



Dragon Mountain Park

Management Plan

December 2015



BC Parks

Dragon Mountain Park Management Plan

Approved by:



Peter Weilandt
A/Regional Director
Thompson Cariboo Region
BC Parks

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Date



Brian Bawtinheimer
Executive Director
Conservation, Planning and Aboriginal Relations Branch
BC Parks

December 14, 2015

Date

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of Dragon Mountain Park. This management plan:

- articulates the key features and values of Dragon Mountain Park;
- identifies appropriate types and levels of management activities;
- determines appropriate levels of use and development;
- establishes the 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

Dragon Mountain Park, 1,773 hectares, is located about ten kilometres southeast of the City of Quesnel and about three kilometres east of Highway 97. No other protected areas are in close vicinity of the park.

Dragon Mountain Park can be accessed by secondary roads from Highway 97 (Figures 1 and 2). An access road to communications infrastructure at the top of Dragon Mountain can be driven in the summer season.

The park includes Dragon Mountain – a prominent landmark in the relatively flat surrounding lands. The mountain is mostly covered with sub-boreal spruce forests dominated by Douglas-fir including old-growth remnants.

Dragon Mountain Park: Context

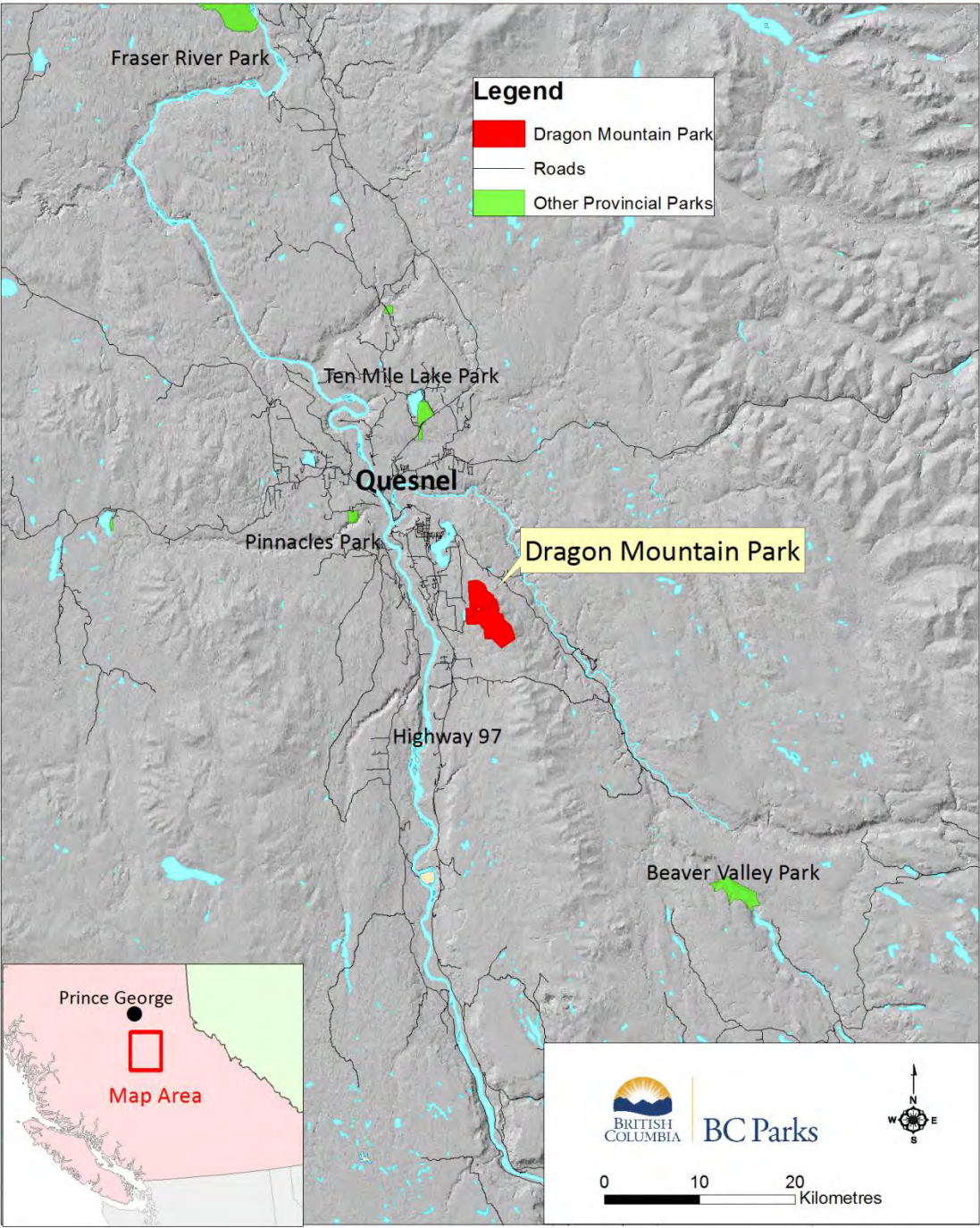


Figure 1: Context Map for Dragon Mountain Park

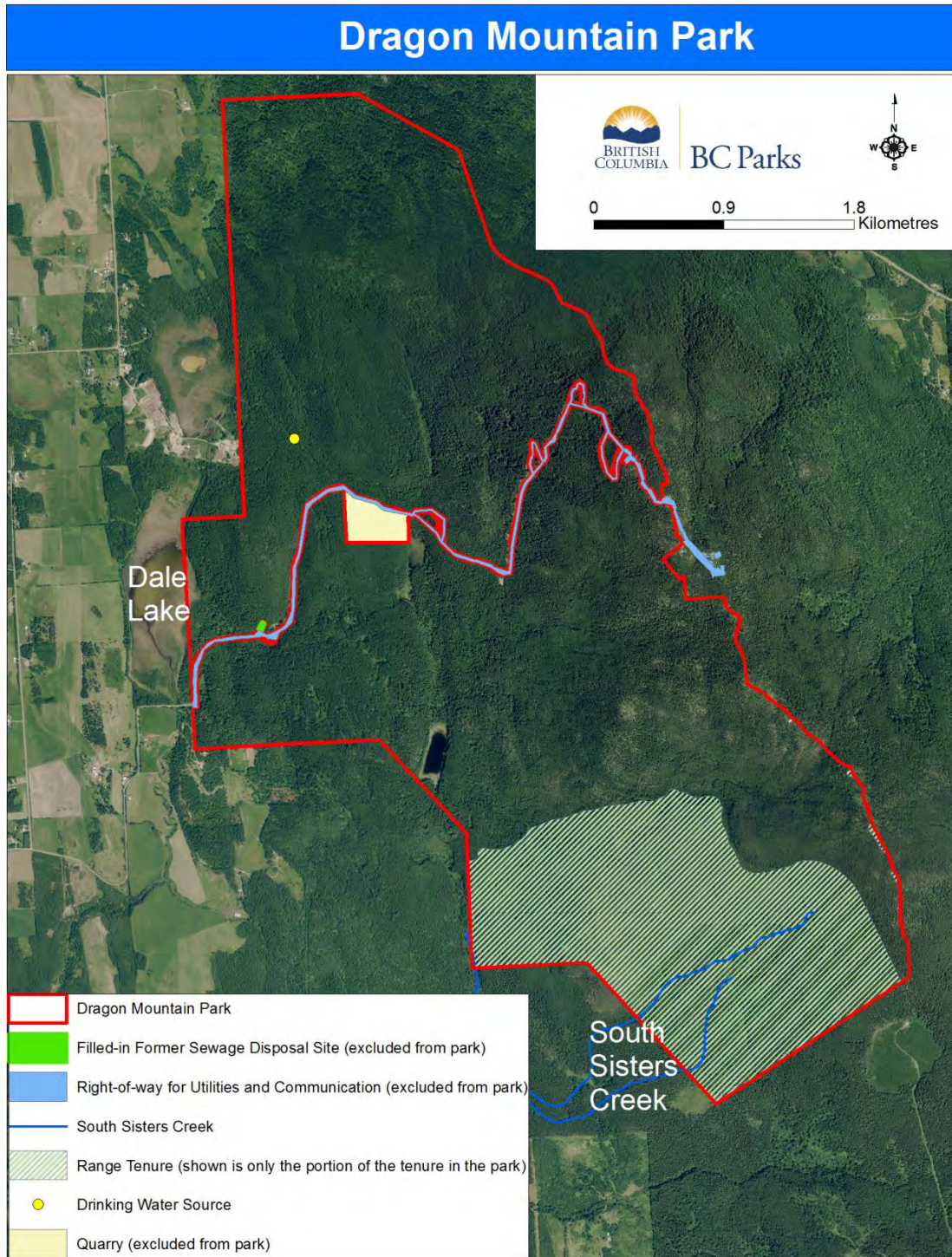


Figure 2: Map of Dragon Mountain Park

1.3 Legislative Framework

Establishment of Dragon Mountain Park was recommended through the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan (CCLUP) Goal 2 (Special Features) process and the Quesnel Sustainable Resource Management Plan. The area was formally established as a Class A park on March 14, 2013, by the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2013*. The park is named and described in Schedule D of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

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. Some activities that exist at the time a park is established (e.g., grazing, hay cutting) may be allowed to continue in certain Class A parks¹ but commercial resource extraction or development activities are not permitted (e.g., logging, mining or hydroelectric development).

1.4 Adjacent Land Use

The terrestrial lands and waters adjacent to Dragon Mountain Park consist of Crown land with various designated and tenured uses as described below, as well as private lands particularly adjacent to the western park boundary (Figures 4 and 5, Appendix 2).

Dragon Mountain Park is partially surrounded by forestry lands, including tenured lands. Forestry is a historic and continuing activity in the area surrounding Dragon Mountain Park and includes operating areas adjacent to the park although presently there are no active cutblock licenses immediately adjacent to the park. Land Use Objectives for the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan Area, including those for Old Growth Management Areas, are being applied in operating areas in the vicinity of the park. General Wildlife Measures for Mule Deer winter ranges established under the *Government Actions Regulation* are also being applied to operating areas in the vicinity of the park (Figure 3).

¹ Applies only to Class A parks listed in Schedule D of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

Dragon Mountain Park: Mule Deer Winter Range Context

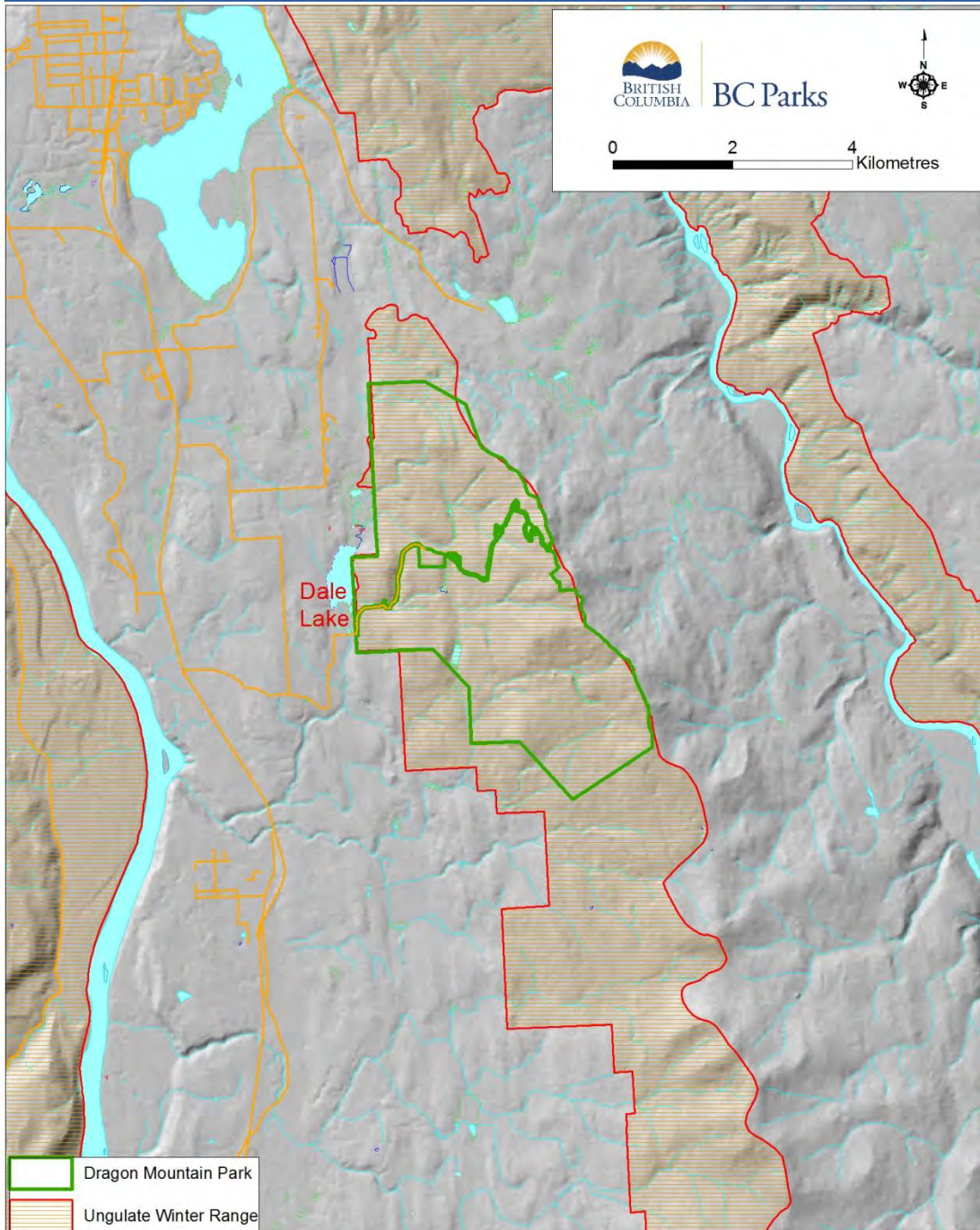


Figure 3: Map of Mule Deer Winter Range Context for Dragon Mountain Park

Various other designated and tenured uses exist adjacent to the park. Accordingly, several range tenures for grazing occur adjacent to the south to southeastern park boundary (Figure 5, Appendix 2). Agricultural Land Reserve polygons cover much of the area adjacent to the park (Figure 4, Appendix 2). A designated use area authorized for extensive agriculture under section 17 of the *Land Act* borders on the southwestern park boundary.

The Fish and Wildlife Program of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations manages a parcel of land adjacent to Dale Lake which is leased from The Nature Trust of British Columbia. Dale Lake is located immediately west of the park (Figures 4 and 5, Appendix 2). A resource road and right-of-way for utilities and communication dissects the park from west to east and provides access to a communication tower and other facilities east of the park (Figure 2). A filled-in former sewage disposal site and an active sand and gravel quarry are located along the right-of-way for utilities that dissects the park. Finally, a guide outfitter area is situated east of the park (Figure 5, Appendix 2).

The Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan and the Quesnel Sustainable Resource Management Plan have designated the Crown land immediately north, east, and south of the park as scenic areas where visual quality objectives may apply.

1.5 Management Commitments/Agreements

During the implementation of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan², the following general guidance was provided for park management in the land use plan area:

- A protected area, regardless of subsequent designation, is land on which the dominant ecological values should be protected and that uses, such as recreation, cattle grazing (except the Junction Sheep Range), hunting, trapping and backcountry tourism, will be allowed.
- Hunting and trapping will continue to be allowed.
- Many of the major new protected areas are available, in principle and where appropriate, for commercial tourism and recreation. These development opportunities will be identified during area-specific management planning which will also recognize the protection of the special natural values of each area and the provision for public non-commercial recreation.

Protected areas, such as Dragon Mountain Park, recommended under the Goal 2 (Special Feature) objective³, protect special natural, cultural heritage, and recreational features,

² Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan 90 Day Implementation Process Final Report, February 1995

³ A Protected Areas Strategy for British Columbia, 1993.

including rare and endangered species and critical habitats, outstanding or unique botanical, zoological, geological, and paleontological features, outstanding or fragile cultural heritage features, and outstanding recreational features.

During development of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan, Dragon Mountain Park was recommended for protection under the Goal 2 (Special Feature) objective to protect special features significant for local recreation associated with Dragon Mountain, as well as Mule Deer winter range and remnant old-growth forest communities (see section 2.1).

1.6 Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Some tenures in the park predate park establishment. These tenures include a trapline, which overlaps the entire park, and a water license for a drinking water source⁴, located roughly northwest of the resource road that dissects the park. These tenures are administered by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and authorized under the *Wildlife Act* and *Water Act* respectively, and these activities and uses must also be authorized by a park use permit under the *Park Act*.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations administers a range tenure for grazing authorized under the *Range Act*. This tenure predates park establishment. Livestock use under this tenure occurs in approximately 320 hectares of the southern portion of the park (Figure 2). Currently, a cattle trail provides access to this portion of the park where the mixed fir/aspen/birch/spruce stands provide preferred forage. The trail extends for 800 metres into the park, ending in an area along South Sisters Creek.

1.7 Management Planning Process

BC Parks initiated a management planning process for Dragon Mountain Park in June 2014. Background information was compiled that identified important natural and cultural values, as well as recreational and economic interests to be incorporated into the management plan. As part of an initial comment period, BC Parks invited First Nations, stakeholders, local governments, and the general public to provide information on the values, future direction, activities and future management objectives and strategies for Dragon Mountain Park.

In June 2015, a review draft was circulated to First Nations, relevant agencies, stakeholders, and local governments as well as posted on the BC Parks website for broader comment and circulation. Input received during this review was essential to develop the final management plan.

⁴ Note that Dragon Mountain Park is not part of the community watershed.

1.8 Relationship with First Nations

The Province and First Nations governments are working toward a relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights. This management plan proposes to develop working relationships between BC Parks and First Nations in a number of areas to ensure that management of the park considers their traditional uses.

Dragon Mountain Park is situated within the asserted traditional territory of the Toosey Indian Band, Lhtako Dene Nation, Carrier Chilcotin Tribal Council, and the Tsilhqot'in National Government (Engagement Zone B).

1.9 Relationship with Communities

Dragon Mountain Park is in the Cariboo Regional District. The closest city to the park is Quesnel which is located about 10 kilometres northwest of the park. Many residents who live in the regional district and the city share an interest in the management of Dragon Mountain Park.

Ongoing engagement and outreach with the Cariboo Regional District and the City of Quesnel will be required to ensure that residents are aware of, and supportive of, the Dragon Mountain Park Management Plan. This will include continued dialogue with residents of the regional district, the City of Quesnel, and any other provincial and/or local interest groups or local governments who have expressed interest in the use and development of the park.

2.0 Values and Roles of the Dragon Mountain Park

2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

The primary role of Dragon Mountain Park is to protect opportunities for local recreation associated with Dragon Mountain, such as mountain biking in locally unique terrain. The secondary role of the park is to protect Mule Deer winter range and remnant old-growth forest communities.

2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values

Dragon Mountain Park is located within the Quesnel Lowland Ecoregion⁵ of which approximately 1.4% or 8,333 hectares⁶ are provincially protected and 21% or 1,773 hectares of this are within Dragon Mountain Park. This ecoregion is a lowland trench lying between the Nazko Upland to the west and the Quesnel Highlands to the east. This ecoregion is divided by the Fraser River which flows from north to south. Generally, there are numerous small lakes and wetlands in this ecoregion; however, Dragon Mountain Park contains relatively few wetlands and only a small lake probably due to the relatively steep topography of the park.

Fish presence has not been confirmed in the small lake located just inside the park's southwestern boundary.

The park falls within the Sub-Boreal Spruce (SBS) biogeoclimatic zone⁷. In general, this zone extends from valley bottoms to about 1,300 metres elevation and is dominated by upland coniferous forests with Douglas-fir, hybrid white spruce, subalpine fir, lodgepole pine and trembling aspen as common tree species. Dragon Mountain Park contains a substantial portion of unique stands dominated by relatively large Douglas-fir. The park contributes substantially to the provincial protection of the Horsefly Variant of the Sub-Boreal Spruce Dry Warm Subzone (SBS dw1). A total of 8,450 hectares of this variant is protected in British Columbia and 20% (or 1,710 hectares) of it is located within Dragon Mountain Park⁸. The park also contributes to the provincial protection of the Moist Hot Subzone of the Sub-Boreal Spruce biogeoclimatic zone (SBS mh). A total of 1,280 hectares of this subzone are

⁵ British Columbia's ecoregion classification system divides the province into broad areas of similar climate, physiography, oceanography, hydrology, vegetation and wildlife potential. Ecoregions are the narrowest in scope of the geographic units within this classification system.

⁶ Data Source: Protected Areas System Overview at <http://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/sv/paso/>

⁷ British Columbia's biogeoclimatic classification system divides ecosystems into biogeoclimatic (BEC) zones representing climatic variations associated with specific types of soils, plant and animal communities. Within zones, subzones and variants reflect finer-scale climatic variations.

⁸ Data Source: Hectares BC online query at <http://www.hectaresbc.org/app/habc/HaBC.html>

protected in British Columbia and 5% (or 63 hectares) of it is located within Dragon Mountain Park.

Dragon Mountain Park contains some mature and old-growth forests of which 752 hectares, or 42% of the park, were formerly designated as Old Growth Management Areas under the *Land Act*. The establishment of the park supersedes this designation and protects these forests under the *Park Act*.

The park supports wildlife including Black Bear and ungulates such as Elk, Moose, and Mule Deer. Critical winter range for Mule Deer covers the park entirely (see Figure 3). This winter range was formerly designated as an Ungulate Winter Range under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. The establishment of the park supersedes this designation and protects the winter range under the *Park Act*.

2.3 Cultural Values

First Nations likely use the park for hunting, berry picking, gathering, and other uses of spiritual significance. Archaeological overview assessments reveal that several areas in the park have a high potential for archaeological sites.

2.4 Recreation Values

The mountainous terrain of Dragon Mountain Park is an important focal point of local recreation with mountain biking being particularly popular. Recreational activities also include trail running, hiking, nature viewing, and enjoyment of the scenery visible from the upper reaches of Dragon Mountain. Large Douglas-fir forests provide an exciting backdrop for these activities. Hunting also occurs in the park.

There are several mountain bike trails in the park which have been established by local mountain bike groups and individual mountain bike enthusiasts prior to park establishment. None of these trails has been formally designated. These trails attract a substantial number of local mountain bikers due to the diverse and challenging terrain in a locally unique mountainous setting.

Forest recreation trails approach the eastern boundary of the park but no trails solely for hiking exist in the park. Besides the unmanaged mountain bike trails, there is no infrastructure in the park. No quantitative estimates on present and historic visitor use levels are available.

2.5 Climate Change

In British Columbia, climate change effects vary by region. Dragon Mountain Park falls within the Cariboo Regional District for which predictive⁹ 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 decrease substantially. These climatic changes will likely result in changes to ecosystem composition and function across the landscape including Dragon Mountain Park.

Protected areas, such as Dragon Mountain Park, have a role in mitigating the impacts of climate change by naturally storing carbon, reducing non-climate stressors and providing a refuge for species that migrate when conditions become unfavourable in their existing habitats.

⁹ Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium. Plan2Adapt. Web based analysis tool accessed in 2015. URL at: <http://www.pacificclimate.org/analysis-tools/plan2adapt>

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Management Vision

Dragon Mountain Park continues to provide opportunities for regional recreation on Dragon Mountain, including mountain biking, while protecting Mule Deer winter range and unique remnants of old-growth Douglas-fir forest.

3.2 Management Objectives and Strategies

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
<p>There is a desire to enhance the visitor experience and provide for compatible recreational activities.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Provide safe backcountry recreational opportunities.</p> <p>Allow low-impact backcountry recreation, including mountain biking, nature viewing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and enjoyment of the scenery visible from the upper reaches of Dragon Mountain. Hunting is also acceptable. Acceptable commercial tourism opportunities include guide outfitting, guided nature and wildlife tours, and guided mountain biking and ecotourism.</p> <p>Support the construction of a visitor information kiosk, a parking lot, and other day use facilities appropriate for low-impact recreation, if these facilities and infrastructure do not impact cultural values, Mule Deer winter range and old-growth forest stands.</p> <p>Develop a trails plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm that existing mountain bike trails are in the appropriate location and should be continued. • Confirm appropriate locations for potential future cross-country skiing, mountain bike trails, horseback riding trails, running trails, and hiking trails. • Develop partnership agreements with local mountain bike groups for building and maintaining new and existing infrastructure for mountain biking in the park. The agreements must clearly establish roles and responsibilities of all parties involved including timelines for assessments and actions in case of non-compliance with appropriate safety and environmental standards (see for example the

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
	<p>International Mountain Biking Association¹⁰ Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack and Whistler Trail Standards¹¹). Partnership agreements must follow the Mountain Bike Operational Standards as outlined in Schedule D of the BC Parks Group Partnership Agreement Template¹².</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit the construction of new trails for cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking, or running only if cumulative impacts from such new trails on cultural values, Mule Deer winter range and other biodiversity values in the park are negligible. • Explore options for multiple uses only on trails that serve as mountain bike climbing or cross country trails, and allow for horseback riding, hiking, and/or running on these trails if and when such activities are compatible and safe. <p>Do not permit off-trail mountain biking.</p> <p>For public safety, do not permit multiple uses, including horseback riding and mountain bike climbing, on mountain bike downhill trails.</p> <p>Ensure that all recreational activities in the park, as for example mountain biking and hunting, are compatible and safe. If necessary for public safety, support temporal and spatial separation of activities. For example, during hunting season, avoid co-occurrence of hunting and mountain biking in close proximity.</p> <p>Work with recreational groups to avoid park visitor trespassing on private property and farmlands adjacent to the park.</p>

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.imbacanada.com/>

¹¹Source: http://cyclingbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/trail_standards_first_edition.pdf

¹² Contact the BC Parks Volunteer Program for further information on these operational standards.

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
<p>If not managed, human activities and infrastructure have the potential to negatively impact Mule Deer winter range, old growth forest communities and cultural values.</p> <p>Pine and Fir Beetle outbreaks occur repeatedly in the park and along the utility right-of-way.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Maintain cultural values and healthy forest ecosystems including the Mule Deer winter range and old-growth forest communities.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <p>If it is necessary for maintenance and preservation of recreational values to build new or maintain existing infrastructure, minimize impacts on Mule Deer winter range, old-growth forest stands and cultural values such as berry picking grounds. Keep trails narrow, and avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building on ridge lines; • cutting of trees greater than 11.5 centimetres diameter; and • opening of the forest canopy. <p>Prohibit the construction of new roads and fixed roof accommodations to avoid impacts on Mule Deer winter range.</p> <p>Except for activities related to registered traplines or range tenures, do not allow motorized activities because these activities likely impact deer winter range values and are not compatible with other recreational activities in the park.</p> <p>Work with BC Hydro, Rogers Communications, recreational groups, and other tenure holders to minimize activities affecting the Mule Deer winter range as much as possible particularly through restricting access and decreasing activities in and adjacent to the park in the winter.</p> <p>Continue to monitor Pine Beetle and Fir Beetle activity.</p> <p>Work with BC Hydro and Rogers Communications to implement pro-active measures for beetle management particularly along the utility right-of-way (see section 1.4 for detail on the right-of-way).</p> <p>If tree removal is necessary in the park as part of forest health management, balance appropriate forest health objectives with maintaining Mule Deer winter range.</p> <p>Develop a fire management plan to address potential fire hazard resulting from dead beetle-infested trees.</p> <p>Do not allow camping and establishment of campsites and picnic</p>

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
	<p>areas because of the increased wildfire hazard in the area and potential detrimental impacts on the Mule Deer winter range and old-growth forest communities.</p> <p>Work with the appropriate agencies to minimize livestock impacts on Mule Deer winter range.</p> <p>To avoid introduction of invasive species, support the development of an invasive species program and explore partnerships with appropriate agencies, increase public awareness, and conduct field assessments to locate and eradicate invasive species.</p> <p>Wherever possible, work with the appropriate agency and The Nature Trust of British Columbia to support management of the biodiversity values in the park in conjunction with management of the biodiversity values adjacent to the park on the privately owned conservation lands at Dale Lake owned by The Nature Trust.</p>
<p>Some of the park’s ecosystems and habitats may be affected by climate change, but there is substantial uncertainty regarding the impacts and outcomes of those changes on the park values.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Improve knowledge and understanding of the effects of climate change on the park’s biodiversity values.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <p>Support research and other efforts to monitor and evaluate the effects of climate change on park values such as old-growth forest.</p> <p>When evaluating the effects of climate change, consider the regional context including adjacent Mule Deer Winter Range.</p>

3.3 Zoning Plan

In general terms, a zoning plan divides a park into logical management units within which certain activities/uses are permitted and a particular set of management objectives apply. 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.

Dragon Mountain Park is zoned in its entirety as Nature Recreation. This zone is oriented to maintaining a natural environment and providing high quality recreation experiences.

4.0 Plan Implementation

4.1 Implementation Plan

Specific projects will be evaluated for priority in relation to the overall protected areas system. 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. Develop partnership agreements with local mountain bike groups for building and maintaining new and existing infrastructure for mountain biking in the park. Partnership agreements must follow the Mountain Bike Operational Standards as outlined in Schedule D of the BC Parks Group Partnership Agreement Template.
2. Develop a trails plan (as per detail in section 3.2).
3. Work with BC Hydro, Rogers Communications, recreational groups, and other tenure holders to minimize activities affecting the Mule Deer winter range particularly through restricting access and decreasing activities in and adjacent to the park in the winter, except for those activities related to registered traplines.

4.3 Plan Assessment

In order to ensure that the management direction for Dragon Mountain Park remains relevant and effective, BC Parks staff 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 and update protected area details where needed), and will be documented according to BC Parks guidelines.

If an internal assessment reveals that the management plan requires more significant 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 management 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 Dragon Mountain Park based on appropriate use in the Nature Recreation 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 appropriate uses may be geographically restricted (i.e., only allowed in certain areas of Dragon Mountain 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 important to review relevant sections of the management plan when interpreting 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 park, the management plan will include strategies for ending the activity (e.g., phasing out, closing).
Y	<u>May be an appropriate use</u>	Some level or extent of this use may be appropriate in the zone indicated. The management plan may provide 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.). For new or expanded uses, this symbol indicates that the use <u>may be considered</u> for further evaluation. The appropriateness of some activities may not be confirmed until a further assessment (e.g., BC Parks Impact Assessment Process) or evaluation process (e.g., park use permit adjudication) is completed.
Y1	Appropriate use as per section 30 of the <i>Park Act</i>	The use is not normally appropriate in a park but was occurring pursuant to an encumbrance or Crown authorization at the time the park was established and is allowed to continue.

Activity/Facility	Nature Recreation Zone	Comments
Recreational Activities/Uses		
Camping (designated sites)	N	Not appropriate as per Section 3.2
Camping (wilderness style - undesignated sites)	N	Not appropriate as per Section 3.2
Hiking	Y	
Horseback riding	Y	Not permitted on mountain bike downhill trails (see Section 3.2)
Hunting	Y	
Land-based Mechanized Activity (e.g., mountain biking)	Y	Only on designated trails
Land-based Motorized Activity (e.g., 4x4, motorcycles, ATV-not including snowmobiles, or snowcats)	N	Except for activities related to range tenure or trapping; do not allow motorized access to avoid impacts on cultural and biodiversity values
Skiing (cross-country track based)	Y	
Recreation Facilities/Infrastructure		
Cabins, Huts and Shelters (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy)	N	Not appropriate as per Section 3.2
Picnic Area (vehicle accessed)	N	Not appropriate as per Section 3.2
Designated Camping Site (not vehicle accessed)	N	Not appropriate as per Section 3.2
Parking Lot	Y	
Roads	N	Not appropriate as per Section 3.2
Trails	Y	
Visitor Information Buildings	Y	
Other Activities/Infrastructure		
Grazing	Y1	
Trapping	Y	

Appendix 2: Land Use Context

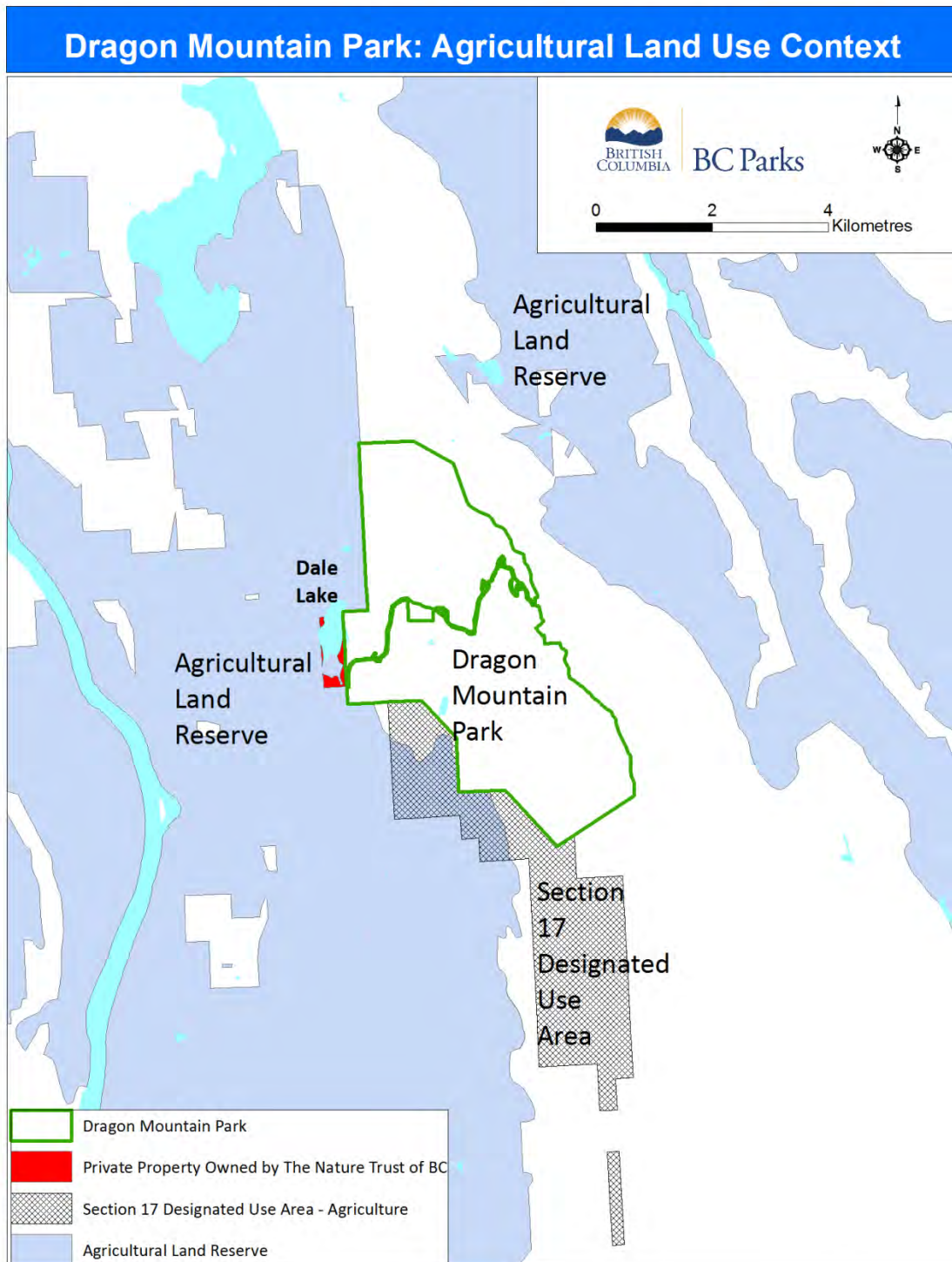


Figure 4: Map of Agricultural Land Use Context for Dragon Mountain Park

Dragon Mountain Park: Other Land Use Context

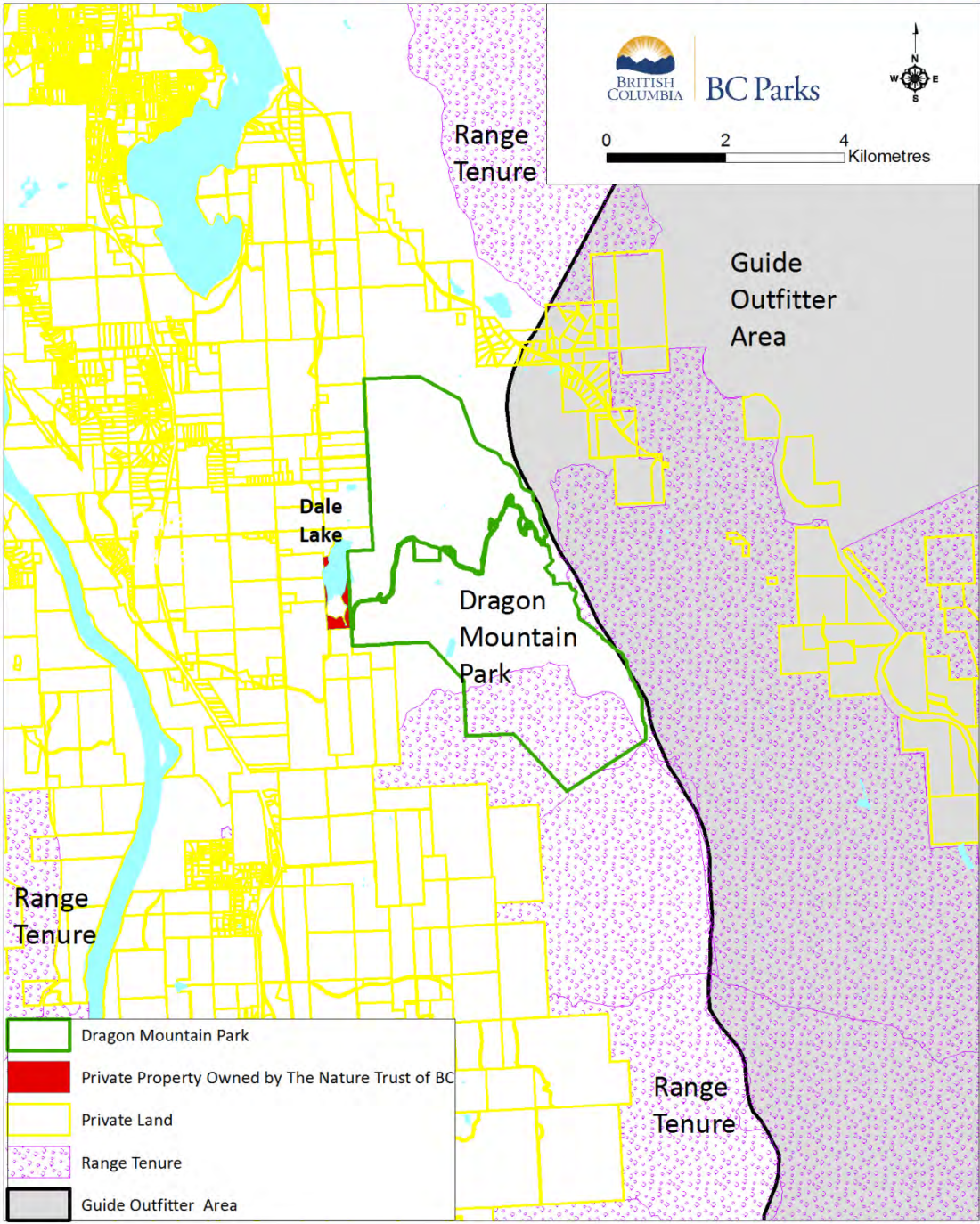


Figure 5: Map of Other Land Use Context for Dragon Mountain Park