

BIG CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

July 2003

Approved by:



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Date: July 31/03

BIG CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
Purpose Statement

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Big Creek Ecological Reserve is to protect an intact, ungrazed climax grassland area representative of the lowest elevation grasslands of the Chilcotin River Valley

Natural climax grasslands which have not been grazed by livestock are the main feature of the ecological reserve. These grasslands comprise approximately 55% of the ecological reserve area, occur largely on steep slopes and are mostly dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass. A few Douglas-fir trees are scattered over the grasslands.

Secondary Role

The **secondary** role of the ecological reserve is to protect representative features of the Chilcotin River Valley, such as river terraces, rock and talus slopes and semiarid eroding slopes.

Known Management Issues	Response
Fire management and suppression	Fire needs to be carefully controlled in this area to preserve climax ecosystems but allow natural processes to continue. Firefighting needs to be balanced with light prescribed fire. Fire management plan to be developed.
Rafting/canoelist/recreation conflicts	A 200 x 200 metre area was excluded from the northeast corner of the ecological reserve at the confluence of Big Creek and the Chilcotin River to allow for recreational use. All recreational use is to be directed to this area.
Impacts to archaeological values from rafters	The presence of rafters at the confluence may result in recreationists damaging pithouses inside the ecological reserve. Work with rafting companies to ensure they are aware of sensitive values.

CONSERVATION

Representation

- ecosection Situated in the well-represented Fraser River Basin Ecosection (13.86%). Big Creek's contribution to the representation of this ecosection is minimal (0.66% of overall protected area representation of ecosection). Other protected areas contributing to the representation of this ecosection include Doc English Bluff Ecological Reserve, Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park and Churn Creek Protected Area.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant ~194 hectares of BGxw2, which is well represented within the protected areas system (18.29%) and ~22 hectares of IDfxm, of which 6.85% is protected. The ecological reserve's contribution to the overall representation of these 2 BEC units is 1.86% and 0.13% respectively. Vast majority of both of these BEC subzone/variants are protected in Churn Creek Protected Area.

Special Feature

- Escarpment of lava plateau, river terraces, rockslides, talus slopes, block fields, semi-arid eroding slopes, and grasslands. Climax grasslands and Douglas-fir communities. Several plants of the dry interior (giant wildrye, rabbitbrush, sagebrush, mariposa lily) are at the northwestern limits of their range in this ecological reserve.

Rare/Endangered Values

- White-throated swifts (blue-listed), California bighorn sheep (blue-listed), sharp-tailed grouse (yellow-listed). Other species likely present but little inventory completed.

Scientific/Research Opportunities

- Benchmark of very-well preserved bunchgrass grasslands, research opportunities in plant ecology, vegetation-wildlife interactions. Specifically, it can be used as a permanent range reference area for ecosystem classification.

RECREATION

Representation:

- backcountry n/a
- destination n/a
- travel corridor n/a
- local recreation n/a

Special Opportunities n/a

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Representation

Special Feature Numerous pithouses have been identified.

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Other Designations n/a

Relationship to Other PAs n/a

Co-operative Management Arrangements n/a

Partnerships Williams Lake Field Naturalists undertake informal annual field trips and inventory work.
A volunteer ecological reserve warden is in place.

Vulnerability Low. Natural barriers, difficult access and extremely rugged topography minimize use by hunters, recreationists and cattle.

Relationship to Other Strategies n/a

Area: 257 ha

Date of Establishment: July 5, 1990