine shafts, adits and cabins if they pose a hazard to visitor's safety.

## Visual Resources

The Recreation Area is a prominent landscape feature of the Bulkley Valley. Its scenery is of primary consideration and importance to visitors to the Recreation Area as well as residents of the valley, and makes up a large part of the area's aesthetic appeal. It also forms a major viewscapes from the ski hill development on Hudson Bay Mountain directly across the valley.

### Objective:

To preserve the scenic qualities and aesthetic appeal of the viewscapes both within and outside of the Recreation Area.

### Actions:

- \* Close co-operation with the Ministry of Forests will be maintained to assist in the setting of visual quality objectives (VQO) to minimize visual impacts of forest harvesting on views from within the Recreation Area.
- \* Work with the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources to ensure that visual resources are recognized and protected during any mineral exploration, development, or reclamation activities.
- \* Ensure that the design and location of all new Recreation Area facilities and developments are in harmony with the visual setting.

## Outdoor Recreation Features

The Recreation Area protects a wide variety of outdoor recreation features, from mountain peaks and glaciers, to waterfalls, alpine lakes and meadows. These features contribute significantly to the Recreation Area's special natural character and its ability to support a wide range of quality backcountry recreation opportunities.

### Objective:

To manage both the facility development and visitor use within the Recreation Area to ensure that the area's resources and special features are protected, and that recreation activities are sustainable with minimal impact on the environment.



**Actions:**

- \* Manage recreation use as outlined in the designated zoning description (See Appendix B for details).  
North half - Wilderness Recreation - very low use.  
South half - Natural Environment - controlled use.  
Centre - Special Feature - generally low.
- \* Park developments and / or facilities will be designed and located to blend with the visual setting.
- \* Continue to monitor use to develop a more accurate baseline of data from which to assess the carrying capacity of specific trails and sites as needed.
- \* Manage use of sensitive features such as alpine meadows or trails as necessary.
- \* Conduct an inventory of the area's recreation features to determine their variety and extent, and to assess their sensitivity and importance in relation to current and potential recreation activities. This will assist in determining limits to acceptable change, and guiding facility development and visitor management in the Recreation Area.

# Visitor Services

## Introduction

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area protects 32,400 ha of sub-alpine and alpine terrain, containing rolling uplands, steep-sided valleys and rugged mountains. The Recreation Area's close proximity to Highway 16 and the town of Smithers makes it ideally situated to provide a range of outdoor recreation opportunities suitable for families and novices, as well as experienced backcountry users.

The Recreation Area's attractiveness and suitability for backcountry recreation are dependent on its outstanding recreation features, its ease and variety of access, a developed trail system, adequate pre-trip and on-site information, and its facilities such as the snowmobile and cross-country ski cabins.

Local residents, other regional and provincial visitors from both British Columbia and Alberta and an increasing number of American and European clients are discovering the Recreation Area. Visitor use is currently fairly low.

## General Concept

As directed by the Park Act, and outlined in its policy, BC Parks has identified four recreation goals that it is striving to fulfil. (See Appendix A for details). Of these four goals, the Babine Mountains Recreation Area is able to meet three. They are: to provide a range of outstanding backcountry opportunities, to provide park attractions which enhance tourism travel routes, and to ensure access to local outdoor recreation opportunities for nearby residents. A major portion of the Recreation Area's appeal to visitors comes from its raw natural character and scenic appeal. Therefore, given the importance of maintaining these valuable qualities, a high priority will be placed on low impact recreation opportunities.

## Backcountry Recreation

Located just 12 km east of the Yellowhead Highway, the Babine Mountains Recreation Area offers a variety of wilderness experiences, suitable for both inexperienced first-time users as well as seasoned wilderness travellers. Trips can range in length from day hikes lasting just a few hours, to complete wilderness backpacking trips of several days. The Recreation Area also retains a feeling of remoteness and isolation although it is situated only a few kilometres from the Town of Smithers.

Exploring the landscape of the Babine Mountains Recreation Area offers several different experiences. The easily accessible alpine terrain provides vistas of towering peaks, glaciers, waterfalls, wildlife, colourful meadows, alpine lakes and panoramic views of the surrounding valleys and mountains. Visitors hike, mountain bike, ride horses, ski and snowmobile into this mountainous terrain to experience both the natural and cultural history. Most visitors make day trips into the alpine, but several days are required to travel the loop trails and discover the true extent of the area.

There is good winter recreation potential in the Babine Mountains. Snow and temperature conditions, and ease of access are ideal for winter activities. Ganokwa Basin provides some of the best snowmobiling in the region with wide open meadows and steep slopes to challenge all levels of experience. Silver King Basin, sections of Harvey Mountain and the Cronin offer intermediate to expert ski-touring and telemarking in the only area legislated non-motorized in the Bulkley Valley.



**Plate #6. The Recreation Areas close proximity to Smithers and variety of terrain make it attractive for both summer and winter recreational activities.**

Natural and cultural history in the Babine Mountains are closely linked. The traditional native use, prospecting in the early 1900's and later mining offer visitors a glimpse into the past. Mountain goats, wild flower meadows and steep alpine mountains form the backdrop for experiencing the natural history of the Recreation Area.

## **Tourism Travel Route**

There is little doubt about the importance of the Yellowhead Highway 16 to tourism in the Pacific Northwest. The highway is the lifeline of the region, functioning as the major industrial, transportation and tourism corridor, and linking the communities of Prince Rupert, Terrace, Hazelton, Smithers, Houston, and Burns Lake to the central interior and the rest of the province.

It also forms part of two major circle routes for tourists enjoying the Inside Passage trip, and those travelling to and from the Yukon and Alaska. After hours of driving through farmland and flat plateau country from the interior, the mountains loom up suddenly and dramatically at Smithers. Here, the Babine Mountains Recreation Area provides opportunities for the touring public to take an interesting side trip without having to leave their planned travel route.

The Babines provide one of the first mountain views west of the Rockies for travellers and is the only accessible and visible wilderness park along this route to the coast. Visitors have very easy access into the Babine Mountains and can also draw on permitted guides to lead them on a seasonal adventure. Increased awareness of these opportunities by the travelling public could lead to more economic benefits for the Town of Smithers.

## **Local Recreation**

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area is probably used more by local residents of the Bulkley Valley than by touring visitors. Having the superb scenery and variety of terrain available "in one's own back yard" allows nearby residents to pick and choose the best "fair-weather" days in which to enjoy the area's seasonal variations.

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area truly is a park for all seasons, which compliments the Town of Smithers' theme and alpine image. The Babines are used year-round and add to the attraction of this unique community. Activities pursued here include fishing, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, viewing (scenic and wildlife), photography and nature appreciation.

## Continuity of Experience

It is the aim of BC Parks to manage the Recreation Area for continuity of high quality experiences. The recreation experiences that exist in the Babine Mountains Recreation Area rank high on the provincial scale of quality due in large part to the unique combination of characteristics that make up the area.

From the time visitors receive their first information on the Recreation Area, there is a certain expectation set about the type and quality of experience they are likely to have. BC Parks is committed to meeting that expectation by providing quality service, and maintaining a high level of satisfaction from the time that visitors enter the Recreation Area until the time they leave.

This would include not only the pre-trip planning information, but also various on-site experiences such as trail access, the adequacy of mapping and signing, the availability of pamphlets, and the appropriate management of visitors and area resources. It is the intent of the Master Plan to have all of the management actions support the objectives that have been identified for the Recreation Area.

## Access Strategy

The Yellowhead Highway 16 is the main highway corridor running through the Bulkley Valley. Several secondary roads leave Highway 16 to the east to reach different parts of the Recreation Area, which helps disperse users and contributes to the variety of experiences available. The major access routes into the Recreation Area are along the Driftwood Creek Road from the west, and the Babine Lake Road from the south and east.

If a decision is made to harvest timber along the western boundary of the Recreation Area, there could be new forest access roads constructed. Close interagency co-operation is needed as all access routes are under the jurisdiction of other Provincial agencies. Regular upkeep and directional signs are important for visitor satisfaction and to meet the role of an easily accessible backcountry area.

Commercial aircraft use will be controlled through BC Parks existing permit system. All float planes (both private and commercial) will only be permitted to land on Lower Two Bridge Lake. If private aircraft landings increase in frequency, BC Parks will work with the B.C. Aviation Council to control private aircraft use.

Commercial helicopter use (drop-off charters) will be allowed at specially designated landing sites within each of the two identified zones. These sites will be located at the extreme northwest corner and near the snowmobile cabin at the Astlais Mountain (see Figure 4). This use will be subject to a valid Resource Use Permit which will set out conditions of operation and any necessary restrictions.

## Information Strategy

Providing up-to-date information on all aspects of the Recreation Area is an important function of visitor service management. First-time users to the Recreation Area are interested in access points, existing trails, their lengths and levels of difficulty, and what can be seen in the area. BC Parks' existing information pamphlet will be redesigned to focus on the natural and historical character of the Recreation Area, describe trails, encourage dispersed use and ensure that visitors are aware of, and prepared for, potential dangers associated with wilderness travel.

## Awareness and Pre-Trip Planning

People learn about the Recreation Area in a variety of ways. The Skeena District Office, the Northern Regional Office and the Victoria Headquarters Office all provide information on the Babine Mountains Recreation Area through individual letters and printed material that raises awareness of the area, and aids people in their pre-trip planning. The two main sources of information about the Recreation Area are: the BC Parks' map brochure entitled *Provincial Parks of Northern B.C.* and the *B.C. Road Map and Parks Guide* published by the Ministry of Tourism.

Information about the Recreation Area is also made available through the North by Northwest Tourism Office and the key Tourist Information Centres in Smithers, Hazelton, and Houston, all of which are well situated to dispense orientation and pre-trip planning material to interested users.

Some other sources of information that are important in making people aware of the Recreation Area's location, features and opportunities include the Regional location maps at other nearby parks, private sector advertising by recreational guides, *Parks of British Columbia and the Yukon*, and a regional hiking and trail guide, *Trails to Timberline*, which provides detailed descriptions of the location, length and difficulty of the Recreation Area's many trails.

### Objective:

To provide accurate and up-to-date information about the Babine Mountains Recreation Area for visitor awareness and pre-trip planning.

### Action:

- \* Develop and produce an information pamphlet for the Babine Mountains Recreation Area that highlights the trails available, both in text and map form, outlines proper backcountry ethics, identifies important regulations and interprets some of the area's unique natural and cultural history.

## **Orientation and Information**

BC Parks provides orientation and information mainly through its printed pamphlets and on-site signs. Directional signs identify various trails and intersections to assist visitors in keeping to their planned route and avoiding mishap. The emphasis here is placed upon safe recreation, proper camping techniques and minimizing environmental impacts.

### **Objective:**

To provide information and on-site orientation to visitors arriving at the Recreation Area.

### **Actions:**

- Install a new information shelter, along with appropriate signs and mapping at the new parking area located at the end of Driftwood Road.
- Install additional trailhead signs and maps at all major access points to the Recreation Area.
- Provide information pamphlets at all of the above sites.

## Natural and Cultural Resource Education

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area has an important role to play in presenting and interpreting both the natural and cultural resources of the area, for the enjoyment and education of the public. The desired approach will encourage visitors to develop a sense of stewardship for the Recreation Area and the features it protects, as well as understanding and support for the mandate of BC Parks.

However, because of the backcountry nature of the Recreation Area, on-site interpretation of natural and cultural features will be kept to a minimum. This will be accomplished through the production of an information pamphlet and by integrating various educational themes into existing interpretation programs. These major themes will focus on:

- i) Natural History - regional landscapes, geology, active glaciation, alpine areas, ecological diversity and wildlife.
- ii) Cultural Heritage - archaeological evidence, native peoples history, mining history.
- iii) Recreation - things to do and see, available opportunities, outdoor safety, backcountry ethics.

Information signs for the area will be unobtrusive and limited to only a few sites. For example, small interpretive signs could be developed for each of the Silver King and Cronin minesites to explain some of the early exploration history that occurred in these locations. The interior of the existing overnight/emergency shelters could also be used to display management or interpretative messages.

### **Objective:**

To provide interpretation of the Recreation Area's natural and cultural heritage through integration of its major educational themes as a component of the District's existing interpretative programs.

To build increased awareness, understanding and support of the Recreation Area and park system in general, through the development and presentation of school programs and park awareness evenings.



## **Actions:**

- Identify significant natural and cultural features (such as the Silver King and Cronin Minesites) for interpretation and produce and install appropriate informational signs at viewpoint and feature locations that maximize these viewing opportunities.
- Incorporate information on the Recreation Area's major educational themes into the Skeena District's existing interpretation programs, information pamphlet, school programs and park awareness evenings.
- Encourage discussion on the formation of a "friends of" cooperating association involving all user groups to help foster a sense of pride and stewardship for the Recreation Area.
- Work with interested native groups to produce a map of the Recreation Area showing the historic native names for the areas' features and landmarks.

## **Management Services**

The Recreation Area is administered by the Skeena District Office - Bulkley Zone in Smithers and its field office is located at Tyhee Lake Park Headquarters. The primary emphasis for staff will be to ensure that various management responsibilities are carried out according to the guidelines of the Master Plan, and the established policies and procedures of the Ministry.

A BC Parks presence in the Recreation Area will be maintained during the busy summer and early fall months through periodic backcountry ranger patrols. These patrols will be made along existing roads and trails in the area. Radio communication for backcountry staff will be via a portable radio system and scheduled check-ins will occur daily in the interests of public safety and efficient park management. During the winter, periodic patrols will be undertaken by District, Zone, and Area staff as conditions permit.

## **Objective:**

To maintain a BC Parks presence within the Babine Mountains Recreation Area, to provide resource management, visitor management, safety services and enforcement.

## **Actions:**

Staff will be responsible for the following management and operation functions:

- Maintain existing trails, public cabins, signs and other facilities.
- Maintain and regulate public visitation to ensure the safe and proper use of the area and the protection of its resources.
- Collect data on area resources and seasonal visitor use and satisfaction.
- Monitor all commercial resource and guiding permits within the Recreation Area to ensure compliance with outlined conditions. Enforce regulations as necessary.
- Increase community and visitor awareness of the Park Act & Regulations through education and enforcement.
- Encourage and work with interested volunteers as park hosts or roving rangers to provide and collect information, and to maintain trails and shelters.

## **Marketing**

### **Image**

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area is closely linked to the scenic and recreational appeal of the Bulkley Valley and the Town of Smithers, whose identity is based, in part, on the wholesome quality of its natural surroundings.

The Recreation Area owes its existence in large part to the efforts of local residents who had used the area for years, and had come to recognize the importance of conserving its unique combination of features. A wilderness park proposal was developed in 1973 by Joe L'Orsa, a local resident and prospector, and persistent lobbying by interested users eventually resulted in the establishment of an Integrated Management Unit (I.M.U.), which later became the Provincial Recreation Area that exists today.

With its easy accessibility and developed trail system, the area offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities that appeal to inexperienced first-time users through to seasoned backcountry travellers. Thus, the Recreation Area makes up an important component of the Valley's tourism base.



**Plate #7. The Recreation Area has a well developed trail system that appeals to a variety of different user groups and experience levels.**

## **Promotion**

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area currently receives fairly low use, but has shown steady increases in use over the last several years. It is expected that this trend will continue as word of the area's features and opportunities spreads.

Since one of the main components of an enjoyable backcountry experience is feeling a sense of solitude, the Recreation Area will be managed for continued low use, as defined in the Park Zoning Descriptions. Therefore, promotion of the Babine Mountains Recreation Area will not be a major initiative.

### **Objective:**

To establish a low-profile approach to promoting and marketing the Recreation Area that will allow for a modest increase in use.

**Actions:**

- \* Continue to utilize the services of the North by Northwest Tourism Association and the local tourist infocentres to inform the public of the Recreation Area's features and opportunities.
- \* Encourage the commercial operators to work together to market and promote a range of recreation opportunities available, at a level of use that will not threaten the conservation objectives of the Recreation Area.

## Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The Recreation Area has been utilized for decades for backcountry recreation and offers a variety of opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in year round. Protection of the resource is BC Parks first priority, and recreation activities must be managed in such a way that they are not detrimental to the resources supporting them.

This section identifies the objectives for the provision of these activities and outlines various management actions to be followed to ensure the protection of the natural environment while still allowing these activities to continue.

### Backcountry Hiking

The Recreation Area's current trail system allows for a diversity of hiking experiences ranging from short day trips to weekend overnight trips to extended wilderness backpacking trips of several days. Its many interconnected trails provide extra variety by allowing interesting loops and circuits to be completed without having to hike along the same trail twice.

**Objective:**

To provide a range of hiking and backpacking opportunities that give access to the Recreation Area's scenic features, and that have minimal impact on the environment.

**Actions:**

- \* Maintain Silver King, Cronin Creek, Lyon Creek, McCabe, Harvey Mountain, Higgins Creek, Little Joe and Reiserer Creek access trails into the Recreation Area in a cleared, passable condition so that all visitors are assured of a high level of safety, convenience and satisfaction with their hiking experience in the Recreation Area. Locate and re-open the historic Victoria Basin trail to complete a loop between the Cronin Creek and Higgins Creek trails. Ensure accurate informational signs are established and maintained at all major trailheads.

- \* Encourage volunteer assistance in maintaining the trail system and cabins, and assist volunteer groups in applying for grant money to develop and improve the trails in the Recreation Area.
- \* Work closely with interested user groups to jointly maintain the existing cabin identified for public use in Silver King Basin. Identify any other existing cabins that would be appropriate to retain as emergency public shelters.
- \* Monitor visitor use through a variety of counting and reporting methods (automatic counters, ranger patrols, register boards, recreational guide reports) to obtain more precise user statistics. This will provide more accurate baseline data from which to make informed management decisions regarding the area's carrying capacity.
- \* Develop primitive backcountry facilities at designated camping sites as deemed necessary to reduce the environmental impacts on the more popular and heavily used sites.
- \* Encourage the use of low impact camping equipment and techniques, such as portable stoves for cooking instead of campfires, through the development and dissemination of a backcountry code of ethics in both sign and pamphlet form.
- \* Ensure that all heli-hiking use in the Recreation Area is controlled through the existing Resource Use Permit system. Permit conditions should identify designated flight paths and landing sites to minimize disruptions to other visitors.

## Horse Use

Horse use has occurred in the Babine Mountains since Europeans first started exploring the area. Historically, horses have played an important role in packing people, equipment and supplies to hunt, prospect and mine here. More recently, horses have been used for recreational purposes. Today, increasing numbers of users are accessing the Recreation Area. In addition, higher and more concentrated use is causing some damage to popular trails and other sensitive natural areas.

### **Objective:**

To provide for both private and commercial horseback riding opportunities that have a minimal impact on the environment and other recreational users.

### **Actions:**

- \* Designate as "open" for all horse use those better-constructed trails and old roads that are less susceptible to environmental damage through increased use. These trails are: Silver King, Cronin Creek, Higgins Creek, Harvey Mountain Road, and the Astlais Mountain (Big Onion) Road.
- \* Regulate by Letter of Authority / Resource Use Permit all horse use on those trails that are regularly used by hikers, and that exhibit an environmental sensitivity to horses that could be made worse by heavier, uncontrolled use. This includes the following trails: McCabe, Reisetter Creek, Little Joe Lakes, and Lyon Creek.
- \* Monitor trails to identify problem areas, and work co-operatively with the Northern Saddle Club, the Bulkley Valley Backpackers Club, the recreational guides and other interested local users to improve problem areas along existing trails. Where feasible, separate trail sections could be built around wet areas to prevent further damage to trails.
- \* An opening date for horse use may be set or trail closures implemented during the year at the discretion of the District Manager, dependant upon certain conditions such as spring and summer snowmelt, late thaw, extended periods of rain, to prevent trail damage.

## Winter Recreation

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area has ideal terrain, a good climate and reliable snow conditions for all types of winter recreation. Activities include cross-country skiing, ski-mountaineering, snowshoeing and snowmobiling, and these account for much of the areas annual use. However, the rugged terrain also makes for zones of high avalanche hazard that somewhat limit the extent of safe use areas.

Two winter warming huts are located in the Ganokwa Basin for snowmobile use, and an old mining building near the Silver King minesite has been improved to provide a warming hut and emergency shelter for other winter users.



**Plate #8. Snow conditions, terrain and scenery all combine to provide superb winter recreation opportunities.**

Snowmobiling in the Babines has been an extremely controversial subject for a number of years. As a result of perceived impacts of ATV's and snowmobiles on high altitude vegetation, and possible interference with wildlife, a series of studies and meetings involving government and user groups in 1975 resulted in the area being designated as an Integrated Management Unit (I.M.U.) under the Environment and Land Use Act. This designation was to allow a measure of control to be placed on the use of ATV's and snowmobiles and also allowed the creation and designation of a cross-country ski area in Silver King Basin, a ski-mountaineering area on Harvey Mountain and three separate areas in which snowmobiles were allowed. These areas were the Ganokwa Basin, located within the I.M.U., and Dome Mountain and McDonell Ridge outside the area.

Through the years, Orders-in-Council were passed in attempts to protect the alpine and subalpine areas of the Babine Mountains Integrated Management Unit from damage by all terrain vehicles. These were determined by the Ministry of Attorney General not to be legal methods for control, and in 1984 the area was established as a Recreation Area under the Park Act. Under this legislation ATV's including snowmobiles could be controlled and provision was made to allow for the existing designated snowmobile area to continue.

The Draft Master Plan, released early in 1992, recognized the conflict between snowmobile use and other winter activities and proposed the continuation of the official designation of the snowmobile area in the Ganokwa Basin for snowmobile use. Permits would continue to be issued to the Smithers Snowmobilers Club for use and maintenance of the two existing cabins in the area. Any expansion of snowmobiling use would be directed toward Dome Mountain, an area outside the Recreation Area. Snowmobilers objected strongly to this proposal for a number of reasons, citing increasing numbers of snowmobilers had become accustomed to using a larger area, few complaints to them of conflicts, and lack of evidence of permanent damage. On the other hand, local non-motorized user groups and individuals objected to allowing snowmobilers in the Recreation Area at all.

This issue did not become fully developed until the master planning process was in the late draft plan stage and could not be ignored. To do so, a plan would have been created which would be unacceptable to several hundred snowmobilers, which likely would have resulted in boundaries continuing to be ignored, insufficient staff resources to enforce regulations and other user groups and wildlife would continue to be disturbed outside the designated area.

In order to reach an agreement between snowmobilers and non-motorized user groups, a separate process was developed to address this specific issue. Representatives from both groups were requested to meet with BC Parks staff to seek a solution to the impasse.





As a result of this process, continued snowmobile use will be allowed in the Designated Snowmobile Area. Limited access to two adjacent areas will be allowed only under Letter of Authority from the District Manager.

### **Objective:**

To allow for a variety of winter recreation opportunities to occur in the Recreation Area with minimal conflict among the various user groups. The emphasis for use will focus on low-impact, non-motorized recreation opportunities, outside of the designated snowmobile area.

### **Actions:**

- Undertake monitoring of wildlife and snowmobile interactions to determine whether there is any disruption of wildlife, primarily mountain goats. Any indication of disruption will result in review and possible adjustment of snowmobiling boundaries.
- Work closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and industry to ensure that secondary roads and parking areas situated adjacent to the Recreation Area are snowplowed as necessary to provide trailhead access for winter recreation activities.
- Allow continued snowmobiling centred on the existing designated area of Ganokwa Basin (see Figure 4). Minor boundary amendments will be made in the area of Copper Lakes and Harvey Mountain. Limited access to specified areas (Four Lakes and Cronin) will be allowed only by Letter of Authority issued by the District Manager of BC Parks. Snowmobile use will be curtailed if non-compliance with boundaries or permits is observed.
- Continue to issue Resource Use Permits to the Smithers Snowmobile Club for the maintenance of the two cabins in the area.
- Initiate an avalanche assessment of the Recreation Area to identify areas of high risk that are frequented by winter recreation users.
- Work closely with the various user groups to ensure that each is aware of the designated boundaries that have been developed for their particular activity, and to the dangers associated with winter backcountry use. This will be done through a combination of trailhead signs and mapping, a winter recreation pamphlet and information sessions with each user group.

## Mountain Biking

This is a relatively new activity that is growing in popularity in B.C.'s backcountry. In the Babine Mountains, hikers find it convenient to bicycle along the Driftwood Road to the start of the various trails that lead into the Recreation Area. This greatly reduces the hiking time spent in the less-scenic areas outside of the Recreation Area and increases the time spent enjoying the scenic alpine inside it.

In addition, some cyclists are using the existing trails within the Recreation Area to directly access alpine areas with their machines, causing some damage to this environment and coming in conflict with other users over right-of-way and excessive speed.

### Objective:

To provide opportunities for mountain biking that reduces the possibility of conflicts with other users and that does not negatively impact on the environment.



**Plate #9. Mountain biking is becoming an increasingly popular backcountry activity.**

## **Actions:**

- Designate the following trails as "open" for use by mountain bikes: Silver King -Cronin Creek trails, Harvey Mountain road, Big Onion road, Higgins Creek road. Mountain bike use is not allowed in open alpine areas or meadows. This will allow access to higher elevations for foot travel while minimizing impacts on other trails, reducing potential conflicts with hikers and horses, and eliminating damage to sensitive natural areas such as alpine meadows.
- Promote proper trail ethics and etiquette through an information and signing program developed in co-operation with local user groups and the B.C. Cycling Association to encourage safe and informed use of bikes in the Recreation Area.
- Encourage volunteer assistance in maintaining the trail system and cabins, and assist volunteer groups in applying for grant money to develop and improve the trails in the Recreation Area.
- Develop a means to monitor use by mountain bikes, and their impacts on the trails utilized and other users, to make further refinements on expanding or curtailing their use.

## **Angling**

There is limited recreational angling available in the Babine Mountains Recreation Area. Lower Two Bridge Lake provides a good fish stock of small rainbow trout but it is the only fishery located in the Recreation Area.

## **Objective:**

To provide fishing opportunities in a wilderness environment, based on a self-sustaining fishery.

## **Actions:**

- Maintain Lower Two Bridge Lake as a rainbow trout fishery catering to recreational users. This will be done through the natural recruitment of fish stocks. No hatchery stocking will be undertaken unless necessary to remedy a drastic decline in the viable population.

- Work closely with the Provincial Fisheries Branch to monitor habitat conditions, and carry out periodic creel surveys to evaluate population dynamics. Manage catch limits through a combination of gear and quota restrictions.
- Emphasize recreational fishing (ie. catch and release) rather than consumptive fishing in available park information.

## **Hunting**

The Recreation Area is open to hunting for all designated species during the prescribed hunting season. This includes grouse and ptarmigan, mule deer, moose and both species of bear. Hunting for mountain goats has been allowed under a Limited Entry Hunting (L.E.H.) system. There are two guide outfitters whose territories encompass the Recreation Area. One of the guides is allowed a quota of one mountain goat per year. (Mountain goats will be managed to maintain an optimum population level in relation to the habitat.)

### **Objective:**

To provide opportunities for both guided and non-guided hunting to occur within the Recreation Area based on self-sustaining populations of existing wildlife species.

### **Actions:**

- Work closely with the Wildlife Branch to maintain the existing natural diversity of species presently found within the Recreation Area through ongoing inventories, monitoring impacts of surrounding land use, and the setting of conservative annual harvest quotas.
- Monitor both individual and guide outfitter hunting activities and harvest success rates on an annual basis to help determine impacts on wildlife populations and other recreational activities. Adjust hunting opportunities as required to maintain viable wildlife populations.

## **Recreational Guiding**

There are currently three recreational guiding services being offered in the Babine Mountains Recreation Area. These are commercial horseback riding trips, snowmobile trips and hiking tours. In keeping with the stated intent of maintaining the area's wilderness character, the focus of commercial recreation opportunities will be centred on non-mechanized activities that are not intrusive to other forms of recreation, and that have minimal impact on the environment. Snowmobile tours will be limited to the designated area in Ganokwa Basin.

**Objective:**

To allow controlled private sector involvement in the provision of recreational guiding services that are compatible with the stated objectives of the Recreation Area.

**Actions:**

- Continue to permit commercial horseback and hiking services in the Recreation Area. These guided services will be limited to two operations each. Permits will specify limitations on size of parties, number of trips, grazing, and any other necessary conditions. The trial permit for snowmobile tours will be re-evaluated before the 1992/93 season.
- Review new proposals for the provision of commercial recreation services in the context of the overall role, and individual objectives identified for the Recreation Area.
- Where demand from more than one private sector operator for a limited commercial opportunity warrants it, exclusive or limited permits will be issued through a competitive tendering process.

**Resource Appreciation**

The Babine Mountains Recreation Area has some significant opportunities for both natural and cultural resource appreciation. The presence of wildlife species such as mountain goats and marmots provides numerous opportunities for visitors to view, study and photograph animals at home in their natural environment. In addition, remnants of past Native and mining activities that are present can be interpreted to provide a fuller understanding of the area's early history.

**Objective:**

To encourage and provide opportunities for greater appreciation of the Recreation Area's natural and cultural resources.

To provide opportunities for public viewing and other low-impact appreciation of both scenery and wildlife in a wilderness environment.

**Actions:**

- Manage mountain goats as the primary viewing species within the Recreation Area, develop appropriate viewing opportunities, and inform the public of the need to limit disturbance to the wildlife.

- Provide an historical perspective of the area through the development of interpretive opportunities for significant Native sites and for the Silver King and Cronin minesites.
- Ensure safety at abandoned minesite locations to a standard considered acceptable by the District Inspector of Mines and the District Manager, BC Parks, prior to encouraging visitation.
- Encourage the local museum and the established recreation guides to provide information on the natural and cultural history of the area.

# Plan Implementation

For the purposes of this master plan, the management actions will be implemented in two phases: Phase I (Short term) which occurs from one to three years after approval of the master plan and Phase II (Long term) which requires more than 3 years to complete or is an ongoing project.

## Natural and Cultural Resource Management

### Phase I (Short term)

#### Land

- Liaise with Ministry of Forests' L.R.U.P. process to review the adjustment of the Recreation Area boundaries along Driftwood, Reisetter and Harold Price Creeks that will add key missing landscape elements, and to maximize the visual aesthetics if harvesting is proposed in areas adjacent to the Recreation Area.

#### Mineral

- Following completion of the current mineral evaluation to the satisfaction of the Chief Geologist, announce the start of the process leading to class 'A' park status.

#### Water

- Develop properly designed sanitary facilities at designated recreation sites.

#### Wildlife

- Monitor and inventory wildlife and habitat, especially the mountain goat population, and evaluate fishing use in Lower Two Bridge Lake through a creel survey, in consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Branch (goat inventory done -1991 and 1992).

#### Forest and Vegetation

- Update the Fire Management Plan on an annual basis and review fire control policy.

#### Outdoor Recreation Features

- Conduct an inventory of recreation features with regional assistance.



**Cultural Resources**

- Conduct a cultural resource inventory of historic sites and integrate in a Regional Interpretation and Information Plan. Interpret where appropriate.

**Phase II (Long Term)****Mineral**

- Work closely with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources to assess any new exploration programs, outline conditions to minimize environmental impacts and issue R.U.P.'s and reclamation permits as necessary.

**Water**

- Co-operatively develop water quality guidelines with Water Management Branch for mineral exploration and mining development activities.

**Wildlife**

- Investigate impacts of recreation activities on mountain goat populations.
- Establish common objectives with Ministry of Forests and Wildlife Branch for identifying habitat requirements and managing wildlife species that range through the Recreation Area and adjacent lands.
- Encourage scientific research related to wildlife with emphasis on sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered species.

**Fish**

- Carry out periodic monitoring and evaluation on the health and viability of the Lower Two Bridge Lake fishery.

**Forest and Vegetation**

- Monitor incidence of insect and disease infestation with assistance of the Ministry of Forests.
- Monitor both recreational use and mineral exploration activities to ensure the continued protection of the fragile alpine vegetation.

- Work closely with Ministry of Forests and private sector to review harvesting plans on lands adjacent to the Recreation Area so that existing aesthetic and recreational values are protected.
- Encourage scientific research related to vegetation with emphasis on sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered plants.

### **Cultural Resources**

- Consult with local native groups regarding the significance of the Recreation Area to their culture.

### **Permits**

- Monitor and inspect all Resource Use Permits. Enforce regulations as necessary.

## **Visitor Services**

### **Phase I (Short Term)**

#### **Visitor Opportunities**

- Designate "open" areas and trails for horseback, snowmobile and mountain bike use.
- Assist in the development of operating plans for recreational guides and continue to monitor use.
- Identify wildlife (mountain goat) viewing opportunities.
- Develop interpretive information for Silver King and Cronin minesites.

#### **Management Services**

- Conduct an avalanche assessment of the recreation area to identify high risk areas.
- Work closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Highways to provide access to the recreation area's trail system on a year-round basis.
- Ensure public safety at shelters and old minesites before recreation promotion begins.

- Develop parking and information facility at the end of Driftwood Road for both summer and winter use in conjunction with jurisdictional agencies.

### **Information and Education Program**

- Update information packages (trailhead, pamphlets, park awareness programs), and continue to liaise with North by Northwest Tourism Association and tourist info-centres to provide information on the recreation area's features and opportunities.
- Designate trails, and develop and install trailhead information relating to wilderness ethics, low impact camping and trail techniques.

### **Phase II (Long Term)**

#### **Management Services**

- Monitor and manage recreational use and its impact on the alpine and subalpine environments, wildlife and other users. Survey as necessary to gather user data.
- Continue to maintain area trails and the Silver King shelter.
- Develop proper facilities at designated recreation sites as identified in the Annual Management Plan (AMP).
- Conduct a cultural resource inventory of historic sites and integrate into a Regional Interpretation and Information Plan. Interpret where appropriate.

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Appendix A  
BC Parks System Goals

## BC PARKS' SYSTEM GOALS

In the Park Act, BC Parks must:

- conserve significant and representative natural and cultural resources, and
- provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.

### Conservation

With the conservation mandate, BC Parks has two goals:

- Goal 1** Protection of Representative Landscapes - To conserve British Columbia's natural diversity by protecting viable, representative examples of our different landscapes.
- Goal 2** Protection of Special Features - To protect British Columbia's key natural and cultural features, including outstanding examples of our wildlife, old growth forests, waterfalls and cultural artifacts.

### Recreation

Within the recreation mandate, BC Parks has four goals:

- Goal 1** Tourism Travel Routes - To provide park attractions and services which enhance tourism travel routes.
- Goal 2** Outdoor Recreation Holiday Destinations - To provide park attractions which serve as or improve key destinations for outdoor recreation holidays.
- Goal 3** Backcountry - To provide outstanding backcountry recreation opportunities throughout the province. Some sites may feature adventure tourism, while in other areas the wilderness would remain untouched.
- Goal 4** Local Recreation - To ensure access to local outdoor recreation opportunities for all residents of this province.

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# MASTER PLAN

Appendix B  
BC Parks Zoning

	<b>Intensive Recreation</b>	<b>Natural Environment</b>
OBJECTIVE	To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.	To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.
USE LEVEL	Relatively high density and long duration types of use.	Relatively low use but higher levels in association with nodes of activity or access.
MEANS OF ACCESS	All-weather public roads, or other types of access where use levels are high (see "Impacts" below).	Off-road mechanized (power-boats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles), off-road non-mechanized (foot, horse, canoe, bicycle). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pickup points will be permitted.
LOCATION	Contiguous with all-weather roads and covering immediate areas, modified landscapes or other high-use areas.	Removed from all-weather roads but easily accessible on a day-use basis. Accessible by mechanized means such as boat or plane.
SIZE OF ZONE	Small; usually less than 2,000 hectares.	Can range from small to large.
BOUNDARY DEFINITION	Includes areas of high facility development in concentrated areas.	Boundaries should consider limits of activity/facility areas relative to ecosystem characteristics and features.
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES	Vehicle camping, picnicking, beach activities, power-boating, canoeing, kayaking, strolling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, snowplay, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, specialized activities.	Walk-in/boat-in camping, power-boating, canoeing, hunting, kayaking, backpacking, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, river rafting, horseback riding, heli-skiing, heli-hiking and specialized activities.

Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
To preserve and present significant natural or cultural resources, features, or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage value.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designated sites.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized activities will be allowed.
Generally low.	Very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.	Very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.
Various; may require special access permit.	Non-mechanized; except may permit low frequency air access to designated sites; foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).	Non-mechanized (no air access); foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).
Determined by location of special resources; may be surrounded by or associated with any of the other zones.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.
Small; less than 2000 ha.	Large; greater than 5,000 ha.	Large; greater than 5,000 ha.
Area required by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of cultural resources (adequate to afford protection).	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access. Will be designated under the Park Act.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographical features. Will be designated under the Park Act.
Sight-seeing, historic and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (eg. caving, climbing).	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (eg. caving, climbing).



	<b>Intensive Recreation</b>	<b>Natural Environment</b>
FACILITIES	May be intensively developed for user convenience. Campgrounds, landscaped picnic/play areas, trails, accommodation or interpretive buildings, boat launches; administrative buildings, service campgrounds, gravel pits, disposal sites, wood lots, parking lots, etc.	Moderate development for user convenience. Trails, walk-in/boat-in campsites, shelters; accommodation buildings may be permitted; facilities for motorized access, eg. docks, landing strips, fuel storage, etc.
IMPACTS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Includes natural resource features and phenomena in a primarily natural state but where human presence may be readily visible both through the existence of recreation facilities and of people using the zone. Includes areas of high facility development with significant impact on concentrated areas.	Area where human presence on the land is not normally visible; facility development limited to relatively small areas. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.
MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES	Oriented toward maintaining a high quality recreation experience. Intensive management of resources and/or control of visitor activities. Operational facilities designed for efficient operation while remaining unobtrusive to the park visitor.	Oriented to maintaining a natural environment and to providing a high quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be controlled to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation. Designation of transportation modes may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (eg. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).
EXAMPLES OF ZONES	Campground in Rath Trevor Beach Park. Gibson Pass ski area in E.C. Manning Park.	Core area in Cathedral Provincial Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.

Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
Interpretative facilities only, resources are to be protected.	Minimal facility development. Limited development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment, eg. trails, primitive campsites, etc. Some basic facilities at access nodes, eg. dock, primitive shelter, etc.	None.
None; resources to be maintained unimpaired.	Natural area generally free to evidence of modern human beings. Evidence of human presence is confined to specific facility sites. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.	Natural area generally free of evidence of modern human beings.
High level of management protection with on-going monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate, a high quality recreational and interpretive experience. Active or passive management depending on size, location, and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve recreation experience and to limit impacts.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
Tide pools in Botanical Beach Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Wilderness Zone in Spatsizi Park.	Central Valhallas Wilderness in Valhalla Provincial Park. Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy Area.

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Appendix C  
Summary of Comments  
from Public Meetings

## and Questionnaire

## **BABINE MOUNTAINS RECREATION AREA**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

BC Parks was pleased to receive completed Questionnaires from 168 respondents. This summary is intended to generally reflect the opinions expressed by the participants and is not a statistical representation of the Questionnaire.

The information has been organized according to the original topic headings used.

#### **GENERAL**

Participants responded by saying the most interesting and enjoyable aspects of the Babine Mountains Recreation Area include its visual qualities, scenery and wildlife, its accessibility and closeness to Smithers and Highway # 16, and a certain wilderness feeling and remoteness. People see All Terrain Vehicles, garbage, mineral exploration and development and insects as unenjoyable aspects of the Recreation Area.

#### **RECREATION AREA BOUNDARY**

Of the people who responded to this question, the majority felt some adjustments to the boundary are necessary to better protect the overall integrity of the Recreation Area. The main choices include the addition of Driftwood Creek and Reiser Creek watersheds to the west, and the Harold Price Creek drainage to the north. A small number of people proposed the deletion of a portion of the Big Onion around the existing mineral claim.

#### **ROLE OF THE RECREATION AREA**

In order to better serve the public, many people suggested BC Parks should simply look after what's already there. (ie. buildings, trails, information, signs, patrols). To help maintain the Recreation Area's wilderness character, we should limit commercial development, determine carrying capacity, prohibit mechanized access and limit mining.

The majority of respondents supported increased protection through a change to Class "A" Park Status, while some were unclear as to just what this meant, or what difference it would make.

#### **MINERAL EXPLORATION**

Many people strongly opposed any mineral exploration proceeding in the Recreation Area; others acknowledged that although exploration may have to be allowed, strict controls should be put in place to regulate this activity and minimize any adverse environmental impacts. Few people actually had any suggestions for how this could be done.

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Most people did not agree that natural fires should be allowed to burn without some degree of fire suppression. The area is too small, and adjacent private and commercial values might be endangered. Some people supported the removal of insect infested trees providing it is done selectively, with no clear-cutting.

## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

A slight majority favour limiting but not prohibiting access into backcountry to avoid conflicts with wildlife. The disturbance to Mountain Goats, in particular, was frequently mentioned. More study is needed to identify critical or sensitive habitat areas. Bear warning signs could be posted if the need arises.

Most people feel uncomfortable with prescribed burning to enhance wildlife habitat. They feel that natural processes should be allowed to operate as far as possible.

There was mixed reaction and opinion over hunting in the Recreation Area, with a slight *majority for the continuation* of this activity. People expressed concerns over visitor safety and the possible over-harvesting of goats. Many people felt that the amount of hunting was "about right".

## FISH MANAGEMENT

Many people felt fishing is an important part of their outdoor experience and wanted to eat what they had caught.

Other suggested catch and release was best or reduced limits were needed to ensure the long term viability of the fishery.

Most people said no to fish stocking, or only if needed.

## HERITAGE FEATURES

Comments regarding the preservation and presentation of the areas' history ranged from letting it fade away, to providing an information pamphlet, to interpretive signs and a museum display. A common suggestion was signing at points of interest or at trailheads. Any signs erected must be tastefully done. Unsafe features should also be fenced for safety.

## **AIRCRAFT / HELICOPTER ACCESS**

There was mixed reaction to allowing aircraft to land in the Recreation Area, with slightly more saying no than yes.

Many people qualified their yes answers by indicating that use should be limited to medical emergencies and Park Operations (including Fish & Wildlife) only. Some support helicopter use for exploration to minimize damage to the area.

There was limited support for heli-dependant activities such as sight-seeing, because it may be an acceptable way for the elderly and disabled to see the backcountry.

Most disagreed with other activities such as heli-skiing or heli-hiking because of the impacts on sensitive wildlife populations and the need to preserve the wilderness atmosphere of the area. Some people were in favour of drop-offs, but with restrictions on when and where, such as isolated boundary locations.

## **ROAD ACCESS**

There was overwhelming agreement with B.C. Parks restricting motor vehicle and A.T.V. access in the Recreation Area. Some suggested better enforcement of the regulations was necessary. Others wanted improved access to the Recreation Area boundaries (ie. Driftwood Road to Sunny Point).

## **MOUNTAIN BIKING**

The majority of respondents indicated that some restrictions were necessary for safety reasons, and to minimize environmental damage. Many suggested limiting mountain bikes to established roadways or designated trails. Also, people recommended closures during wet conditions.

## **HORSEBACK RIDING**

Although horseback riding was deemed acceptable, given the long history of use in the area, many people were concerned about damage to sensitive areas such as trails and alpine meadows. Some felt access should be restricted to designated trails and grazing limited to minimize impacts on the environment. Others suggested numbers may have to be limited.

## **HIKING AND CAMPING**

A large majority of people felt some parts of the Recreation Area should be left undeveloped in order to preserve its wilderness nature. Although few areas were actually identified, many suggested those areas without trails be left as is, and emphasis and effort be focused on improving existing trails. Those commonly mentioned were Lyons Creek, McCabe, Silver King and Little Joe.

Generally, people supported the concept of designated campsites to reduce widespread impacts. However, only minimal development was appropriate, and may not be necessary at this time. People also raised concerns about concentrating garbage at certain locations could create nuisance animal problems (ie. bears).

People gave moderate support for the use of some existing cabins as huts, especially for skiing and emergency shelter during bad weather. Some respondents raised concerns about vandalism, maintenance, and sanitation. They felt the area is too small for a hut to hut system of development.

## **WINTER RECREATION**

Most people felt that non-mechanized forms of recreation are the most appropriate such as skiing, snowshoeing, ice-fishing, winter camping and dog-sledding. There was some concern that dog-sledding might conflict with other users.

## **SNOWMOBILING**

Generally, there were mixed comments, with some for and some against this activity. Some people were concerned over garbage being scattered throughout the area, noisy machines and detrimental effects on wildlife. Many recognize the traditional use of the area by snowmobiles and would tolerate it, but did not want to see this area expanded. People called for a clearly defined snowmobile area.

## **INFORMATION SERVICES**

The vast majority of respondents favoured enhanced signage and information, especially trailhead signs and some trail markers. People urged caution about putting too many signs in the backcountry. Also, ideas for a park map and information package were suggested.

People supported interpretive signs to a lesser degree, with some suggested at major points of interest (ie. mine sites). Again, respondents expressed concern about cluttering the backcountry with signs. Signs should be tasteful and unobtrusive. A park handout could also be used to interpret the area. Problems could arise with vandalism and maintenance.



## **COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

People gave qualified support for some commercial services, provided there was minimal impact on the area and other users (ie. non-mechanized commercial activities). Some objections were raised over motorized operations, which were seen as incompatible with the intent of the area. A majority indicated that strict controls should be in place to regulate activities on a limited-time basis. Also, respondents expressed concern over control of numbers, as the area is too small and large numbers would reduce the quality of the backcountry experience. Development should be kept to a minimum. Many other diverse types of activities were suggested, but most focused on low impact, non-consumptive use that could minimize any environmental damage.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Overall, we found the Issues Paper & Questionnaire effective in reaching a broad cross-section of users. Comments tended to be positive in terms of support for maintaining the wilderness character of the Recreation Area. Many people just want to be able to pursue their traditional recreation pursuits with minimal impact from development. Most agree that conservation and preservation of the Recreation Area's inherent qualities are of utmost importance in the preparation of the Master Plan due to the areas' limited size and ease of access.