



Bridge Lake Park

Management Plan

This document replaces the Bridge Lake Park Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan of February 2003.

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BRITISH
COLUMBIA

BC Parks

Bridge Lake Park Management Plan

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Management Vision

This vision statement describes the future state and management that is desired for Bridge Lake Park. The park vision provides long-term direction for park managers while aiding them in making decisions regarding current issues.

Bridge Lake Park plays a central role for residents of the local Bridge Lake community to engage in year-round recreational activities that are based upon experiencing and observing nature. Hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing and wildlife viewing are popular activities in the park. The park is also a key element in the local tourism economy, providing a place to stay for campers to experience the Interlakes area.

Wildlife using the park continue to find refuge from the more developed surrounding land. Important areas for wildlife remain protected from disturbance, with the islands and key habitats on the north shore of Bridge Lake remaining relatively untouched by human intrusion. The natural ecosystems are protected and undiminished.

Table of Contents

Management Vision	i
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Management Plan Purpose.....	1
1.2 Planning Area	1
1.3 Legislative Framework	1
1.4 Adjacent Land Use	5
1.5 Land Uses, Tenures and Interests.....	5
1.6 Management Planning Process	5
1.7 Relationship with First Nations.....	5
1.8 Relationship with Communities.....	5
2.0 Values and Roles of the Park	6
2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System	6
2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values.....	6
2.3 Cultural Values	7
2.4 Recreation Values	7
2.5 Climate Change	7
3.0 Management Direction	8
3.1 Management Objectives and Strategies.....	8
3.2 Zoning Plan.....	11
4.0 Plan Implementation	14
4.1 Implementation Plan	14
4.2 High Priority Strategies	14
4.3 Plan Assessment	14
Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table	15
 Table of Figures:	
Figure 1: Context Map for Bridge Lake Park.....	2
Figure 2: Map of Bridge Lake Park	4
Figure 3: Zoning Map	13

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of Bridge Lake Park. This management plan:

- articulates the key features and values of Bridge Lake Park;
- identifies appropriate types and levels of management activities;
- determines appropriate levels of use and development;
- establishes a long-term vision and management objectives for the park; and
- responds to current and predicted threats and opportunities by defining a set of management strategies to achieve the management vision and objectives.

1.2 Planning Area

Bridge Lake Park is 405 hectares in size and situated on Bridge Lake, approximately 86 kilometres north-northwest of the City of Kamloops and approximately 50 kilometres east-southeast of the Town of 100 Mile House. Access is by Highway 24 that links the Interlakes district of the southern Cariboo (Figure 1). The main features of the park are the islands within the lake (all but one are part of the park), a larger, more accessible, wooded upland area on the northeast shore and the campground on the southeast shore (Figure 2).

1.3 Legislative Framework

Bridge Lake Park was originally established as a Class A park under the *Park Act* in March of 1956. The original park centred on a campground on the southwest shore of Bridge Lake. A second provincial park, Bridge Lake Centennial Park, a Class C park, was established under the *Park Act* in 1958. Bridge Lake Centennial Park comprised a small upland and foreshore area on the northeast shore of Bridge Lake.

The two parks were consolidated in 2004. The lands comprising the former Bridge Lake Centennial Park were added to Bridge Lake Park. In addition, 100 metres of foreshore were added to the park at this time, resulting in the park's area increasing to 25 hectares (12 hectares of upland and 13 hectares of foreshore).

In 2013, the park was enlarged by an additional 380 hectares as a follow-up to the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan that had provisions for future "Goal 2¹" protected areas. Bridge Lake Park was one of 22 Goal 2 areas that were either new or additions to existing protected areas. The enlarged Class A park was formally established by the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2013* on March 14, 2013. The park is presently named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

¹ Goal 2 protected areas are relatively small special feature areas.

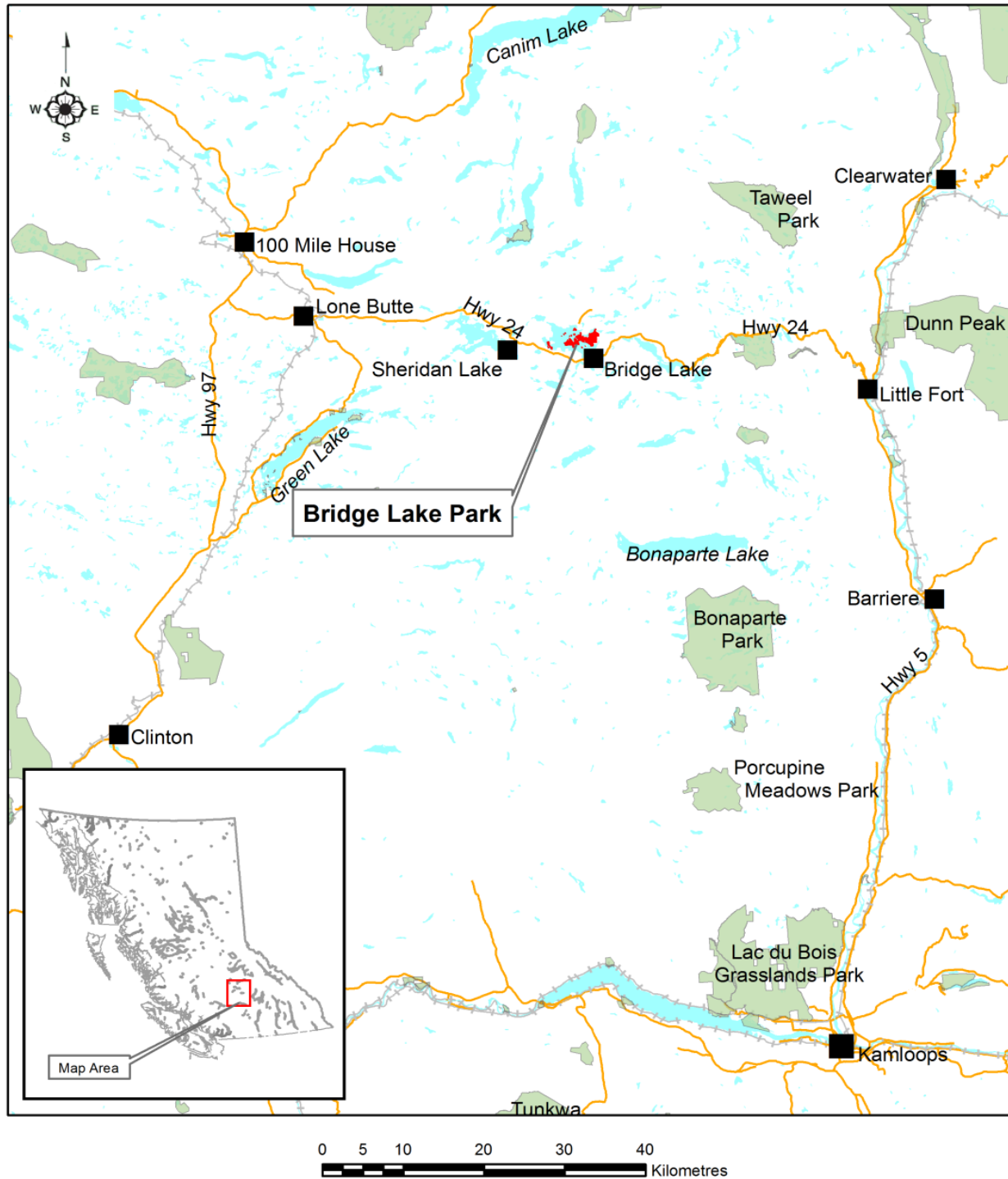


Figure 1: Context Map for Bridge Lake Park

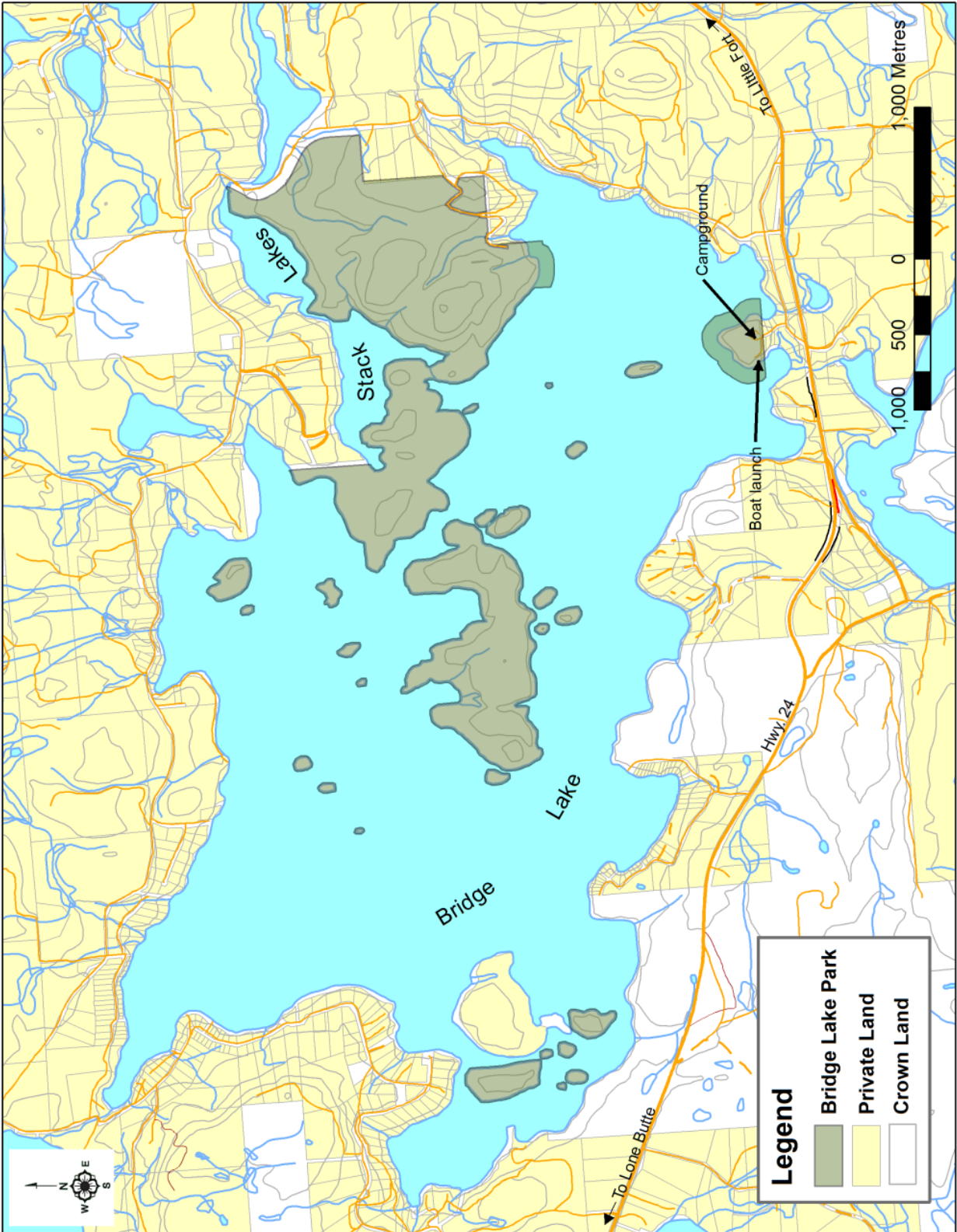


Figure 2: Map of Bridge Lake Park



View looking southeast over Bridge Lake.

Class A parks are Crown lands dedicated to the preservation of their natural environments for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public. Development in Class A parks is limited to that which is necessary to maintain the park's recreational values.

1.4 Adjacent Land Use

Most land in the vicinity of Bridge Lake is privately owned (Figure 2). The private lands consist largely of smaller residential and recreational properties surrounding the lake, with some resorts and larger areas of farmland. One island in the southwest of the lake was privately owned, but recently transferred to Crown land. Some Crown land occurs on the southwest shore of the lake and contains a popular recreation area known as the Ice Caves. Forestry is the main activity beyond the lake and private land areas.

1.5 Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development administers some tenures that include the park. These include portions of two traplines and one guide outfitter territory that are authorized under the *Wildlife Act*, and also must be authorized by a park use permit under the *Park Act*.

1.6 Management Planning Process

BC Parks consulted with First Nations, the Bridge Lake area community, government agencies, public interest groups, stakeholders and the general public in the development of this draft management plan. Summaries of input from various groups were posted to the BC Parks website as they became available.

BC Parks obtained information on values, uses, present and future desired activities, the desired experience, public and commercial recreational use, issues and items needing management attention. Input received during the initial public review process has been taken into consideration in this management plan.

1.7 Relationship with First Nations

Bridge Lake Park is situated within the asserted traditional territory of the Canim Lake Indian Band, the Simpcw First Nation and the Neskonlith Indian Band. BC Parks will continue to seek to develop an ongoing relationship with these First Nations to find common interest and direction for the future management of Bridge Lake Park.

1.8 Relationship with Communities

Bridge Lake is a popular lake for resident and non-resident anglers. Resorts in the area and lake residents rely on the lake and the natural backdrop provided by the park to enhance their outdoor experiences. The park is a dominant aspect of the lake and is a prominent element in the marketing of tourism in the Interlakes area along Highway 24

and beyond. The community uses the park year-round as the main access point to the lake for wildlife viewing, fishing and enjoyment of the outdoors.

2.0 Values and Roles of the Park

2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

The primary roles of Bridge Lake Park are to provide recreational activities associated with a moderate-sized interior lake, and to protect associated shoreline and upland conservation values. It is also regionally important for tourism along the Highway 24 corridor.

2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values

Ecosystems represented within the park include the Sub-Boreal Spruce Biogeoclimatic Classification variants of SBSdw1 and SBSdw2. These variants are under-represented in the protected areas system of British Columbia, with only 3.6% and 1.8% protected within the province respectively. Bridge Lake Park accounts for only a minor part of the protected area component, containing 0.04% and 3.9%, respectively, of the area of these variants that is protected. The park is located within the Cariboo Plateau Ecoregion, an area of rolling upland with several medium-sized lakes and many wetlands, smaller lakes and streams.

Forests found in the park consist of a mix of interior Douglas-fir, spruce, trembling aspen and lodgepole pine. These occur as second generation stands with some old-growth groups and individual trees.

The park provides habitats for many wildlife species, from wide-ranging larger mammals or migratory species (songbirds, shorebirds and waterfowl) that use the park seasonally, to smaller species that find their full home range within the park.

Wildlife found within the area of the park includes Mule Deer, Moose, Black Bear, American Beaver, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Common Loon, various waterfowl and shorebirds, and numerous other species. The park is used for wintering by Mule Deer, Moose and Black Bear. The islands are used by Moose and deer to have their young in the spring and early summer. The smaller islands support nesting colonies of gulls and other birds. Bald Eagles nest in some of the old growth trees found along the lakeshore. Species at risk confirmed in the area include the blue-listed Great Blue Heron and red-listed American Badger.



The lake contains Rainbow Trout, Kokanee, Lake Char and Burbot, all eagerly sought by anglers.

2.3 Cultural Values

There are four known archaeological features found around Bridge Lake, with two being located within the park.

Old logging and skid roads, which are overgrown, are evidence of the early logging history in the park.

2.4 Recreation Values

The park is used by local residents, travellers on Highway 24 and by clients of tourism operators for various activities. A 16-site provincial campground with a boat launch ramp is found on the southeast shore of the lake, although there is no available drinking water. Campsites are usually available for campers, with an average occupancy rate of 36% during the 2014 to 2016 seasons, although the campground can be fully occupied on popular weekends. Day use is relatively light, with 3 to 12 day users per day averaged throughout the open season from May 15 to September 30.

The park serves as a natural backdrop to the lake from most vantage points, giving a more remote feel to a lake whose shoreline is largely private land with numerous dwellings.

In summer, activities include fishing, hiking, observing nature, boating, camping, swimming and horseback riding. Winter activities include ice fishing, snowmobiling on the lake, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and nature observation.

Access to Bridge Lake Park is relatively easy by road or boat. The eastern side of the mainland section on the northeast of the lake is accessible by roads, but these do not extend into the park to any extent; access into this section of the park is by non-vehicular means only. There are some old rough and grown-in trails and skid roads from previous logging, which if upgraded, offer opportunities for the expansion of nature-based recreation in this area, such as hiking and wildlife viewing.

2.5 Climate Change

In British Columbia, climate change effects vary by region. Bridge Lake Park falls within the Cariboo Regional District for which predictive² modelling indicates that, from 2040 to 2069, mean annual temperature, annual precipitation, frost-free days, and annual growing degree days will likely increase substantially; whereas snow fall and summer precipitation will likely

² Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium. Plan2Adapt. Web based analysis tool accessed in 2015. URL at: <http://www.pacificclimate.org/analysis-tools/plan2adapt>.

decrease substantially. These climatic changes will likely result in changes to ecosystem composition and function across the landscape.

Along with other possible ramifications, these projected climatic changes may result in hydrological changes, including water temperature and flow regimes, which could in turn affect the aquatic flora and fauna and recreational values of Bridge Lake Park. Increased forest fire frequency and intensity is another possibility. However, no research specific to the Bridge Lake area is available to support these assertions.

Small protected areas such as Bridge Lake Park play an important role as stepping stones for organisms that may have to move across the landscape should conditions in their present location become unsuitable as a result of ecosystem changes. The park can provide refuge as organisms move to find suitable conditions.

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Management Objectives and Strategies

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
<p>Wildlife find refuge in the park because the surrounding land has been altered and is more prone to disturbance.</p> <p>Some wildlife species, such as moose and migratory birds, are seasonally dependent upon park habitats.</p> <p>Critical wildlife habitats, such as the spring calving areas, nesting islands and eagle nests, within the park need protection.</p> <p>As ecosystems shift and change with climate changes, different assemblages of species will be using the park.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Maintain healthy wildlife populations for all native species utilizing the park.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory the park to identify species and critical habitats. • Ensure that recreational activities do not interfere with wildlife species or their seasonal movement patterns and connectivity; separate activities from critical habitats and species. The islands are especially valuable to wildlife, providing some degree of seclusion and protection of critical habitats. Consider options for limiting boat wakes around islands and shoreline to protect shoreline nesting species. • Work with adjacent land owners, lake users and managers to minimize impacts on wildlife and habitat (e.g., by keeping the potential for wildlife movement corridors into the park, staying a safe distance from important wildlife features such as nesting colonies, eagle nests and calving areas, and preventing motorized vehicles from accessing the park). • Assess the suitability of trapping with respect to the park having a refuge role for wildlife and potential conflicts with recreational users. • Seek to acquire the one island on Bridge Lake that is not presently in the park.

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
<p>There is a high level of community interest in park management.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Ensure Bridge Lake Park is valued by residents of the Interlakes area.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is effective and ongoing contact between BC Parks and the local community, encouraging a strong connection and sense of stewardship to the park, with active involvement in conservation activities such as inventory, monitoring and trail construction that is sensitive to wildlife. The park should reflect the desires of the community as much as possible while still protecting important conservation and cultural values. • Integrate the park into local tourism marketing.
<p>Recreational activities are desired, but there are differing ideas on degree of appropriate development. Most wish a natural, undeveloped area due to the high level of private lands found on the remainder of the lake; others seek more tourism-related opportunities that may include motorized vehicle access or a second larger campground.</p> <p>Winter access to the campground portion of the park was requested for parking and snowmobiles.</p> <p>Portage from Bridge Lake to Stack Lakes was requested.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Provide recreation opportunities that are compatible with wildlife values of the park.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow low-impact recreation opportunities, including hiking, mountain biking and horse riding on approved trails. • Provide a day use area on the mainland, north shore portion of the park, with toilet facilities and a parking area that provides access to trails. Consider a small picnic area, depending on demand. • Construct trails on the mainland portion of the park that showcase interesting features (e.g., shoreline views, wildlife viewing opportunities, old growth) while avoiding impacts to areas used by wildlife; this can include a portage trail from Bridge Lake to Stack Lakes. • Do not encourage use of islands for recreational activities, although occasional day use visits can be acceptable on larger islands provided that wildlife impacts do not occur. Boat landings and trails will only be considered after a full impact assessment indicates there would be negligible impact on wildlife. The smaller islands that contain nesting gull colonies or other nests should have use restricted to a distance that does not cause birds to alter their behaviour. The islands are the only area, on a relatively developed lake shoreline, where wildlife can find refuge. The existing unofficial camping on the islands should be phased out due to wildlife disturbance and fire potential, safety concerns and the lack of facilities to handle waste. • Periodically monitor activities to determine if wildlife impacts are occurring. If adverse effects on wildlife are detected, then implement measures to mitigate impacts, such as educational efforts or investigating whether recreational uses should be

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
	<p>relocated, seasonally restricted or curtailed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorized vehicles are allowed only to official access points (roads in day use or camping areas) or on designated trails in the Intensive Use Zone. While aircraft access is presently permissible, it is recommended that aircraft access be restricted in the future (place in Schedule A of the Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation) due to high potential impact to wildlife and recreation. • Consider options for expanding camping opportunities within the Intensive Use Zone containing the existing campground area. • Make the campground area available for winter use (vehicle and trailer parking, snowmobile access). Consider an agreement to allow local maintenance. • Assess the feasibility and construction of a trail to the lake from the southeast side of the campground for year round use (especially for snowmobile and ATV use to access ice fishing).
<p>Park infrastructure (boat launch, parking, swimming area, potable water) is in need of upgrading.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Provide recreational facilities appropriate to a safe and enjoyable park experience.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the boat launch for accessibility and larger boats. • Consider providing a swimming area that provides more separation from the boat launch. • Consider options for providing potable water to the campground.
<p>Archaeological features need to be protected.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Protect archaeological features.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational activities will avoid archaeological sites. • Ensure archaeological assessments are carried out in high potential areas prior to any developments. • Involve First Nations in any planned developments within the park.



3.2 Zoning Plan

In general terms, a zoning plan divides a protected area into logical management units within which certain activities/uses are permitted and a particular set of management objectives apply. Zoning is often used to physically separate incompatible activities or uses within the protected area and provides visitors and managers with a quick visual representation and appreciation of how a particular protected area is managed. Zones are designed to reflect the physical environment, existing patterns of use and the desired level of management and development in a given management unit.

Bridge Lake Park is divided into three zones (Figure 3) that reflect the highest use area associated with the campground, the mainland portion of the park on the northeast shore that allows recreational activities while protecting wildlife from disturbance, and the islands that provide secure habitats for wildlife.

3.3.1 Intensive Recreation Zone

The objective of this zone is to provide for a variety of readily-accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities. In Bridge Lake Park, this is to provide vehicle-accessed camping opportunities and access to Bridge Lake for water-based activities (e.g., boating, swimming, fishing, snowmobiling, wildlife viewing). It comprises approximately 7 hectares of upland and 9 hectares of foreshore, or 4% of the park, on the south-eastern shore of the lake.

3.3.2 Nature Recreation Zone

The objective for this zone is to protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. Maintaining the value of the area for wildlife habitat is a priority while allowing recreational use. Opportunities are available for visitors to explore and observe the natural features of the park. This zone comprises approximately 240 hectares, or 59% of the park.

3.3.3 Special Natural Feature Zone

The objective for this zone is to protect and present significant natural values, features or processes because of their special character, fragility or natural value. This includes the islands on Bridge Lake where natural values are to be maintained unimpaired. Some sightseeing and nature appreciation may occur, but may be subject to access restrictions to limit impacts. This zone comprises the 25 islands within the park, consisting of approximately 148 hectares, or 37 % of the park.



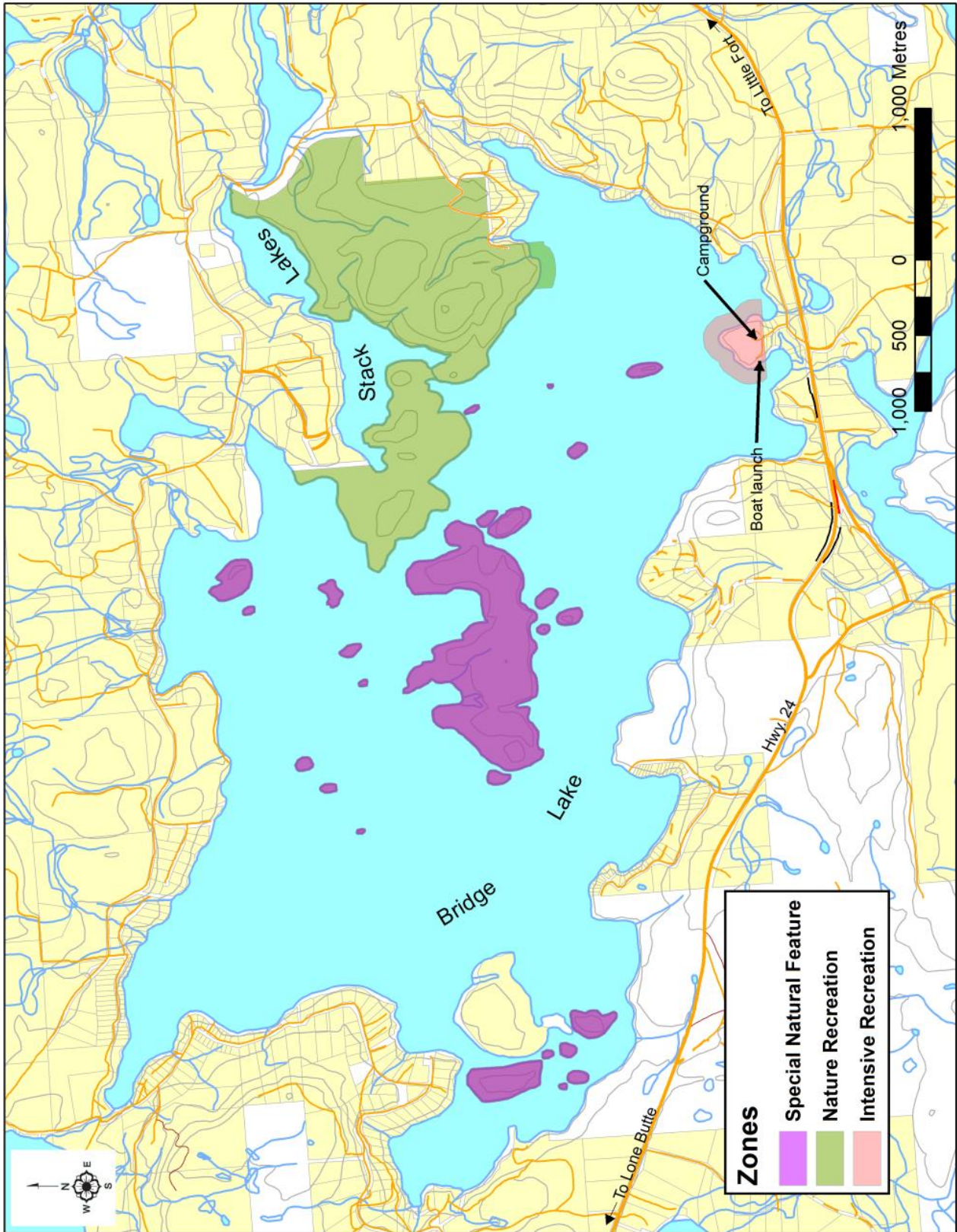


Figure 3: Zoning Map

4.0 Plan Implementation

4.1 Implementation Plan

Specific projects will be evaluated for priority in relation to the overall protected areas system. BC Parks will collaborate with First Nations on all aspects of park management. Where needed, BC Parks will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement management strategies.

4.2 High Priority Strategies

The following strategies have been identified as high priorities for implementation:

1. Ensure that recreational activities do not interfere with wildlife species or their seasonal movement patterns and connectivity; separate activities from critical habitats and species. The islands are especially valuable to wildlife, providing some degree of seclusion and protection of critical habitats. Consider options for limiting boat wakes around islands and shoreline to protect shoreline nesting species.
2. Ensure there is effective and ongoing contact between BC Parks and the local community, encouraging a strong connection and sense of stewardship to the park, with active involvement in conservation activities such as inventory, monitoring and trail construction that is sensitive to wildlife. The park should reflect the desires of the community as much as possible while still protecting important conservation and cultural values.
3. Consider options for providing potable water to the campground.

4.3 Plan Assessment

In order to ensure that the management direction for Bridge Lake Park remains relevant and effective, BC Parks will ensure that the management plan is assessed by BC Parks staff on a regular basis (i.e., at least every 5 years). Minor administrative updates may be identified and completed at any time (e.g., correct spelling errors, update park details where needed), and will be documented according to BC Parks guidelines.

If an internal assessment reveals that the management plan requires updating or substantial new management direction is needed, a formal review by BC Parks may be initiated to determine whether the management plan requires an amendment or if a new plan is required.

The management plan amendment process or development of a new management plan includes an opportunity for public input.

Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table

The following table summarizes existing and potential future uses in Bridge Lake Park that are and are not appropriate in each zone. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all uses that may be considered in this protected area in the future.

Please note that many appropriate uses are geographically restricted (i.e., only allowed in certain areas of Bridge Lake Park) or are only appropriate at certain times of the year. Please ensure that you are well informed of any use restrictions as indicated in the table. It is a good idea to review relevant sections of the management plan where indicated in the table.

Appropriate Use Table Legend		
N	Not an appropriate use	The use is not appropriate in the indicated zone. If the use currently exists but the management planning process has determined that the use is no longer appropriate in all or part of the protected area, the management plan will include strategies for ending the activity (e.g., phasing out, closing).
Y	<u>May be an appropriate use</u>	<p>Some level or extent of this use may be appropriate in the zone(s) indicated. If the activity/use already exists, the management plan provides guidance on the appropriate level of use and may address specific restrictions or planned enhancements (e.g., capacity, designated areas for a particular activity, party size, time of year, etc.).</p> <p>For new or expanded uses, this symbol indicates that the use <u>may be considered</u> for further evaluation and approval. The appropriateness of some activities may not be confirmed until a further assessment (e.g., BC Parks Impacts Assessment Process) or evaluation process (e.g., park use permit adjudication) is completed.</p>

Activity/Facility	Special Natural Features Zone	Nature Recreation Zone	Intensive Recreation Zone	Comments
Recreational Activities/Uses				
Aircraft Landing/Takeoff	Y	Y	Y	Recommend restricting in future (see pg. 9)
Boating (human powered and electrical)	Y	Y	Y	
Boating (combustion engine)	Y	Y	Y	
Camping (designated sites)	N	N	Y	
Camping (wilderness style-undesignated sites)	N	N	N	
Fish Stocking	Y	Y	Y	
Fishing	Y	Y	Y	
Hiking	Y	Y	Y	See pg. 9
Hunting	N	N	N	
Land-based Mechanized Activity (e.g., mountain biking)	N	Y	Y	
Land-based Motorized Activity (e.g., 4x4, motorcycles, ATV-not including snowmobiles, snowcats or aircraft landings)	N	N	N	
Horse and Pack Animal Use	N	Y	Y	
Skiing (downhill and cross-country track based)	N	N	N	
Skiing (backcountry)	Y	Y	Y	
Snowmobiling	N	N	Y	Designated trails only
Snowcat Use	N	N	N	
Recreation Facilities/Infrastructure				
Boat Launches	N	N	Y	
Boat Wharves and Docks	N	N	Y	
Cabins, Huts and Shelters (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy)	N	N	N	
Lodges (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy)	N	N	N	
Campgrounds (vehicle accessed)	N	N	Y	
Picnic Areas (vehicle accessed)	N	Y	Y	
Designated Camping Sites (not vehicle accessed)	N	N	N	
Mooring Buoys	N	N	N	
Parking Lots	N	Y	Y	
Roads	N	Y	Y	Access to facilities only
Trails	N	Y	Y	
Visitor Information Buildings	N	Y	Y	
Other Activities/Infrastructure				
Commercial Filming	Y	Y	Y	
Grazing	N	N	N	
Trapping	Y	Y	Y	