

# MANAGEMENT PLAN

February, 1999



for Elk Lakes and Height of the  
Rockies Provincial Parks



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Environment,  
Lands and Parks  
BC Parks Division

Elk Lakes & Height of the  
Rockies Provincial Parks

MANAGEMENT  
PLAN

Prepared by  
BC Parks  
Kootenay District  
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*This management plan is a component of the Kootenay - Boundary Land Use Plan and was developed through direction received from the Kootenay -Boundary Land Use Plan.*

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes  
Provincial Parks

# Management Plan

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Plan Highlights</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
The Management Planning Process .....	2
Background Summary .....	4
Planning Issues .....	6
Relationship with Other Land Use Planning .....	9
<b>Role of the Protected Area</b> .....	10
Provincial and Regional Context .....	10
Significance in the Protected Area System .....	12
Conservation Role .....	13
Recreation Role .....	14
Cultural Role .....	15
Vision for Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes Provincial Parks .....	16
<b>Relationship with First Nations</b> .....	17
<b>Protected Area Zoning</b> .....	18
Introduction .....	18
Wilderness Recreation Zone .....	18
Natural Environment Zone .....	20
Special Features Zone .....	20
<b>Natural and Cultural Values Management</b> .....	21
Introduction .....	21
Land and Natural Resource Tenures .....	21
Park Tenures .....	21
Height of the Rockies Park Tenures .....	21
Elk Lakes Park Tenures .....	22
Adjacent Land Use/Tenures .....	22
Vegetation .....	23
Plant Communities .....	23
Range Management .....	24
Water .....	26
Fish Values .....	26
Wildlife .....	27
Cultural and Historic Values .....	29
Paleontological Values .....	30
Scientific Research and Education .....	31
<b>Outdoor Recreation Opportunities and Management</b> .....	32
Introduction .....	32
Hiking and Backpacking .....	33
Angling .....	34
Horse Use .....	35
Mechanized Activities .....	36
Hunting .....	37

Commercial Recreation .....	38
Outdoor Recreation Features .....	39
Aesthetic Values .....	40
Access Strategy.....	41
Management Services.....	42
<b>Communications</b> .....	43
Introduction .....	43
Marketing and Promotion.....	43
Pre-Trip Planning.....	44
Natural and Cultural Heritage Education .....	45
<b>Plan Implementation</b> .....	47
Introduction .....	47
Highest Priority Actions.....	47
Project Oriented Actions .....	49
Ongoing Monitoring Actions.....	52

### **Appendices**

A. Provincial Park System Goals.....	56
B. BC Parks Management Planning Zoning System Description.....	57
C. Kootenay/Boundary Land Use Implementation Strategy - Chapter 4 .....	62
D. Summary of Public Comments .....	68
<b>References Cited</b> .....	73

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Park Facilities Map .....	5
Figure 2. Regional Context Map.....	11
Figure 3. Park Zoning.....	19

### **List of Plates**

Plate 1. Mount Queen Mary .....	3
Plate 2. Fish fossil in Elk Lakes Park .....	10
Plate 3. Horseback riding at Queen Mary Lake .....	15
Plate 4. Petain Falls in Elk Lakes Park .....	17



# Plan Highlights

- This management plan incorporates the guidelines of the Kootenay-Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS).
- 98.45% of the combined area of both parks is zoned Wilderness Recreation.

Commitments for the management of natural values include:

- Conduct inventories and assessments for key park values; e.g., red and blue-listed species, fish and threatened plant communities;
- Develop specific management plans for mountain goats, fish, specific vegetation and range values;
- Develop a coordinated management approach with other government agencies for inside, and adjacent to, the parks' boundaries; and,
- Recognize the role of natural disturbances in maintaining natural ecosystem diversity.

Commitments for the management of cultural values include:

- Inventory and assess the cultural and archeological features in concert with First Nations and BC Archeology Branch; and,
- Adopt BC Archeological Assessment Guidelines whenever development may potentially disturb archeological resources.

Commitments for the management of the recreational values include:

- Retain existing level of facilities;
- Assess conditions and monitor the impacts of horse use to minimize impacts on natural values and other visitors;
- Ensure management of trailheads and other access; and,
- Restrict snowmobile and mountain bike use to the Abruzzi corridor, subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process Policy.

# Introduction

## The Management Planning Process

A management plan is a document created to guide a park's management for the future. It sets objectives and actions for conservation, development, interpretation and operation of the park. This plan relies on current information relating to park values obtained from the background report. Additional information is gathered from park managers, permittees, other government agencies, previous reports, public interest groups, First Nations and from the general public. It is important to be familiar with the background report to fully understand this management plan.

Preparation of a management plan involves a thorough analysis of the overall goals of the park, levels of use, and management objectives. Through this process, various options for managing the park are developed and assessed.

BC Parks prepares management plans with a high degree of public involvement. The general public and public-interest groups have opportunities to provide comments to BC Parks through a variety of means, including public meetings and mail-outs.

In the case of Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks, the management plan has been prepared by an independent consultant with direction and input from BC Parks staff. Additional information was gathered from the Kootenay-Boundary Land Use Plan (1995) and Implementation Strategy (1997) and Draft Management Direction Statement (1996).

Public consultation was conducted by BC Parks primarily through a series of open houses held in various communities near the parks. Most of the comments were provided through letters and comment forms that were received following these meetings. Details of the public consultation process are included in Appendix D.

The following management plan focuses on management issues, objectives and recommended actions. There are six main sections in this document:

- 1) Introduction - highlights planning issues and provides a background summary of the park.
- 2) Role of the Park and Vision Statement - Describes the importance of the park and the overall guiding principles for management.
- 3) Park Zoning - Establishes management zones in accordance with the *Park Act*.
- 4) Objectives and actions for managing the various natural and cultural values.

- 5) Objectives and actions for managing the various outdoor recreation opportunities and for providing information about the park.
- 6) Priorities for implementing the management actions.

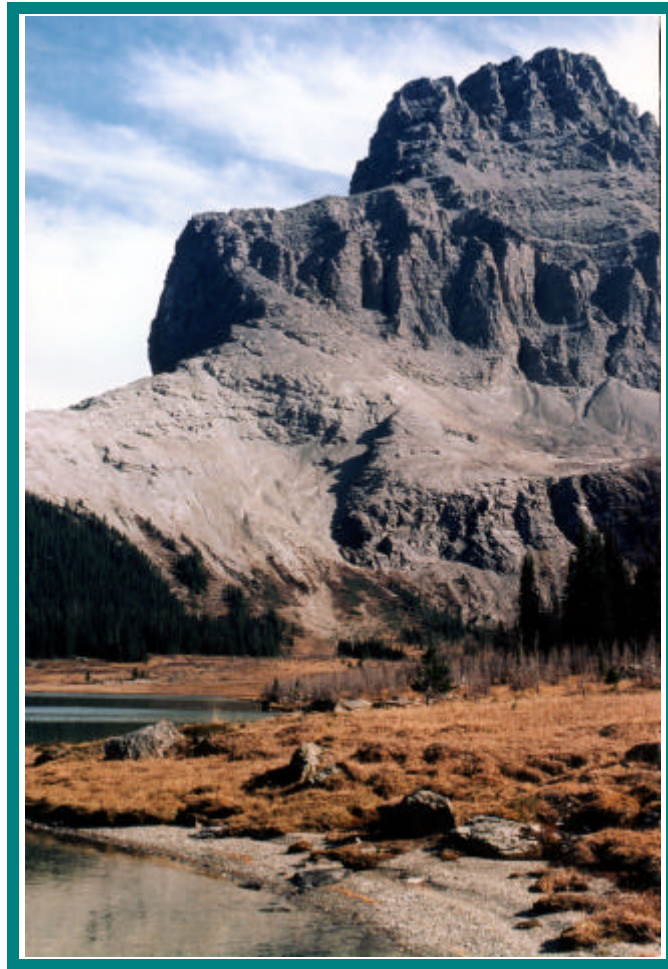


Plate 1 : Mount Queen Mary in Height of the Rockies Provincial Park

# Background Summary

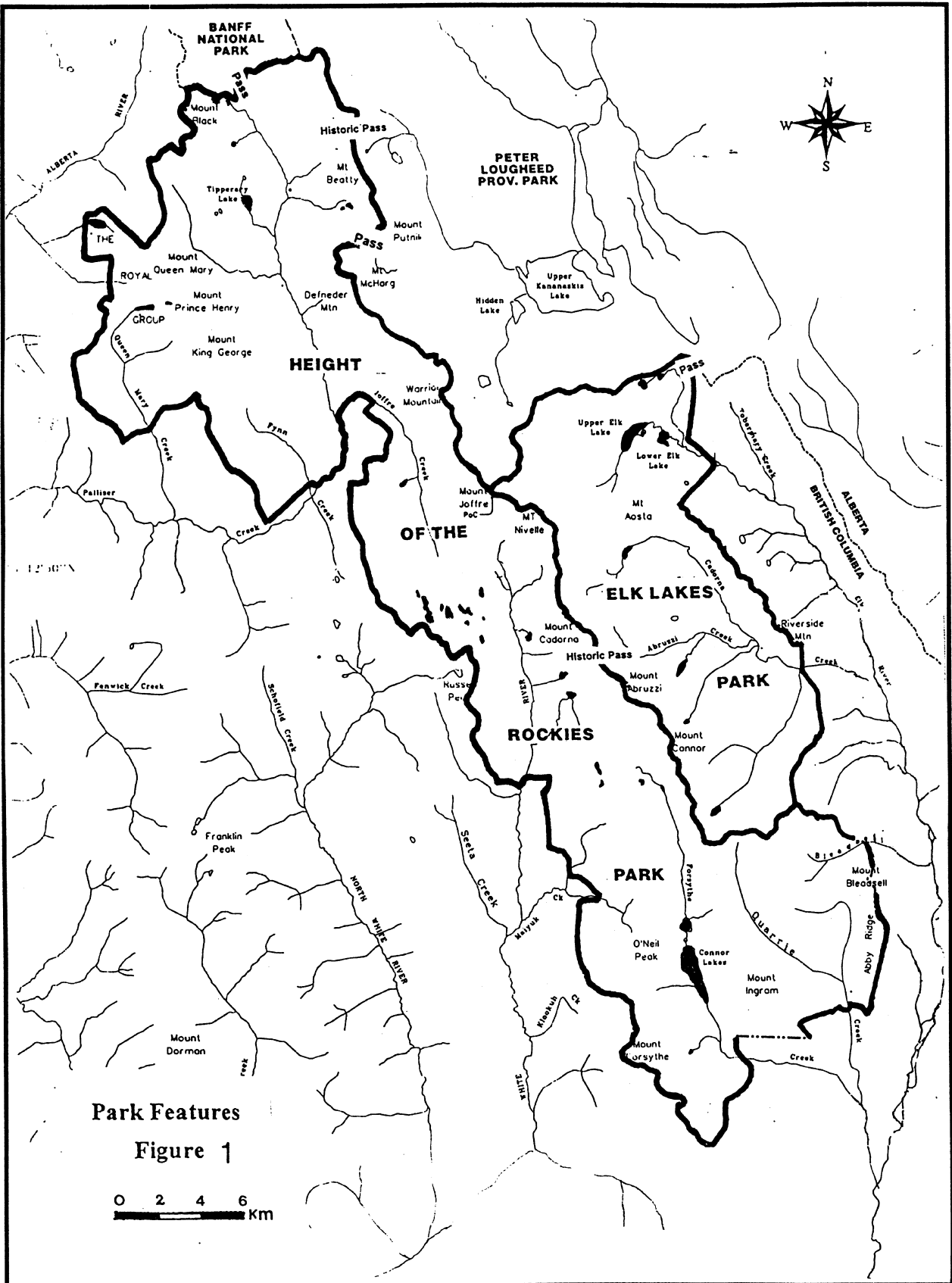
Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes parks protect 71,532 hectares of mountain wilderness located along the Great Divide on the British Columbia-Alberta boundary. The two parks border on Banff National Park and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park to the north in Alberta. Important features include 26 peaks over 3000 metres, over 60 alpine and sub-alpine lakes, 25 glaciers, extensive alpine meadow areas, valley bottom meadows, and several old growth stands. The area provides very high quality habitats for mountain goat and grizzly bear. It also protects habitat for black bear, bighorn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer and moose, along with a variety of small mammals, birds and fish. These parks play an important role in the representation of the Southern Rockies eco-section.

Elk Lakes Provincial Park provides day hiking, climbing and fishing with the greatest amount of use around the Upper and Lower Elk lakes. The Cadorna Creek area (formerly the Elk Lakes Recreation Area) and the Height of the Rockies Park provide opportunities for long wilderness backpacking and horse packing trips with lower levels of use. The first third of the Great Divide Trail - stretching from Connor Lakes to Mt. Robson Provincial Park - lies within Height of the Rockies Provincial Park.

The parks are generally sparsely developed with a few guide-outfitter camps, established trails, numerous wildlife trails and several primitive campsites. Elk Lakes Provincial Park has a walk-in campsite a few minutes walk from the trailhead.

Interest in the recreational and wildlife values of Elk Lakes began with the establishment of the White River and the Elk River Game Reserves in the 1920s. In 1955, a reserve on Crown land for recreation was established on 1555 ha around the Elk Lakes. The Elk Lakes Reserve became a Class A Park in 1973. In 1977, an assessment of Cadorna Creek resulted in the area becoming a Recreation Area in 1982. Class A Park designation occurred during the follow up to the Regional Land Use Planning Process in 1995. The first management plan for Elk Lakes Provincial Park was developed in 1976.

The history of establishing Height of the Rockies Provincial Park is more complex. In the 1970s the Palliser Wilderness Society, a group of diverse interests including ranchers, outfitters, hikers, horse users and hunters proposed that the Palliser Wilderness Area be established. It included all the high country from the south edge of Assiniboine Park to Brule Creek east of Elkford. A second proposal, involving a smaller area, led to the establishment of Height of the Rockies Wilderness Area in 1987. As the Forest Service administered this area they developed a detailed management plan in 1993. In 1995, the Height of the Rockies Wilderness Area became a Class A Park following the recommendation of the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Planning Process.



# Planning Issues

This Management Plan addresses a number of planning issues identified by BC Parks through previous land use planning processes and through consultation with other government agencies, First Nations, user groups, and the general public.

The former Height of the Rockies Wilderness Area was managed by the Ministry of Forests as a wilderness area "where human influence is substantially unnoticeable." (MOF, 1993) The former Elk Lakes Recreation Area was similarly managed with minimum trail maintenance and signage. Confirmation that these two areas should continue to be managed for wilderness and backcountry recreation was provided in the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS)

The overall challenge for the management of these two parks is to seek a balance between conserving and protecting important wilderness values while providing visitors with a high quality backcountry experience. The choice between emphasis on wilderness and conservation values or recreational and tourism use affects many aspects of planning and management. The following main issues have been identified.

## Natural Values Management:

### Wildlife

The parks play an important role in protecting wildlife populations and habitat while adding to the biodiversity and connectivity values of the Southern Rockies ecosystem. There is a need for current information on the numbers and the health of all the wildlife species that use these two parks, especially mountain goat and grizzly bear that have international importance.

Wildlife populations and habitat requirements transcend park boundaries. It is critical for the continued health and viability of the wildlife in these parks that cooperative management strategies are developed with adjacent land managers.

### Vegetation

Natural disturbances such as fire, disease and insect infestations are fundamental in maintaining ecosystem complexity. While allowing natural phenomena to occur without interference is consistent with wilderness management, this strategy contains an element of risk to facilities in the parks and to adjacent managed forest lands.

Height of the Rockies Provincial Park contains a number of low elevation alpine meadows. This habitat type is important for a number of wildlife species, is vulnerable to human impact and is not well represented in other protected areas.

## **Fisheries**

BC Parks must consider several issues relating to the fisheries values in these parks. These include the stocking of lakes, the removal of brood stock from Connor Lakes for the Kootenay Fish Hatchery, and the use of regulations and closures to ensure viable populations.

## **Boundaries and Access**

Several trails and trailheads in both parks are outside the parks' boundaries in areas administered by the Ministry of Forests. Cooperation among BC Parks, the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees is required in order to determine appropriate levels of access to the parks and the management of trails and trailheads beside the park boundaries.

It is also important to address the potential pressures that may arise from the imposition of new user fees and other restrictions in the national parks and anticipated fee in Alberta parks within the next two years.

## **Grazing**

One of the main impacts on the range resource is over-use by horses. Over-grazing has occurred in some areas as a result of inadequate horse management and sheer numbers of horses at popular camp locations.

## **Adjacent Land Management**

It is important to coordinate planning for commercial and non-commercial uses surrounding Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes parks to fully manage impacts. Equally important is the coordination of park management with land use planning outside the park. Currently there are plans to harvest the forests adjacent to the park as well as proposals to initiate the issuing of coal tenures in the upper Elk Valley.

## **Cultural and Archaeological Values**

These two parks have a rich First Nations and post-contact history; however, there has been relatively little research conducted in the area. First Nations traditional use and archeological sites need research and documentation.

## **Paleontological Values**

There are significant fossil deposits in Height of the Rockies Park and Elk Lakes Park. Management direction needs to ensure protection of these deposits in their current natural condition and undisturbed. The *Park Act* prohibits fossil collecting unless authorized by Park Use Permit for research or education purposes. Commercial and/or personal collecting is prohibited.

## **Visitor Management**

### **Levels and Types of Recreational Opportunities**

Although a wide range of potential recreational opportunities exists, it is important to maintain the natural undisturbed character of the parks' backcountry. Ensuring that recreation activities have minimal affect on the landscape, including minimizing interactions between visitors and wildlife, is a high priority.

### **Horse Use**

Horses have used the parks for a long time; however, horse use can damage trails and sensitive riparian areas. While horses provide an enjoyable way to see the parks, they can also conflict with other visitors, such as hikers. Care must be taken not to over-use areas or damage the parks' sensitive natural areas.

### **Mechanized Activities**

Mechanized forms of recreation, from helicopter access to snowmobiles and mountain bikes, have increased substantially in popularity, thus making it difficult to retain wilderness values. While air access is not permitted in either park except for management purposes, mountain biking and snowmobiling continue in portions of Elk Lakes Provincial Park.



## Relationship with Other Land Use Planning

Land use planning for land resources and conservation in the Kootenay-Boundary region of southeastern British Columbia entered a new era with the provincial government initiative to prepare a strategic land use plan, the Kootenay-Boundary Land Use Plan (KBLUP). A major component of this plan was the designation of various land uses, including protected areas, over the entire region. Although park and recreation area designations of Elk Lakes Park pre-date the KBLUP, it was through the land use plan that the Elk Lakes Recreation Area became a Class 'A' Park. Also, the boundaries of the former Height of the Rockies Wilderness Area changed and this area was designated Class 'A' at the same time.

In addition to allocating land use, the KBLUP also established land use management guidelines through an Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS). These guidelines help to integrate land use management with a variety of government strategic policies from the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* to the Provincial Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. They are intended to provide broad, corporate guidance to managing agencies. With respect to protected areas, the KBLUP-IS emphasizes the importance of cooperative management of values within both the parks and adjacent areas "to ensure that parks can effectively protect sensitive values contained within them." (KBLUP-IS) To this end, general management objectives and strategies associated with environmental, recreation and tourism values are provided for inclusion in park management.

The specific areas the KBLUP considers include:

- Park Planning
- Pre-Existing Tenures
- In-Holdings
- Natural Occurrences
- Park Management.

Details for each of these sections are in Appendix C and specific actions are in this management plan. The KBLUP-IS also defines, in general terms, the management emphasis for the parks. In the case of Height of the Rockies Park, management will emphasize a balance between conservation and backcountry recreation; for Elk Lakes Park, management will balance conservation with general recreation.

# Role of the Protected Area

## Provincial and Regional Context

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks lie in southeastern British Columbia in the Rocky Mountains, about 85 km southwest of Calgary, Alberta. They are flanked to the East by the Elk Valley and the Kananaskis Valley and to the West by the Park Ranges. The mountain ranges of the Kootenay District provide a wide diversity of natural values and recreation opportunities as evidenced by the numerous national and provincial parks in the District (Fig. 2). Over 16% of the land base in the East Kootenays is in protected areas.

- Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are a significant part of BC's system of protected areas. In conjunction with Banff National Park and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park in Alberta, they form a large, contiguous protected area that is rich in natural, recreational and cultural values. Also, these parks are critical links in the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y)<sup>1</sup>.
- The combined size of these two provincial parks contributes to the protection of biodiversity in the region and is integral to the conservation of wildlife populations, plant communities and biodiversity.
- These parks offer a wide range of top caliber wilderness recreation opportunities and outstanding features.



Plate 2 : Fish fossil in Elk Lakes Provincial Park

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<sup>1</sup> Proposal by Canada and U.S. conservation groups to create a thread of ecological connectivity linking protected areas in both countries from Yellowstone National Park to the Yukon.

# Kootenay District

## Regional Context

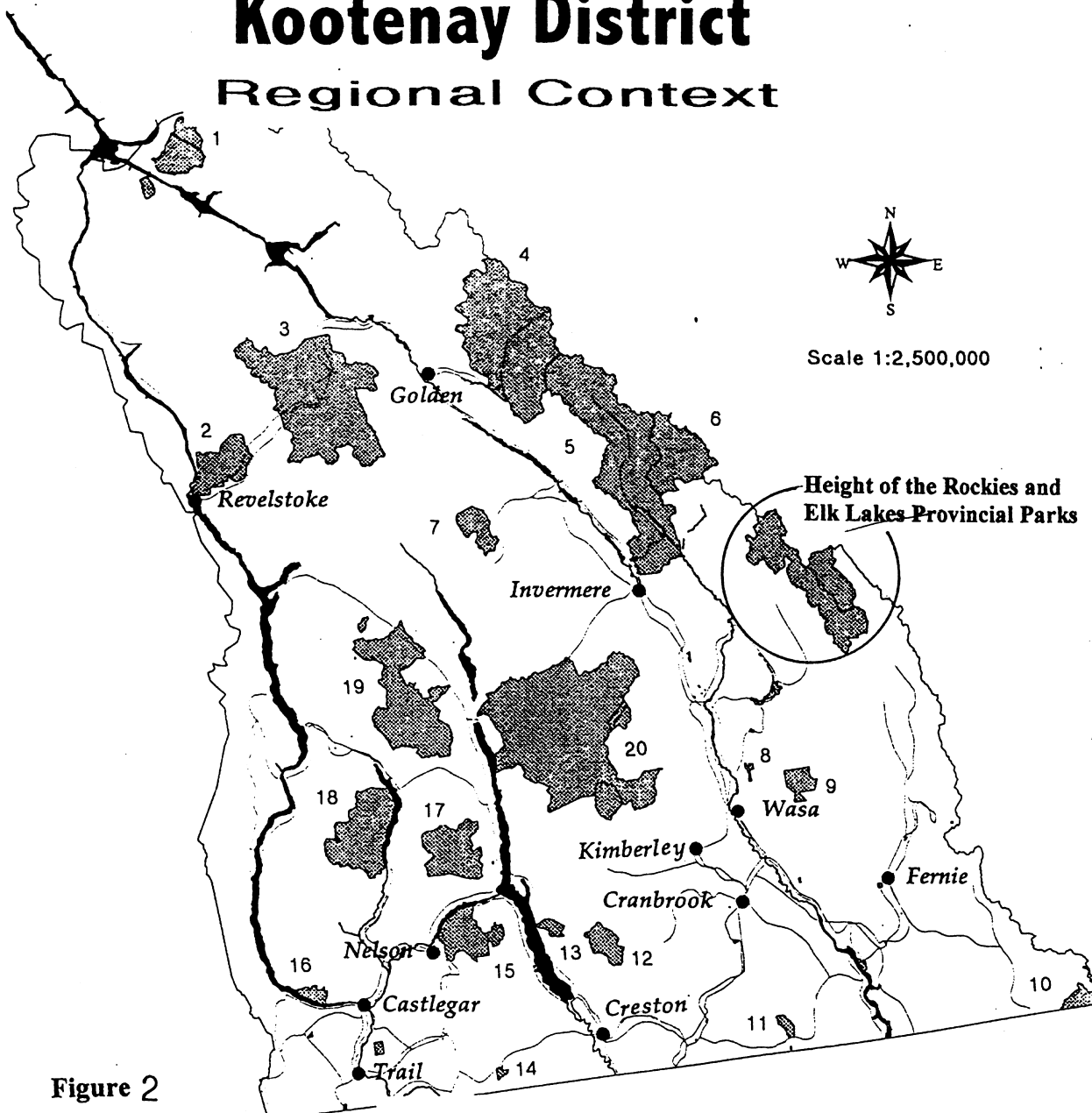


Figure 2

### Kootenay District Protected Areas

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Cummins Provincial Park            | 12. Kianuko Provincial Park                              |
| 2. Mt. Revelstoke National Park       | 13. Lockhart Creek Provincial Park                       |
| 3. Glacier National Park              | 14. Nancy Greene Provincial Park                         |
| 4. Yoho National Park                 | 15. West Arm Provincial Park                             |
| 5. Kootenay National Park             | 16. Syringa Provincial Park                              |
| 6. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park  | 17. Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park                      |
| 7. Bugaboo Provincial Park            | 18. Valhalla Provincial Park                             |
| 8. Premier Lake Provincial Park       | 19. Goat Range Provincial Park                           |
| 9. Top of the World Provincial Park   | 20. Purcell Wilderness Conservancy and St. Mary's Alpine |
| 10. Akamina-Kishenina Provincial Park |  |
| 11. Gilnockie Provincial Park         |  |

# Significance in the Protected Areas System

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are a significant part of BC's system of protected areas. In conjunction with Banff National Park and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park they form a contiguous area that is rich in natural, recreational and cultural values.

- These parks represent five percent of the Southern Park Ranges Ecosection and four percent of the Border Range Ecosection.
- These parks are considered to have some of the highest wildlife values in the Canadian Rocky Mountains.
- They also protect some of the most spectacular scenery in the Rocky Mountains.
- They form an important connector that preserves critical wildlife movement corridors from the Southern Rocky Mountains to the Central Rocky Mountains.
- The combined size of these two parks contributes to the protection of biodiversity in the region and is integral to the conservation of wildlife populations, plant communities and biodiversity.
- They offer a wide range of top caliber wilderness recreation opportunities and outstanding features such as the high peaks of the Royal Group of mountains and the Connor Lakes area .
- Upper and Lower Elk lakes are outstanding outdoor recreation features unrivaled by any other areas in the Southern Rocky Mountain ecosystem except for Mount Assiniboine Park.
- They form critical links in the international Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) conservation initiative.
- Connor Lakes, in Height of the Rockies Provincial Park, is the single source of brood stock for Westslope cutthroat trout in the interior of the province.
- The fossils in the parks are of potentially national significance.

# Conservation Role

BC Parks has two conservation goals:

**Goal 1 Representation** - *ecosystem representation of the natural ecosystems of British Columbia*

**Goal 2 Special Features** - *the conservation of the best provincially significant natural, recreation and cultural features (Appendix A).*

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks contribute to both goals, specifically:

- Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes contribute significantly to the protection of ecosystem and biological diversity of the South and Border Park Ranges ecosections. Three of the provinces biogeoclimatic zones are found here, including the Engelmann-Spruce Subalpine Fir zone (ESSF), the Alpine Tundra zone (AT), and the Montane Spruce zone (MS).
- According to the Protected Areas Strategy analysis, these areas contribute to the representation of high elevation areas within the Southern and Border Park Ranges Ecosections. They also play an important role as part of the Southern Rocky Mountain ecosystem, as they form a contiguous trans-boundary system of protected areas.
- These parks support rich and diverse wildlife values. One of the highest densities of mountain goats in the world is believed to be found in these parks. They also provide high quality habitat for grizzly bear and elk. The grizzly bear population in these parks is of special significance due to its high density and adjacency to populations in Alberta, where their viability is of special management concern.
- The pure strain of Westslope cutthroat trout resident in Connor Lakes has special conservation importance. The fry may be stocked over a wide range of interior lakes. The stock is especially suited to alpine lakes. Pure stocks of Westslope cutthroat trout are provincially significant as introductions of hatchery produced rainbow trout have hybridized with resident cutthroat.
- These parks play an important role in conserving the critical wildlife movement corridors of the Southern Rocky Mountain ecosystem.
- Nationally significant special features include the Upper and Lower Elk lakes area and possibly fossils.

# Recreation Role

BC Parks has four recreation goals (Appendix A):

- Goal 1**      **Tourism Travel Routes** - *to provide park attractions and services which enhance the province's major tourism routes*
  
- Goal 2**      **Outdoor Recreation/Holiday Destination** - *to provide park attractions that serve as or enhance outdoor recreation holiday destinations in key areas across the province*
  
- Goal 3**      **Backcountry** - *to provide outstanding backcountry adventure recreation experiences across the province*
  
- Goal 4**      **Local/Regional Recreation** - *to ensure access to local outdoor recreation opportunities for all residents of the province*

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks contribute to backcountry and local/regional recreation goals by providing visitors with an outstanding backcountry wilderness experience. Specifically:

- Horse trips of several days are possible using a network of trails in the Palliser, Joffre, Middle White, Forsythe and Maiyuk creeks. Trips through these areas can extend into Banff National Park (via Palliser Pass) and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park (via North and South Kananaskis passes).
  
- The first third of the Great Canadian Divide Trail, extending from Connor Lakes to Mt. Robson Provincial Park, lies within Height of the Rockies Provincial Park.
  
- Good quality fishing is available in several lakes in the area and in some of the major creeks and rivers. Big game hunting and viewing opportunities for mountain goat, big horn sheep, elk, moose, mule and white-tailed deer and grizzly bear are also part of the attractions of these parks.
  
- Mountain climbing in the Royal, Military and Italian Groups is also important due to the large concentration of high altitude peaks.

## Cultural Role

BC Parks plays an important role in protecting cultural heritage features in the province. Although there are no known archeological sites, Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks contribute to protecting cultural values by preserving an area that is important to First Nations and Canadian Rockies exploration history. Specifically:

- Several historic passes such as Pass in the Clouds and North Kananaskis Pass;
- Historic First Nations hunting areas such as the White River and Cadorna Creek; and,
- Numerous unclassified historic trails.



Plate 3 : Horseback riding at Queen Mary Lake

## Vision for Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes Provincial Parks

Being clear about the long-term vision helps to guide what should be done in the short-term. The Vision Statement is an important guide for reacting to changing demands for recreation or for incorporating new approaches to conservation management. This Vision Statement for Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks looks 20 years into the future to set the tone for how the parks may differ from what they are today.

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks will continue to be known in the future as primarily wilderness parks. They form an important part of a contiguous network of protected areas within the Southern Rocky Mountains ecosystem and link habitat and wildlife corridors from south to north. As a result of 25 years of research, monitoring, assessment and education, a solid information base is generated. This allows for the management of dynamic ecosystems with negligible evidence of human influence. Wildlife values remain high given efforts to ensure connectivity between habitats inside and outside park boundaries. A close working relationship has developed with a variety of agencies, First Nations and community groups who have become partners in the management of parks. This has fostered a strong sense of stewardship, pride and achievement across all sectors of the community.



# Relationship with First Nations

With the emergence of treaty negotiations in British Columbia and the growing awareness of aboriginal rights, BC Parks has begun to forge relationships with First Nations across the province. The provincial park system contains cultural and natural values that are highly significant to First Nations. Some parks are important as sources of natural medicines and foods or as sacred sites. BC Parks needs to consider the traditional knowledge and concerns of First Nations. To this end, a staff member of the Ktunaxa Traditional Use Study was contracted in 1996 to compile existing traditional use information for the parks in the East Kootenay. For Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes Parks there was little information available.

Two First Nations tribal councils (Ktunaxa/Kinbasket and Shuswap) have included Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks within their asserted traditional territory. The 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 the traditional uses of First Nations people. While direct consultation with tribal council representatives on the management plan was requested, limitations of time and resources have prevented First Nations from participating. However, this management plan provides a foundation upon which continued relationships between BC Parks and First Nations' tribal councils are based.



Plate 4: Petain Falls in Elk Lakes Provincial Park

# Protected Area Zoning

## Introduction

BC Parks uses zoning as a tool to assist in the planning and management of a provincial park. In general terms, zoning divides a park into logical units for management. It applies uniform and consistent management objectives based on natural, cultural and recreational values, and existing and projected patterns of access and recreation use in relation to specific conservation goals. The zones reflect the intended land use, the degree of human use, level of management and development permitted. The spectrum includes five zoning options: Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment, Special Feature, Wilderness Recreation and Wilderness Conservation. The BC Parks Zoning Policy is in Appendix B.

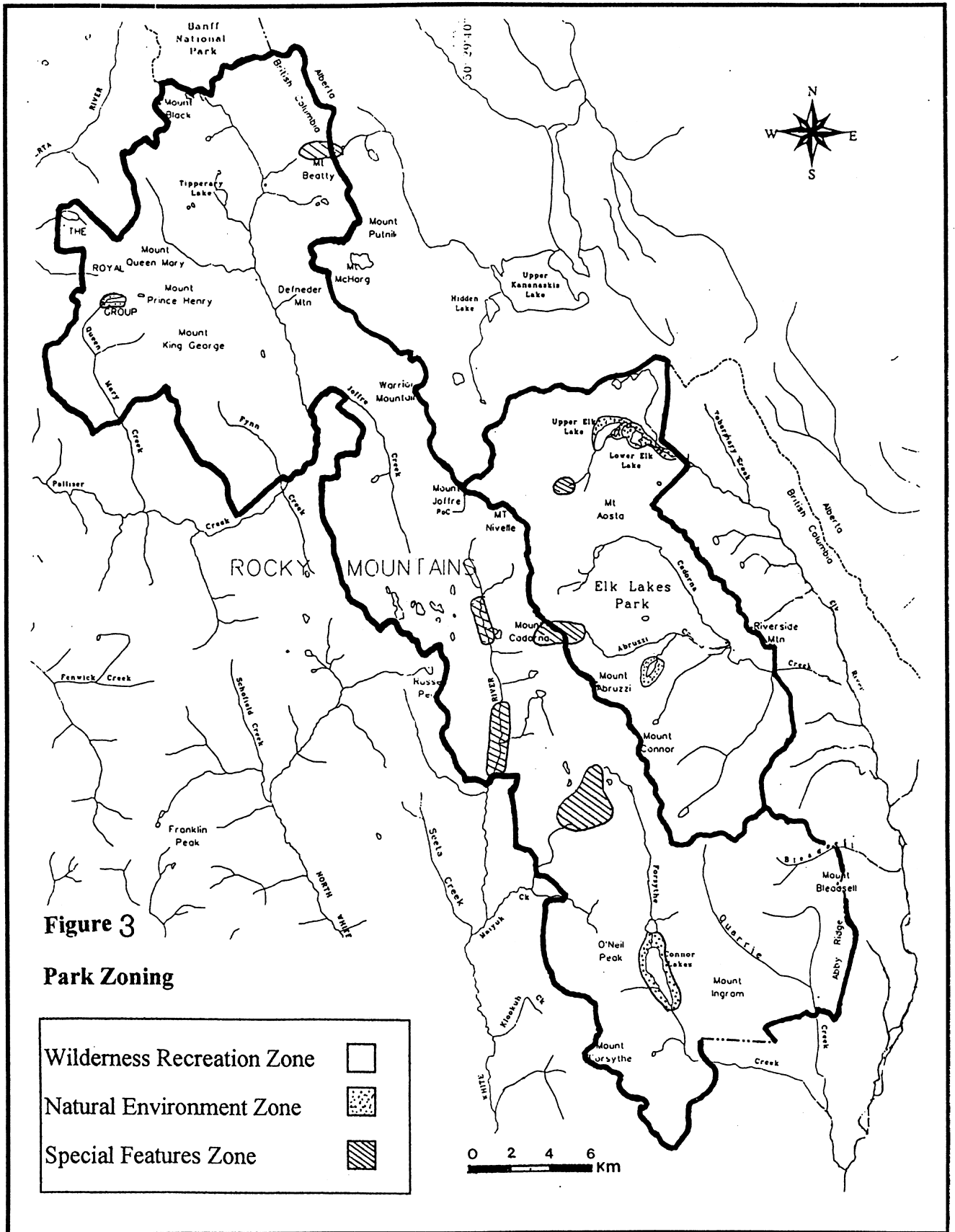
Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are separated into three management planning zones (figure 3): Wilderness Recreation Zone, Natural Environment Zone and Special Features Zone.

## Wilderness Recreation Zone




The intent of this zone is to place a high priority on conserving the natural environment while providing some level of backcountry use that is consistent with its wilderness atmosphere. Facility development is minimal, at a level sufficient to satisfy user needs and to protect the overall environment of the park.

Areas zoned Wilderness Recreation are large natural areas where natural ecological processes occur largely uninfluenced by human activity. Low levels of recreational use are permitted but evidence of human presence is confined to specific primitive facilities and sites. The Wilderness Recreation Zone encompasses approximately 98.45% of the parks.

While large portions of these parks are essentially unmodified, the presence of facilities and the significant hunting occurring in many areas, prevent them from being considered for the Wilderness Conservation Zone designation. The Wilderness Recreation Zone allows for the continuation of dispersed, traditional recreational activities and primitive support facilities for horse packing, guided outfitting, hunting, fishing, backpacking and hiking. Areas of the parks with high grizzly bear activity are included in this zone to reduce the potential for bear and human conflict through low levels of use and facilities. Although snowmobiling has occurred in the Abruzzi Creek area for many years it is a non-conforming use of this zone that has been made subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process and review.



**Figure 3**  
**Park Zoning**

Wilderness Recreation Zone	
Natural Environment Zone	
Special Features Zone	

The objective of this zone is to provide for a variety of recreational activities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. The intent is to ensure that the activities and facilities do not dominate the natural setting and to provide for a higher level of recreation use than is provided for in the Wilderness Recreation Zone.

In Height of the Rockies Provincial Park, the Natural Environment Zone encompasses an area around Connor Lakes and Queen Mary Lake. This designation is intended to reflect the current level of use at this site, including the number of horse parties, hikers, anglers, cabins and campgrounds found here.

In Elk Lakes Provincial Park, the Natural Environment Zone surrounds the Elk Lakes area and Abruzzi Lake. This designation is due to the level of facility development, recreational use and ease of access. Although Lower Elk Lake has very easy access, higher use levels and a little higher standard of development than the rest of the park, this area is used by inexperienced visitors as an introduction to backcountry recreation. The use of the Natural Environment Zone in this case is not only to reflect the management needs of the area but to facilitate a transition to the Wilderness Recreation Zone. The Natural Environment Zone covers approximately .05% (350 ha) of Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks.

## **Special Features Zone**

The objective of the Special Features Zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values. Management emphasizes a high level of protection and ongoing monitoring and limits facilities to those used for interpretation.

The Special Features Zone protects several alpine and valley meadows, Petain Falls, two historic passes and areas encompassing fossil features. The latter feature will be managed as a Special Features Zone once identified through the proposed inventory. The location of fossils will be kept confidential to protect them from being removed from the park. Although Upper and Lower Elk lakes are special features, recreational use by visitors precludes them from being managed as a Special Features Zone.

The Special Features Zone for known features covers about 1.5% or 1100 ha of the parks.

# Natural and Cultural Values Management

## Introduction

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks have long been recognized as outstanding wilderness areas. The high profile of these parks, the significance of their natural values and an increasing demand for backcountry recreation suggests that these parks must be protected and managed wisely. The parks play an important role in protecting wildlife populations and habitat while adding to the biodiversity and connectivity values of the Southern Rocky Mountains ecosystem. To this end, the following section sets resource management objectives and describes the actions to protect these natural values and processes.

## Land and Natural Resource Tenures

### Park Tenures

There are a number of pre-existing tenures and rights issued in these parks, including guide-outfitting, trapping, grazing, mineral and gas tenures. Also, the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) holds a province wide tenure for mountain guiding covering BC Parks throughout the province including Elk Lakes and Height of the Rockies provincial parks. The only area in both parks not included in a guide-outfitting territory or range tenure is the Middle Fork of the White River.

The Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan required that the legal rights of pre-existing tenure holders and landowners within newly established parks in the region be recognized and that their interests be dealt with fairly (Appendix C). Some tenures that were not compatible with protected areas such as timber and minerals were to be discontinued through negotiation under provincial policy respecting resource rights compensation while others were permitted to continue in accordance with the existing management conditions attached to those tenures.

### Height of the Rockies Park Tenures

Height of the Rockies Adventure Company Ltd. operates in the Palliser and Joffre Creek drainages and at Queen Mary Lake and Ralph Lake. This guide-outfitting company provides commercial guiding services, including big game hunting, pack trips, nature viewing and photography, and angling under Park Use Permit. Elk Valley Bighorn Outfitters provides similar services under permit in the Forsyth, Quarrie and Bleasdel Creek drainages of the park. Use of the range in these areas associated with guide-outfitting, is authorized by a tenure issued under the *Range Act* and administered by the BC Ministry of Forests in consultation with BC Parks.

Trapping permits have been issued for the Palliser River, the Middle Fork of the White River and the Forsyth/Quarrie/Bleasdel Creek drainages. Other tenures include portions of six mineral claims which overlap the boundary of the park.

### **Elk Lakes Park Tenures**

Elk Valley Bighorn Outfitters also provides a range of guide-outfitting services in Elk Lakes Provincial Park; mostly in the Cadorna Creek area. The only other tenure is a trapping license that covers the entire park. There are no mineral tenures.

### **Adjacent Land Use/Tenures**

Both parks have forest harvesting occurring in the adjacent forest land as well as tenured coal-bearing land just outside park boundaries. Exploration for coal in this vicinity has been dormant in recent years; in fact, one area adjacent to Elk Lakes Park has had its coal rights reserved to the Crown since 1974. Government has started a process to assess the need for continuing to reserve these coal rights. Removal of the reserve would make the large belt of coal bearing lands along the eastern boundaries of the parks available for tenure acquisition and possible evaluation (exploration). The likelihood of any site advancing to the development stage in the future is unknown at this time.

In addition to tenures, land use in areas adjacent to the park is governed by resource management zones and guidelines established in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS). Portions of the western boundary of Height of the Rockies Park and the southern boundary of both parks are bounded by a Special Management Zone where greater emphasis on retaining conservation values is to be considered. One of the purposes of these Special Management Zones was to maintain a north to south regional connectivity corridor linking the protected areas in the vicinity to other important habitats in the region. East to West connectivity was also recognized in the KBLUP-IS although Special Management Zones were not established. The rest of the park boundaries are adjacent to Integrated Resource Management zones and Coal Enhanced Resource Development zones.

In order to manage the park values in the context of surrounding land uses, BC Parks must work cooperatively with other park managers (i.e. Alberta Natural Resources and Parks Canada) as well as the BC Ministry of Forests, BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, BC Environment and First Nations in the management of park values, both within the parks and outside their boundaries.

### **Objectives:**

To recognize historic uses.

To minimize the impacts of park tenures.

To discontinue non-conforming tenures

To work with adjacent land managers to minimize the impact of adjacent land use on park values.

To work within local planning processes to minimize impact on areas adjacent to the park that have high natural, cultural and recreation values.

### **Actions:**

- Authorize current trapping and guide outfitting operations by issuing Park Use Permits for these activities, associated structures and spike camps.
- Acquire trapping rights as they become available.
- Discontinue mineral claims in accordance with provincial government policy on resource rights compensation.
- Participate in coordinated management planning to address the impact on park values of industrial activities in adjacent resource management zones.

## **Vegetation**

### **Plant Communities**

There are four plant communities of note in Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks.

Valley bottom meadows found in the White River and Cadorna Creek are important ecological and scenic features. These meadows offer superb vistas, diverse plant growth and are important habitat for wildlife. They have historically been used by hunters and guide-outfitters for grazing their horses.

Secondly, extensive alpine meadows and lush avalanche paths are found in such areas as Sylvan Pass, the slopes adjacent to Mt. Queen Mary and Mt. King George in the Royal Group, the southerly flanks of Mt. Sir Douglas, and at higher elevations in Quarrie and Cadorna Creeks. These communities are important habitat for grizzly bears.

Thirdly, mid-elevation forests of fir and spruce are the most prevalent communities providing the main setting for the park and habitat for most of the parks' wildlife. Fourthly, there is a blue-listed (at risk) plant species in Elk Lakes Park. Slender Paintbrush (*Castilleja gracillina*) can be found on Elkan Creek.

Like most of the Rocky Mountains, the forests here have experienced fire many times. A massive fire in 1936 burned most of the forests in the south end of Height of the Rockies Park while remnant old forests can be still found around the Elk lakes, Cadorna Creek, the upper end of the White River, Joffre and Queen Mary Creek. Natural ecosystem processes affecting vegetation like fire, insects, disease, weather (wind, avalanches etc.), and grazing by wildlife, are recognized as natural occurrences shaping vegetation. Managing ecosystems will be required to maintain ecosystem processes in as natural a state as possible. A high level of information and understanding of these natural processes is essential.

## **Range Management**

Open meadows of the park are used for forage by wildlife and park visitors' horses. Management of range in these parks is divided between two jurisdictions. The management of grazing license areas, tenured at the time the parks were designated, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Forests under the *Range Act* and the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act*. Untenured range in the parks is the management responsibility of BC Parks. This condition, established by the KBLUP at the time the parks were designated, recognized the economic importance of continued range use by guide-outfitters. It also acknowledged the Ministry of Forests' historic and statutory role in managing range in the former Height of the Rockies Wilderness Area. The BC Ministry of Forests - Invermere Forest District developed a Range Use Plan (1997) for the grazing tenures in the Palliser area. It identifies range and other resource values as well as strategies for sustainable grazing. A Protocol Agreement between the BC Ministry of Forests and BC Parks is also in place to facilitate inter-ministry cooperation in the management of range.

One of the main impacts on range is over-use by horses. Over-grazing has been observed in some areas as a result of inadequate horse management and sheer numbers of horses at popular camp locations. Appropriate watering facilities, monitoring watering regimes and changing management practices such as salting<sup>1</sup> need to be considered to maintain healthy and productive plant and wildlife communities.

## **Objectives:**

To maintain natural plant communities for their inherent value and for their contribution to the diversity of wildlife habitats and visual and recreation attractions of these parks.

To protect rare, endangered and sensitive native plant communities and species as they are identified and to prevent the establishment of non-native species.

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<sup>1</sup> A technique of using salt blocks to control grazing stock but also used to attract wildlife which alters their natural behavior.



To maintain the parks' natural forage and range resources in a natural condition.

To maintain forage for wildlife and range use.

### **Actions:**

- Complete a vegetation inventory to locate, identify and map plant communities, rare species and threatened plant communities in the Special Features Zones, Natural Environment Zones and areas that could potentially be impacted by recreation.
- Prepare a vegetation management plan for the above mentioned areas that will identify management strategies for specific issues such as insect infestation, disease, and blowdown, in consultation with other agencies.
- Prepare a fire management plan that defines the role of these natural disturbances in the maintenance of natural ecosystem diversity. This plan will also consider fire history, natural fire regimes, impacts of suppression, historical use of fire by humans, concerns of other agencies and values in need of protection.
- In the interim, until the fire management strategy is prepared, undertake an initial attack on all wildfire by either Ministry of Forests or BC Parks to control the fire until the situation is assessed. The fire may be allowed to run its natural course as long as it meets landscape biodiversity objectives, and visitors, adjacent commercial forests and park facilities are not in danger. The intent is to allow natural fires that occur under normal environmental (non-extreme) conditions to run their natural course. Use of mechanized heavy equipment will not be permitted.
- Retain wildlife trees except where there is a hazard to visitors or facilities.
- Apply low impact horse management practices such as hobbling<sup>2</sup> and use of supplemental feed for all horse-packing groups. Limit the number of horses in a group where/when necessary.
- Encourage the use of processed feed.
- Work with the Ministry of Forests to develop a range use plan that includes Elk Lakes Park.
- Monitor and assess the presence of noxious weeds.

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<sup>2</sup> To fasten together the legs of a horse to prevent straying.

- Monitor and evaluate periodically the effectiveness of the Range Use Plans in cooperation with the Ministry of Forests. The guidelines may be modified, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of this plan.
- Reconsider the practice of salting in cooperation with the Ministry of Forests.

## **Water**

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks lie within the Kootenay River watershed. They are drained by the Palliser River, the Middle Fork of the White River and the headwaters of the Elk River. The area accumulates a considerable snowpack in the winter. It functions as an important water source in summer for areas further down in the Kootenay River system, particularly the dry-belt zone of the Southern Rocky Mountain Trench.

There are over 60 alpine and sub-alpine lakes in these two parks. These range from larger mid-altitude lakes such as the Connor Lakes in the southeast, to smaller high altitude lakes such as the Westside lakes in the White River drainage.

### **Objective:**

To maintain the quality of water in the parks.

### **Actions:**

- Ensure recreational activities have minimal impact on erosion of surface materials and do not compromise water quality.
- Assess and manage use to ensure proper disposal of human waste.
- Ensure sanitary facilities are properly designed and located.

## **Fish Values**

Fish species in Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes Parks include cutthroat trout, rainbow trout and bull trout. A cutthroat trout fishery is found in the Middle White River. The major lakes such as Connor Lakes and Upper and Lower Elk lakes are self-sustaining fisheries while the numerous smaller alpine lakes such as Frozen Lake and Driftwood Lake have been stocked by BC Environment over the past 40 years. Little is known about the current state of the fisheries in the parks.

The pure stock of Westslope cutthroat trout (indicated by DNA testing) in Connor Lakes is an important source of brood stock for the Kootenay Fish Hatchery, which supplies lakes throughout the Kootenays. Connor Lakes were originally surveyed in the 1950's and

found to be barren of fish. In 1952 they were stocked with cutthroat trout and have since become a self-sustaining fishery. Removal of brood stock began in 1971 and has continued every other year through a Transplant License issued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This is the only source of Westslope cutthroat trout brood stock in the interior of the province.

BC Parks must consider several fish values issues, including the continued stocking of lakes; the removal of brood stock from Connor Lakes for the Kootenay Fish Hatchery; the management of resident and introduced fish stocks; and the use of regulations and closures to ensure viable populations.

### **Objective:**

To maintain and enhance natural fish habitat.

### **Actions:**

- Conduct inventories of indigenous and resident fish populations as required in concert with BC Environment.
- Assess the stocking of lakes in the parks in concert with BC Environment to determine which lakes should continue to be stocked. In the interim continue to stock Upper and Lower Aosta lakes, Deep Lake, Driftwood Lake, Duck Lake, Frozen Lake, Riverside Lake and Monument Lake.
- Ensure the parks' sanitary facilities are non-polluting.
- Authorize the continued use of Connor Lakes as a source of Westslope cutthroat trout through Park Use Permit subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Policy.

### **Wildlife**

These parks are home to significant populations of every big game species native to the Southern Canadian Rocky Mountains, including elk, mule and white-tail deer, moose, big horn sheep, wolf, wolverine, lynx, cougar, black and grizzly bear. Grizzly bears are a blue-listed (at risk ) species provincially, but recent DNA research in the parks indicates that grizzly bears are abundant and not at risk in this area. The parks also contain what is believed to be one of the largest, most densely populated mountain goat areas in the world but, as with most wildlife species in these new parks, there is very little inventory information to confirm their significance or determine management requirements. There is a need for current information on the habitat and the health of all wildlife species for these parks and in addition, an assessment of the significance of the grizzly bear and mountain goat populations.

BC Parks undertakes management activities in support of provincial, national and international wildlife initiatives. Memoranda of Understanding are in place with BC Environment for the cooperative management of shared wildlife resources, procedures for setting hunting regulations and procedures for setting freshwater fishing regulations. However, in provincial parks the conservation of viable, natural wildlife populations, their habitat and ecological processes that affect them will always take precedence over their use by people.

### **Objectives:**

To maintain the natural diversity of wildlife species and habitat, with special consideration given to rare, endangered or threatened species.

To contribute to the maintenance of opportunities at the regional level for genetic interchange between populations inside and outside the parks.

To increase the knowledge and understanding of wildlife and their habitat requirements both inside and outside the parks' boundaries.

To encourage research aimed at a better understanding of mountain goats and grizzly bears.

To keep wildlife wild and natural with its behavior altered as little as possible by human impacts.

### **Actions:**

- Develop a wildlife inventory of key species including red and blue-listed species and mountain goats.
- Develop a coordinated long term approach to wildlife management with other government agencies including BC Environment, BC Ministry of Forests, Parks Canada, First Nations and Alberta Natural Resources, with emphasis on the following key elements:
  - habitat improvement, nuisance wildlife, transplantation;
  - access, connectivity and range management;
  - coordinating wildlife management objectives.
- Develop a separate wildlife management plan for mountain goats including determining the requirements for sustaining viable populations.
- Investigate opportunities to establish grizzly bear benchmarks for scientific study and management.

- Encourage the assistance of volunteers to collect wildlife data with BC Parks Observation Cards; e.g., bird watching clubs, anglers etc.
- Manage bear/human conflict in accordance with the BC Parks' Bear-People Conflict Prevention Plan
- Ensure the protection of rare, endangered and at risk species from visitor impacts.

## **Cultural and Historic Values**

Although only preliminary archeological work has been done in the two parks, there is abundant evidence of prehistoric occupation suggesting human presence in the East Kootenays for at least 10,000 years. In more recent times, the Ktunaxa made use of this area for hunting and as a route to buffalo hunting areas on the prairies. The Elk Lakes area was also frequented by the Stoney Indians in the late 19th century. They hunted in the area and named many of the surrounding peaks.

Prior to the arrival of the Stoneys, the sole inhabitants of the Southern Rockies were the Ktunaxa. Written history of the area dates back to the arrival of David Thompson in 1811, when he established a trading post near Invermere. In 1858, John Palliser came over the North Kananaskis Pass to the river that now bears his name. At the turn of the century, W.D. Wilcox explored the area extensively, and wrote an article for the 1902 edition of National Geographic Magazine detailing his trip through what is now Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks.

The next visitors to the area were members of the British Columbia/Alberta boundary survey in 1916. The lure of unclimbed summits soon attracted mountaineers and by 1919, the three highest peaks had been climbed.

These two parks have a rich First Nations and post-contact history; however, there has been relatively little archeological research conducted in the area. Aboriginal use, early exploration, and historic trail use need to be better understood.

### **Objectives:**

To gain a better understanding of the pre and post-contact history associated with the parks.

To locate important cultural heritage sites and ensure their protection.

To work with First Nations, other government agencies and Alberta Natural Resources to ensure First Nations access to important cultural heritage sites.

## **Actions:**

- Protect 'in situ' important features, sacred sites and archeological sites. To protect them from damage they will not be identified on any park literature.
- Adopt the BC Archeological Assessment Guidelines whenever development plans for other resources have the potential to disturb archeological sites.
- In concert with First Nations, inventory the cultural and archeological features in the parks.
- Work with First Nations and the Heritage Conservation Board in managing the archeological and heritage resources in the parks.

## **Paleontological Values (Fossils)**

Fossil deposits have been reported in Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks, although little information exists about their nature and location in the parks. A few have been photographed. Most information on the fossils consists of anecdotal accounts from long time users of the parks. These accounts suggest that some of the fossils could be nationally significant. Management direction is required to determine the significance of the fossils and ensure these deposits are maintained in their current natural condition and not disturbed. Although fossil collecting is prohibited by the *Park Act* these valuable features are vulnerable to collectors.

## **Objectives:**

To determine the significance of these fossils.

To encourage a better understanding of the geological history of the area through research.

To protect and maintain the fossil deposits in a natural condition.

## **Actions:**

- Inventory the main fossil features in the parks and assess their significance.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the location of fossils for their protection.
- Assess the threat to fossil features by natural forces such as erosion or by public extraction.

- Develop preventive measures (i.e. monitoring, education and enforcement) to address the threat of extraction or impacts.

## **Scientific Research and Education**

We know little and need to know more about these parks. Knowledge of the details of the natural and cultural values is critical to meaningful management. As these parks are situated next to a World Heritage Site (the four Rocky Mountain National Parks), Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park in Alberta, there are excellent opportunities for collaboration and cooperation in the fields of research , education and management.

### **Objectives:**

To encourage approved scholarly research relating to the archeological and cultural history of the parks.

To encourage multi-agency cooperation in the field of protected areas planning and management.

To promote education and conservation through increasing understanding of the natural and cultural values of the park.

To encourage study of the parks as comparative benchmarks for monitoring ecological change.

### **Actions:**

- Work with local colleges, universities, other agencies and corporate sponsors to establish funding and appropriate and timely research opportunities such as inventory and monitoring.
- Limit scientific research which involves collecting specimens by the specific terms of a research permit.

Ensure that any material that is collected for scientific research will remain the property of the Province of British Columbia, regardless of where it is stored.

# Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Management

## Introduction

The natural features of Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks provide a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities. However, these activities must be carefully managed so that they are compatible with the parks' zoning; are not detrimental to the natural and cultural values; are consistent with visitors' expectations; and respect the Vision Statement of this management plan.

Both of these parks have benefited from previous management direction that is largely consistent with the management objectives and actions identified in this management plan. Previous planning documents emphasize the importance of maintaining the remote, wilderness qualities of the park while allowing for established commercial and non-commercial recreational activities.

As backcountry parks, Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks fulfill wilderness seekers' backcountry expectations in a relatively undisturbed wilderness setting. The sense of solitude and mountain scenery is an integral part of the attraction to this area. It is important to maintain the natural, undisturbed character of the parks' backcountry and a high priority will be placed on ensuring that recreation activities have minimal impact on the landscape. As well, minimizing interactions between visitors and wildlife, particularly grizzly bears, will be a priority.

In maintaining a high quality wilderness recreation experience, values must be assessed and use monitored and managed to ensure that recreation does not affect the environmental and social integrity of the area and the experience itself. In cooperation with local residents, guide-outfitters and recreational users, BC Parks must assess the impact of recreation activity on the parks and their resources.

Both public and commercial recreation activities are well established uses in Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks. Early settlers engaged in recreational guiding and guiding continues to provide a safe commercial recreation experience that enhances many visitors' enjoyment of the parks. It is important for BC Parks to balance public and commercial recreation use to ensure fairness of access to the parks and to protect the natural values that contribute to the recreation experience.

This section of the management plan describes the strategies for managing outdoor recreation, park visitation and providing park information. It will consider:

- 1) Providing opportunities for people to experience the park in ways that are compatible with park features;



- 2) Providing outdoor recreation activities in such a way that there are minimal conflicts between user groups; and
- 3) Providing the tools for creating public awareness of and respect for the natural and cultural values in the parks.

## **Hiking and Backpacking**

These parks offer a variety of hiking opportunities, from short day hikes (Elk lakes area), to backcountry trips (Cadorna Creek, Sylvan Pass), to rigorous wilderness excursions (the Canadian Great Divide Trail). In addition to the marked trails, there are many more unmarked game trails and routes that crisscross these parks. Very few trails are maintained and those who use these parks should be experienced in backcountry travel.

In Height of the Rockies Provincial Park there are two cabins, one at Queen Mary Lake and another at Connor Lakes, where most visitors stay overnight. There are fire pits and pit toilets located at these sites that support some tent camping. Camping also occurs at primitive campsites scattered throughout the park.

In Elk Lakes Provincial Park there are four areas where tent camping is permitted. Three are located in the vicinity of Elk Lakes and another at Abruzzi Lake. These campgrounds range from developed, with pit toilets and tent pads, to primitive, with no facilities. Because the campsite at Lower Elk lakes is only one kilometre from the trailhead parking lot, this area of the park is used as an introduction to the backcountry for the inexperienced visitor.

The campgrounds located at the Elk Lakes receive the most use of both parks. Campground attendance has averaged 239 parties per year between 1988-1995. Observation of public use suggests that use levels and facilities for both parks appear to be appropriate for the foreseeable future.

Backcountry visitors, especially to remote and difficult areas, need to be independent, self-sufficient and self-reliant. For their protection they need to be fully aware of the potential hazards. For example, interactions between park visitors and grizzly bears can result in harm to both the visitor and the bear. Backpackers should be aware of appropriate bear avoidance behavior and identification of prime grizzly habitat to reduce the chances of encountering a grizzly bear.

As backcountry visitors increase, public safety, search and rescue and low impact use will become a concern.

## **Objectives:**

To provide a variety of backcountry and wilderness camping opportunities dependent on a wilderness environment.

To enhance the backcountry visitors' awareness of natural features, wilderness etiquette, cultural setting, techniques for respecting bear habitat and avoiding bear encounters.

To assess and monitor impact of backcountry visitors on natural and cultural values.

## **Actions:**

- Limit camping and overnight accommodation facilities to what is already developed.
- Maintain routes and trails, as prescribed by zoning.
- Close, relocate or improve trails as required if bear and visitor safety problems arise.
- Assist outfitters with trail problems and relocation on user maintained trails.
- Assess conditions and monitor backcountry visitor numbers and destinations to protect natural values in accordance with the Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring (BRIM) Policies.
- Educate visitors about minimum impact camping at all sites in the park to avoid site degradation and minimize human-bear conflicts.
- Encourage the use of portable campstoves instead of open campfires to reduce the potential of forest fires.

## **Angling**

The lakes, rivers and streams in these two parks offer a number of angling opportunities. Connor Lakes in Height of the Rockies Park contains a pure stock of Westslope cutthroat trout and is also used as the brood stock for the Kootenay Fish Hatchery. Cutthroat trout are also found in the Middle White River. Several of the high elevation lakes in this park have been stocked with trout in the past.

As the parks and the angling opportunities found in their lakes and rivers become more well known and other fisheries outside the parks become over-fished, the pressure on these parks may increase. Management of this activity will be very important in order to protect valuable fish stocks.

## **Objective:**

To provide angling opportunities for park visitors without detriment to fish populations.

## **Actions:**

- Monitor human use of fish resources through recreation surveys and information from other agencies. If any changes are required they will be implemented by managing access to the area and by fishing regulations.
- Manage natural fish stocks in collaboration with BC Environment, First Nations and anglers.
- Provide information on fishing regulations to park visitors.

## **Horse Use**

Historically, horses have been an important means of travel for both commercial operators and members of the public in Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks. Given this traditional role, horse use continues to be an acceptable use in both parks. The *Park Act* permits horse use only in areas designated by signs for horse use.

Horses can do damage to trails and wet areas and can create conflict with other users such as hikers. Care must be taken not to over-use areas or damage the parks' sensitive natural areas.

## **Objectives:**

To provide a variety of horseback recreational opportunities that minimize impact on the environment and conflicts with other users.

## **Actions:**

- Identify and sign areas in the parks that are designated for horse use.
- Assess conditions and monitor the impact of horse use in accordance with the Backcountry Recreation Impact (BRIM) Policies to minimize impacts on natural values and the visitor experience. Criteria such as limited entry permits, limits on horse numbers, camp facilities, forage availability and timing will be used. Trails may be relocated around recurring problem areas and during certain conditions (extended periods of rain, soft conditions after a late thaw) to prevent trail damage.

- Consider trail closures to minimize environmental degradation and impacts on wildlife.
- Prepare and provide information on established horse use and travel to minimize conflict between users.
- Relocate horse tethering areas and corrals away from all lakes, creeks and rivers to protect sensitive riparian areas.

## **Mechanized Activities**

Although some mechanized activities such as floatplanes, ATV's, snowmobiles, motorized boats and mountain bikes are accommodated in some provincial parks in British Columbia, mechanized activities are generally not compatible with the wilderness nature and land use intent of protected areas. Some mechanized recreation (snowmobiling and mountain biking ) has occurred over a number of years along the old seismic road in the Abruzzi Creek corridor. As the area has now become a provincial park, the impact of these uses needs to be considered for the conservation of park values.

Although snowmobiling is very popular with local residents, its impact on park values is the subject of debate. Proponents claim impacts are non-existent or negligible given winter conditions; however, snowmobiles are known to have impacts on wildlife values in other areas. A comprehensive study of mechanized uses and the impact of snowmobiles in the Abruzzi Creek corridor is needed to determine the most appropriate management.

### **Objectives:**

To minimize the impact of snowmobiling and mountain biking in Elk Lakes Provincial Park.

To seek alternative mechanized recreation opportunities outside the parks.

### **Actions:**

- Restrict mountain bikes to the old seismic road in Cadorna Creek.
- Monitor and assess the impact of continuing snowmobile and mountain bike use in the Abruzzi Creek corridor (seismic road) through the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process Policy, including an impact assessment of these uses on wildlife values.
- Prohibit all forms of mechanized recreation in all other areas of Elk Lakes Provincial Park and Height of the Rockies Provincial Park.
- Prohibit the use of motorized watercraft on all lakes in the parks except for expressed management purposes only.

- Initiate an interagency review of mechanized recreation in the Elk Valley to determine options for accommodating these activities.

## **Hunting**

These parks are home to populations of big game species native to the southern Canadian Rockies. Consequently, the area is popular for hunters. There is open season for bighorn sheep, elk, deer and black bear; limited entry hunting permits for mountain goat, grizzly bear, black bear, mule deer and moose in both parks. Non-resident harvest is managed using quotas for the two registered park guide-outfitters on bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose and grizzly bear.

Those First Nations who have an aboriginal or treaty right to hunt for sustenance or ceremonial purposes may do so in all provincial parks, subject to conservation requirements and public safety concerns.

BC Parks must manage hunting conservatively to ensure healthy wildlife and predator populations. The Wildlife Branch of BC Environment works with BC Parks to manage the wildlife in the area and has special concerns in relation to mountain goats and grizzly bears. A spectrum of management techniques is used, including open seasons, limited entry permits, hunting closures, archery season and motor vehicle restrictions.

### **Objectives:**

To manage wildlife in the parks using sound and accepted wildlife management principals.

To maintain healthy wildlife populations while providing for conservative hunting opportunities.

### **Actions:**

- Assess, monitor and regulate hunting in cooperation with BC Environment, First Nations, guide-outfitters, hunters, and special interest groups to ensure healthy wildlife populations and habitats are maintained.
- Obtain updated wildlife data in order to manage for healthy populations and appropriate hunting levels.
- Adjust harvest levels according to fluctuations in wildlife populations, including natural predators.
- Review proposed changes with First Nations, guide-outfitters and recreational hunters.

## **Commercial Recreation**

Presently, most of the commercial recreation activities in Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are provided by the tenured guide-outfitters. Commercial activities include big game hunting, horse packing trips, hiking, photography, angling and wildlife viewing. Although guided outfitting has traditionally been limited to hunting, the outfitters have diversified their activities to adjust to changing client preferences and to lengthen their operating seasons and increase their revenue potential. The Middle Fork of the White River in Height of the Rockies Provincial Park is the only area in both parks that has no tenured commercial recreation. This contributes to the diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Guide-outfitting is an established activity that has been a long standing traditional use in the parks. Previous planning processes (KBLUP and previous management plans) have established that it continues to be an acceptable use in these areas subject to review through the management planning process. With the rapid growth in commercial backcountry recreation in recent years, it is expected that there will be a growing demand for commercial services in these parks. It is important to ensure that recreation services do not adversely affect park values.

### **Elk Lakes Provincial Park**

Elk Valley Bighorn Outfitters provides guiding services in the Cadorna Creek portion of the park in the summer and fall. The guide-outfitter has a base facility on the Elk River near the confluence of Cadorna Creek. Summer clients are taken into the camp in Cadorna Creek and are taken on day trips from this site. The outfitter occasionally makes hiking trips into the Elk Lakes area and in the fall operates hunting camps in each of the major drainages in the park.

### **Height of the Rockies Provincial Park**

Elk Valley Bighorn Outfitter's operate in the Quarrie, Bleasdell and Forsyth Creek basins. Height of the Rockies Adventure Company Ltd. operates at Queen Mary and Ralph lakes and in the Palliser and Joffre Creek drainages. Both operations have expanded from their original focus on hunting trips to fishing and horseback trips in the summer season. These trips now account for over 50% of their client base.

### **Objectives:**

To continue to provide commercial guide and outfitting services within acceptable limits of impact.

Encourage stewardship of park resources by all commercial users.

## **Actions:**

- Authorize pre-existing commercial recreation tenure holders by Park Use Permit.
- Retain the Middle Fork free of commercial recreation activities.
- Work with existing tenure holders to develop a stewardship program and code of conduct.
- Limit new commercial recreation services to low impact proposals that do not require infrastructure to be located in the park, in accordance with the KBLUP-IS.
- Conduct BC Parks Impact Assessment process for new recreation services.

## **Outdoor Recreation Features**

The natural scenery and large landscapes with little sign of human impact are a key recreation feature of these two parks. Outstanding scenery, including the high peaks of the Royal Group; the Limestone lakes; the Upper Middle Fork Valley; and the Castlneau and Petain glaciers offer top-caliber recreational opportunities. Trail rides and backpack trips of several days are popular, using a network of trails in all of the major drainages in the parks. Fishing and big game hunting opportunities are also a part of the attractions of these parks. In winter there are opportunities for ski touring, although little use occurs presently.

These combined features provide visitors with a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities; however, all are affected by the conservation goals of the park. The amount of recreation at any one site will vary with the site's ability to support a given recreational activity. Consequently, management prescriptions will vary according to environmental sensitivity.

## **Objective:**

To ensure that recreation promotion, development and use are compatible with the conservation objectives for the parks' natural features and values.

## **Actions:**

- Manage the parks according to the Wilderness Recreation, Natural Environment and Special Features zoning requirements. These include natural areas, solitude, high quality natural features and varied recreational opportunities.

- Undertake the BC Parks Impact Assessment process for major recreational developments, including archaeological impact assessment.
- Establish capacity and limits of use through research and monitoring and in consultation with park users.

## **Aesthetic Values**

The natural scenery and untouched panoramic vistas offered in these two parks are fundamental to the visitor's experience. Views from the high elevation passes (North Kananaskis and Palliser Passes, the Middle Fork of the White River), and at many of the lakes (Queen Mary, Connor, Upper and Lower Elk) are outstanding, and rival any offered in the adjacent World Heritage Site (encompassing the four mountain national parks and adjacent BC provincial parks). Almost all the views of the Royal and Italian Group of peaks are spectacular. Views at lower elevations and away from the lakes tend to be restricted due to forest cover. The facility development in these two parks is limited and concentrated in specific areas, yet trails, campsites, and bridges create visual impacts within the parks. Management activities outside the parks can also affect the quality of visual or scenic values in the parks. Cooperative management strategies are required to lessen these impacts.

### **Objectives:**

To minimize human-caused changes to the views in the parks so that the visual qualities and wilderness nature of the parks are retained and to minimize the visual impact of activities outside the parks.

### **Actions:**

- Locate and design all park facilities in harmony with the visual setting and in accordance with park zoning objectives.
- Provide input to the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees to help ensure, through the Forest Development Plan Review Process, that views outside the park boundary are managed in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act*.
- Work with other agencies to minimize the visual impact of adjacent uses on the parks.

## **Access Strategy**

The opportunity for a wilderness experience depends, in part, on how access is managed. Access management helps define the type, impact, distribution and amount of use. It is also important to maintain the wilderness qualities of the park and keep visitor numbers



low. These two parks are accessed by ground transportation. Air access is not compatible with wilderness values. Access to the two parks is as follows:

### **Elk Lakes Provincial Park**

There are four accesses to the park. A good quality Forest Service road runs up the Elk Valley to the park boundary at Lower Elk Lakes. Access to Cadorna Creek is via an old seismic road that branches from the Elk Valley road. The first three kilometers of this old road have become a trail and are on Forest Service land outside the park. Access from Alberta is from a trailhead at Kananaskis Lakes which goes through Elk Pass to Upper Elk lakes. The last access to the park is from Height of the Rockies Park through a high elevation pass near Mount Cadorna.

### **Height of the Rockies Provincial Park**

There are seven trailheads and four mountain passes accessing Height of the Rockies Provincial Park. The main trailheads are located at Forsyth and Quarrie Creek via trails that begin close to the Elk Valley Road. The first few kilometers of the trails into both basins are through Crown lands outside the parks. No trailhead facilities have been developed. Access to the Middle Fork is via logging road from Whiteswan Lake.

Several trails and most of the trailheads in both parks are located outside the parks' boundaries in areas administered by the Ministry of Forests. Consequently, it is important that BC Parks and the Ministry of Forests work together to determine appropriate levels of access to the parks as well as the management of trails and trailheads on lands adjacent to the park boundaries.

Lands to the north of Elk Lakes Provincial Park and to the north and east of Height of the Rockies Provincial Park are managed by Alberta Natural Resources (Peter Lougheed Provincial Park) and Parks Canada (Banff National Park). Coordination between these agencies is critical for effective access management. It is also important to address the potential for increased pressures that may arise from the recent imposition of new user fees and other restrictions in the national parks and similar changes that are anticipated in Alberta Parks within the next two years.

### **Objective:**

To provide access to the parks from existing access points.

### **Actions:**

- Develop a protocol between the Ministry of Forests and BC Parks concerning the management of trails and trailheads on Crown lands that provide access to the parks.

- Encourage cooperative management with the adjacent National and Alberta parks.
- Use registration boxes and visitor surveys at access points to monitor users' experiences and social conditions regarding access issues.
- Prohibit all forms of motorized access except for management purposes and as provided for in this management plan.

## Management Services

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are administered from BC Parks Kootenay District Office, located in Wasa, BC. Staff ensure that various management responsibilities are carried out according to the *Park Act* and the *Park and Recreation Area Regulations* and the established policy and procedures of the Ministry. This includes such priorities as regulating public use to ensure safe and appropriate use of the park; maintaining trails and facilities; managing permits for commercial uses and research within the park; minimizing impacts from visitor use; conducting environmental rehabilitation and management projects; continuation of First Nation traditional uses and collecting data on the parks' natural and cultural values.

### Objectives:

To carry out management responsibilities according to the *Park Act*, *Park Act and Recreation Area Regulations* and the guidelines of this management plan.

To develop a close working relationship with other agencies and First Nations.

### Actions:

- Liaise on a regular basis with groups representing park users and commercial operators to ensure that the park management concerns benefit from the greatest possible input.
- Consult with First Nations on the actions that affect their traditional use.
- Continue to provide a seasonal ranger program with periodic winter patrols as funding allows.
- Use volunteers where possible to enhance park management.
- Continue to prepare Park Annual Operating Plans to determine the annual management requirements of the parks, including the management actions to be implemented.

# Communications

## Introduction

Providing current information about provincial parks is an important aspect of visitor service management. Information about the parks will serve a number of functions. Firstly, it will assist visitors in planning their visit. Secondly, this information will promote outdoor etiquette, respect for the natural environment and careful appreciation of the wide variety of values found within the park. Thirdly, it will foster an awareness of the cultural and conservation values and features of this area.

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes are primarily wilderness parks which provide opportunities for recreation in semi-primitive and primitive settings. They offer challenges to the backcountry enthusiast who enjoys an experience in a rugged and remote area. The information provided about these parks will reflect their wilderness recreation emphasis.

## Marketing and Promotion

Promotion of a park can affect the level of use and the type of visitors it attracts. Consequently, promotion strategies must be consistent with the management plan of the parks.

The conservation significance and wilderness values of the parks must be incorporated in strategies for marketing. There are concerns that promoting backcountry recreation can lead to significant increases in visitors, which in turn can affect park resources and wilderness qualities. As a result, care must be taken in the type of promotion and marketing programs undertaken. An aggressive marketing campaign is not appropriate for these parks.

In addition to BC Parks, operators and tourism agencies promote the parks. Coordination is needed to ensure that promotional information is consistent, accurate and in keeping with park objectives, and that marketing is consistent with the role of the park and objectives of the management plan.

### Objectives:

To ensure that promotion and marketing is consistent and appropriate for these wilderness parks.

To portray the parks' role in conserving important habitats and biodiversity.

To provide accurate and appropriate information for low impact backcountry recreation opportunities.

## **Actions:**

- Work with commercial operators, tourism associations and the media to portray the park in an appropriate manner and create expectations fitting of a wilderness park.
- Work with commercial operators through a code of conduct to develop a coordinated approach in advertising so as to not unduly promote the park.
- Use an informal approach to promoting and advertising the park.
- Create an information strategy that will focus on maintaining low backcountry use levels.

## **Pre-trip Planning**

Awareness and pre-trip planning information can help to set expectations and influence attitudes and behaviors. Specific information on pre-trip planning can be found at the BC Parks District Office in Wasa, BC. Printed brochures detailing the park resources, facilities, trails and safety considerations can be found at BC Tourism Infocentres.

Due to the variable climate, rugged nature and remoteness of this park, visitors are urged to be especially vigilant in their pre-trip preparations. They are encouraged to seek additional information, including weather reports, and to register their departure and return times at the District Office. Communications from within the park are limited and rescue services are not readily available.

## **Objectives:**

To provide consistent, current and accurate information to visitors to plan their trip to the park.

To clearly indicate to visitors and other tourism outlets that the rugged and remote nature of this park requires special pre-trip planning considerations.

## **Actions:**

- Work with local communities and tourism associations in providing appropriate pre-trip planning information.
- Ensure brochures on Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are current and accurate.

- Maintain the natural character of the park by limiting any signage to where it is necessary for visitor safety or the protection of sensitive sites.
- Prepare information for backcountry visitors which describes the natural and cultural features of the parks, wilderness recreation etiquette and safety, low impact camping, wildlife viewing techniques, and ways of avoiding bear encounters. The focus will be on pre-trip planning as much as possible.
- Work with National and Alberta Parks to coordinate park information to ensure public information is current and accurate.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Education

These parks represent wilderness areas that protect significant recreation, cultural and natural values. They play an important role in sharing information about the natural processes and features and cultural history that are unique to this area. They also represent several unique themes that could be explored in an education or research program. These include:

**Natural Heritage:** regional landscapes, role of the parks in the Southern Rocky Mountains ecosystem, conservation biology.

**Cultural Heritage:** archeological significance of specific sites in the parks, role in First Nations culture, early explorers and travelers, role in guide-outfitting history.

**Wilderness Recreation:** opportunities available in the park, outdoor safety, wilderness and conservation ethics, human waste disposal, horseback riding etiquette.

### Objective:

To share information about the natural, recreational and cultural features and values in the park in order to foster and maintain appreciation and understanding of their significance and the importance of protecting these features and values.

To interpret the cultural heritage for the public's appreciation and education.

### Actions:

- Ensure that research relating to the role of First Nations in the parks involves First Nations peoples and the Heritage Conservation Branch. Research opportunities will require a Park Use Permit.
- Produce education and information brochures on the themes described above. In concert with First Nations, develop and present information on aboriginal cultural heritage features and themes of the park.

# Plan Implementation

## Introduction

This section compiles all of the actions listed throughout this management plan and lists them according to the priority they will receive.

The first list includes the Highest Priority Actions. These highlight actions that require attention in the near future.

The second list is the Project Oriented Actions. These are the actions that are a specific task or project. Park staff will review this list for upcoming budgets and annual work plans.

The third list is the On-going Monitoring Actions, which describes the actions that require on-going or monitoring types of tasks or projects. This list will be reviewed by park staff to ensure that the overall intentions of this management plan are being followed.

Implementation of actions in this management plan is dependent on available financial and staff resources. Approval of this plan does not automatically constitute approval of funding for implementation.

## Highest Priority Actions

- Authorize current trapping and guide-outfitting operations by issuing Park Use Permits for these activities, associated structures and spike camps.
- Participate in coordinated management planning to address the impact on park values of industrial activities in adjacent resource management zones.
- Work with the Ministry of Employment and Investment and BC Environment to minimize the impact of coal extraction on park values.
- Complete a vegetation inventory to locate, identify and map plant communities, rare species and threatened plant communities in the Special Features zones, Natural Environment zones and areas that could potentially be impacted by recreation.
- Prepare a vegetation management plan for the above mentioned areas that will identify management strategies for specific issues such as insect infestation, disease, and blowdown in consultation with other agencies.

- Prepare a fire management plan that defines the role of these natural disturbances in the maintenance of natural ecosystem diversity. This plan will also consider fire history, natural fire regimes, impacts of suppression, historical use of fire by humans and values in need of protection. Prepare this plan in conjunction with other agencies.
- Apply low impact horse management practices such as picketing and use of supplemental feed for all horse-packing groups. Limit the number of horses in a group where/when necessary.
- Authorize the continued use of Connor Lakes as a source of Westslope cutthroat trout through Park Use Permit subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process.
- Develop a wildlife inventory of key species including red and blue-listed species and mountain goats.
- Develop a coordinated long term approach to wildlife management with other government agencies including BC Environment, BC Ministry of Forests, Parks Canada, First Nations and Alberta Natural Resources with emphasis on the following key elements:
  - habitat improvement, nuisance wildlife, transplantation;
  - access, connectivity and range management; and,
  - coordinating wildlife management objectives.
- Develop a separate wildlife management plan for mountain goats, including determining the requirements for sustaining viable populations.
- Investigate opportunities to establish grizzly bear benchmarks for scientific study and management.
- Inventory the main fossil features in the parks and assess their significance.
- Assess the threat to the fossil features by natural forces such as erosion or by public extraction.
- Relocate horse tethering areas and corrals away from all lakes, creeks and rivers to protect sensitive riparian areas.
- Monitor and assess the impact of continuing snowmobile and mountain bike use in the Abruzzi Creek corridor (seismic road), through the BC Parks Impact Assessment process policy, including an impact assessment of these uses on wildlife values.
- Prohibit all forms of mechanized recreation in all other areas of Elk Lakes Provincial Park and Height of the Rockies Provincial Park.

- Authorize pre-existing commercial recreation tenure holders by Park Use Permit.
- Work with the Ministry of Forests to develop a range use plan that includes Elk Lakes Park.

## **Project Oriented Actions**

- Acquire trapping rights as they become available.
- Monitor and assess the presence of noxious weeds.
- Reconsider the practice of salting in cooperation with the Ministry of Forests.
- Discontinue mineral claims in accordance with provincial government policy on resource rights compensation.
- Conduct inventories of indigenous and resident fish populations as required, in concert with BC Environment.
- Assess the stocking of lakes in the parks in concert with BC Environment to determine which lakes should continue to be stocked. In the interim continue to stock Upper and Lower Aosta lakes, Deep Lake, Driftwood Lake, Duck Lake, Frozen Lake, Riverside Lake and Monument Lake.
- In concert with First Nations, inventory the cultural and archeological features in the parks.
- Inventory and monitor campsite use in accordance with the Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring Policy. Education and regulations will be used to ensure compliance with management objectives.
- Educate visitors about minimum impact camping at all sites in the park to avoid site degradation and minimize human-bear conflicts.
- Limit camping and overnight accommodation facilities to what is already developed.
- Assess conditions and monitor backcountry visitor numbers and destinations to protect natural values in accordance with the Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring (BRIM) Policies.
- Discourage campfires and encourage the use of portable campstoves.
- Provide information on fishing regulations to park visitors.



- Assess conditions and monitor the impacts of horse use in accordance with the Backcountry Recreation Impact (BRIM) Policies to minimize impacts on natural values and the visitor experience. Criteria such as limited entry permits, limits on horse numbers, camp facilities, forage availability and timing will be used. Trails may be relocated around recurring problem areas and during certain conditions (extended periods of rain, soft conditions after a late thaw) to prevent trail damage.
- Prepare and provide information on established horse use and travel to minimize conflict between users.
- Restrict mountain bikes to the old seismic road in Cadorna Creek.
- Prohibit the use of motorized watercraft on all lakes in the parks except for expressed management purposes.
- Initiate an interagency review of mechanized recreation in the Elk Valley to determine options for accommodating these activities.
- Obtain updated wildlife data in order to manage for healthy populations and appropriate hunting levels.
- Adjust harvest levels according to fluctuations in wildlife populations, including natural predators.
- Review proposed changes with First Nations, guide-outfitters and recreational hunters.
- Work with existing tenure holders to develop a stewardship program and code of conduct.
- Undertake the BC Parks Impact Assessment process for major recreational developments, including archaeological impact assessment.
- Develop a protocol between the Ministry of Forests and BC Parks concerning the management of trails and trailheads on Crown lands that provide access to the parks.
- Use registration boxes and visitor surveys at access points to monitor users' experiences and social conditions regarding access issues.
- Prohibit all forms of motorized access except for management purposes and as provided for in this management plan.
- Work with commercial operators through a code of conduct to develop a coordinated approach to advertising so as not to unduly promote the park.

- Create an information strategy that will focus on maintaining low backcountry use levels.
- Work with local communities and tourism associations in providing appropriate pre-trip planning information.
- Ensure brochures on Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are current and accurate.
- Prepare information for backcountry visitors which describes the natural and cultural features of the parks, wilderness recreation etiquette and safety, low impact camping, wildlife viewing techniques, and ways of avoiding bear encounters. The focus will be on pre-trip planning as much as possible.
- Ensure recreational activities have minimal impact on erosion of surface materials and do not compromise water quality.
- Assess and manage use to ensure proper disposal of human waste.
- Ensure sanitary facilities are properly designed and located.
- Ensure the parks' sanitary facilities are non-polluting.
- Encourage the assistance of volunteers to collect wildlife data with BC Parks Observation Cards; e.g., bird watching clubs, anglers etc.
- Protect 'in situ' important features, sacred sites and archeological sites. To protect them from damage they will not be identified on any park literature.
- Adopt the BC Archeological Assessment Guidelines whenever development plans for other resources have the potential to disturb archeological sites.
- Work with First Nations and the Heritage Conservation Board in managing the archeological and heritage resources in the parks.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the location of fossils for their protection.
- Develop preventive measures; e.g., monitoring, education and enforcement, to address the threat of extraction or impacts.
- Work with local colleges, universities, other agencies and corporate sponsors to establish funding and appropriate and timely research opportunities such as inventory and monitoring.

- Limit scientific research which involves collecting specimens by the specific terms of a research permit.
- Ensure that any material that is collected for scientific research will remain the property of the Province of British Columbia, regardless of where it is stored.
- Maintain routes and trails, as prescribed by zoning.
- Assist outfitters with trail problems and relocation on user maintained trails.
- Monitor human use of fish resources through recreation surveys and information from other agencies. If any changes are required they will be implemented by managing access to the area and by fishing regulations.
- Manage natural fish stocks in collaboration with BC Environment, First Nations and anglers.
- Identify and sign areas in the parks that are designated for horse use.
- Encourage the use of portable campstoves instead of open campfires to reduce the potential of forest fires.

## **On-going Monitoring Actions**

- In the interim, until the fire management strategy is prepared, undertake an initial attack on all wildfire by either Ministry of Forests or BC Parks to control the fire until the situation is assessed. The fire may be allowed to run its natural course as long as it meets landscape biodiversity objectives, and visitors, adjacent commercial forests and park facilities are not in danger. The intent is to allow natural fires that occur under normal environmental (non-extreme) conditions to run their natural course. Use of mechanized heavy equipment will not be permitted.
- Retain wildlife trees except where there is a hazard to visitors or facilities.
- Encourage the use of processed feed.
- Monitor and evaluate periodically the effectiveness of the Range Use Plans in cooperation with the Ministry of Forests. The guidelines may be modified, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of this plan.
- Consider trail closures to minimize environmental degradation and impacts on wildlife.

- Assess, monitor and regulate hunting in cooperation with BC Environment, First Nations, guide-outfitters, hunters, and special interest groups to ensure healthy wildlife populations and habitats are maintained.
- Retain the Middle Fork free of commercial recreation activities.
- Limit new commercial recreation services to low impact proposals that do not require infrastructure to be located in the park in accordance with the KBLUP-IS.
- Conduct BC Parks' Impact Assessment process for new recreation services.
- Manage the parks according to the Wilderness Recreation, Natural Environment and Special Features zoning requirements. These include natural areas, solitude, high quality natural features and varied recreational opportunities.
- Establish capacity and limits of use through research, monitoring and in consultation with park users.
- Locate and design all park facilities in harmony with the visual setting and in accordance with park zoning objectives.
- Provide advice to the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees to help ensure, through the Forest Development Plan Review Process, that areas outside the park boundary are managed in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* to protect viewscales.
- Work with the Ministry of Forests and other agencies to protect the visual integrity of the park from impacts of adjacent uses.
- Encourage cooperative management with the adjacent National and Alberta parks.
- Liaise on a regular basis with groups representing park users and commercial operators to ensure that the park management concerns benefit from the greatest possible input.
- Consult with First Nations on the actions that affect their traditional use.
- Continue to provide a seasonal ranger program with periodic winter patrols as funding allows.
- Use volunteers where possible to enhance park management.
- Continue to prepare Park Annual Operating Plans to determine the annual management requirements of the parks including the management actions to be implemented.

- Work with commercial operators, tourism associations and the media to portray the park in an appropriate manner and create expectations fitting of a wilderness park.
- Use an informal approach to promoting and advertising the park.
- Maintain the natural character of the park by limiting any signage to where it is necessary for visitor safety or the protection of sensitive sites.
- Work with National and Alberta Parks to coordinate park information to ensure public information is current and accurate.
- Ensure that research relating to the role of First Nations in the parks involves First Nations peoples and the Heritage Conservation Branch. Research opportunities will require a Park Use Permit.
- Produce education and information brochures on the themes described above.
- In concert with First Nations develop and present information on aboriginal cultural heritage features and themes of the park.
- Manage bear/human conflict in accordance with the BC Parks' Bear-People Conflict Prevention Plan
- Ensure the protection of rare, endangered and at risk species from visitor impacts.

# Appendices

# Appendix A

## BC Parks System Goals

In the *Park Act*, BC Parks must:

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

### Conservation

Within 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.

# Appendix B

## BC Parks Management Planning Zoning System

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	Intensive Recreation	Natural Environment
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).	Mechanized (power-boats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles), 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 ha.	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, hunting, canoeing, 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 protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.	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 next to any of the other zones.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.
Small; usually less than 2000 hectares.	Large; greater than 5,000 hectares.	Large; greater than 5,000 hectares.
Area defined 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 geographic 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 (e.g. caving, climbing).	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (e.g. caving, climbing).

	<b>Intensive Recreation</b>	<b>Natural Environment</b>
FACILITIES	May be intensely developed for user convenience. Roads, trails, campgrounds, picnic/play areas, boat launches, visitor and administrative buildings, service compounds, gravel pits, disposal sites, parking lots, etc.	Moderately developed for user convenience. Trails, walk-in/boat-in campsites, shelters, service buildings may be permitted; facilities for motorized access e.g. 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.
CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES	Intensive management of natural values and/or control of visitor activities. Landscape changes may occur to increase carrying capacity of the area. Direct management intervention may occur to protect natural values and enhance recreation opportunities. Compatible scientific research and monitoring encouraged.	Management oriented to maintaining a natural environment where visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Direct management intervention may occur to protect natural values or enhance recreation opportunities. Compatible scientific research and monitoring is encouraged.
RECREATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES	Management oriented toward maintaining a high quality recreation experience. Requires careful management and upkeep of intensive use outdoor recreation facilities. Facilities designed for efficient operation while remaining unobtrusive to the park visitor.	Management oriented to presenting high quality recreation experiences in a natural setting. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and methods of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).
EXAMPLES OF ZONING	Campground in Rathrevor Beach Park; Gibson Pass ski area in E.C. Manning Park.	Core area in Cathedral Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.

Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
Interpretive facilities only, resources are to be protected.	Minimal facility development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment e.g. trails, primitive campsites, etc. Some basic facilities at access points, e.g. dock, primitive shelter, etc.	None.
Natural values are to be protected. Interpretation facilities to be limited to small areas.	Natural area generally free of 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 ongoing monitoring. Natural processes will normally be allowed to continue unhindered; in some instances, protection of rare, unique, outstanding, threatened and endangered natural values may require specific management intervention. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and limit impacts. Any scientific study must be clearly justified and carried out under permit.	High level of management protection for pristine wildland. Active resource management programs may be allowed if essential for protection of significant natural values. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.	Highest level of management protection for pristine wildland. Natural processes will be allowed to continue unhindered. Specific management intervention will not be permitted unless essential to protection or survival of significant natural values. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
Management dedicated to educating visitors through interpretation of features. Visitor access may be restricted to limit damage to features. Facility development and visitor use will be determined by the area's carrying capacity.	Management dedicated to maintaining a visitor recreation experience of solitude, freedom, and physical challenge in a primitive natural setting. Facility development and visitor use will be determined by the area's carrying capacity.	Management dedicated to maintaining a visitor recreation experience of solitude, freedom, and physical challenge in a primitive natural setting. Visitor use will be determined by the area's carrying capacity.
Tidepools in Botanical Beach Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Moose River Valley in Mount Robson Park.	Central Valhallas Wilderness in Valhalla Park; Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy area.

# Appendix C

## Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan Chapter 4

### 4.1 Introduction

One of the purposes of regional and sub-regional land use planning processes, including the Kootenay/Boundary Regional Land Use Plan, has been to implement the provincial government's protected area strategy (PAS). The PAS has two goals:

**Goal 1 - Ecosystem Representation:** To protect viable examples of the natural diversity of the province, representative of the major terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems, the characteristic habitats, hydrology and landforms, and the characteristic backcountry recreational and cultural heritage values of each ecosection.

**Goal 2 - Special Features Protection:** To protect the special natural, cultural heritage and recreation features of the province, 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 outdoor recreational features.

Through the Kootenay/Boundary Regional Land Use planning process, the provincial government, in July 1995, established sixteen new protected areas. Through designation under the provincial *Park Act*, all new protected areas have become class A provincial parks. Consequently, the terms 'provincial parks' and 'protected areas' are used interchangeably in the KBLUP Implementation Strategy.

The establishment of the new protected areas plays a key role in the realization of the Plan's environmental conservation objectives, particularly through contribution towards general biodiversity maintenance and the protection of key habitat areas for maintenance of species health. The parks also contribute significantly to regional recreational and cultural heritage objectives, as well as to long-term economic objectives.

The following section identifies general management objectives and strategies for the region's new protected areas. A description of each new part and an indication of further planning priorities is included in Table 4.1.

4.2 **General Management Objectives and Strategies for New Parks in the Kootenay/Boundary Region**

<b>PROTECTED AREA OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES</b>
<b>Park Planning</b>	
<p>1. To develop comprehensive park master plans, over time, for each new protected area in order to ensure the maintenance of the conservation, recreation and cultural heritage values within the new protected areas.</p>	<p>1.1 Park master plans will be developed for each new protected area in accordance with the availability of budget resources and the general park planning priorities identified in the overview of new protected areas with Appendices 1-7.</p> <p>1.2 Park master plans will be developed with the benefit of extensive public and inter-agency participation. Among other things, the plans will define park-specific management objectives, acceptable levels of use, accepted uses, zoning and other strategies that will minimize conflicts, and help ensure the integrity of important park values.</p> <p>1.3 Park master planning processes will consider existing uses and management objectives and strategies (as identified in this regional plan and in operational level plans) for lands that are adjacent to the protected areas.</p> <p>1.5 Provincial park master planning processes will include consultation with tourism industry representatives in order to examine potential commercial opportunities within provincial park land, subject to the prime goal to protect the conservation, recreation and cultural heritage values within the parks. Commercial opportunities will be assessed with a view towards limiting/locating the development of physical commercial infrastructure (e.g. roads, lodgings, staging areas, etc.) on the periphery of park boundaries in order to minimize park impacts.</p> <p>1.7 Pending the development of comprehensive park master plans for each new protected area, the management guidance provided in BC Parks’ “<i>Management Direction Statements</i>” will be used to direct park management and operations</p>

	<p>1.7 Upon completion of Goal 2, management direction statements will be prepared for those new protected areas.</p> <p>1.8 Resource issues adjacent to park boundaries will be identified and the responsible government agencies will work together to address them.</p>
<b>Pre-Existing Tenures and In-Holdings</b>	
<p>2. To recognize the legal rights of pre-existing tenure holders and landowners within newly established parks in the region, and to deal fairly with those interests.</p>	<p>2.1 Pre-existing mineral and timber tenures and other tenures/encumbrances associated with commodity extraction (e.g. gravel reserves) will be discontinued within new protected areas. The terms of discontinuance will be negotiated with owners of pre-existing tenure interests, in accordance with provincial policy respecting resource rights compensation. Tenure discontinuance negotiations will also consider ongoing silviculture obligations (e.g. free-to-grow requirements), and rehabilitation of harvested areas and roads in key locations.</p> <p>2.2 Pre-existing tenures within new protected areas for utility rights-of-way, communication sites, grazing, commercial backcountry recreation, commercial heli-skiing or hiking, guide-outfitting, trapping, water works and use, etc., will be permitted to continue, in accordance with the existing management conditions attached to those tenures. In the future, the management conditions attached to those tenures may be amended to comply with the requirements of park master plans that are developed for individual protected areas.</p> <p>2.3 Existing grazing authorizations issued under the <i>Range Act</i> within new (1995) protected areas will continue to be managed according to the <i>Range Act</i> and are fully transferable. Where pre-existing tenures other than <i>Range Act</i> tenures lapse or are voluntarily surrendered by a tenure holder, the province is under no obligation to re-issue the tenure rights to a new party. Whether or not tenure rights are to be re-issued should be resolved through the protected areas management planning process.</p>

	<p>2.4 Existing owners of private land in-holdings within new parks will continue to exercise their property rights, and existing opportunities for access to those properties will be addressed.</p>
<b>Natural Occurrences</b>	
<p>3. To protect key park values and adjacent private property, as appropriate, from natural occurrences in protected areas.</p>	<p>3.1 Where appropriate, natural occurrences in new parks, such as fires, insects, forest diseases, will be managed as in other provincial parks, through consultation and joint action by BC Parks, BC Environment and the Ministry of Forests at the District level.</p> <p>3.2 Fire management plans will be developed for areas within new parks that are proximate to residential settlement, and where traditional land management includes burning for winter range enhancement.</p>
<b>Park Management</b>	
<p>4. To maintain ecosystem representation and ensure protection of key representative features.</p>	<p>4.1 Park management emphasis will be placed on maintaining the ecosystems and features for which these areas were established.</p> <p>4.2 Parks will be managed to complement biodiversity objectives across landscape units, where appropriate.</p> <p>4.3 Where existing grazing tenures occur, alpine and subalpine grassland meadows will be maintained in conjunction with MOF through application of high elevation grassland guidelines.</p> <p>4.4 Sound park management relies on good resource information. BC Parks, BC Environment and the Ministry of Forests will work together to collect resource inventory for the new parks.</p> <p>4.5 The natural diversity of previously harvested sites and affected habitats will be restored through negotiation of silvicultural obligations.</p> <p>4.6 Previously open forests and grasslands have become ingrown as a result of fire suppression. Where appropriate, vegetation management will be undertaken primarily using fire to restore natural grasslands.</p>

<p>5. To ensure protection of key species and their habitats.</p>	<p>5.1 BC Parks will work with other agencies to ensure connectivity of wildlife habitat between the park and surrounding area.</p> <p>5.2 Opportunities to establish grizzly bear benchmarks for scientific study and management will be investigated.</p> <p>5.3 Rare, endangered and at risk species, and their habitats will be protected.</p> <p>5.4 Ungulate habitat and cover and site specific features will be considered in management processes.</p>
<p>6. To maintain backcountry recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>6.1 While BC Parks will continue to manage parks to provide a wide range of recreational experiences, protected areas will provide the primary opportunities for primitive and wilderness recreation. Where appropriate, existing access and trails within protected areas may be closed or decommissioned to support primitive recreational experiences. Similarly, recreational access to some areas may be limited to maintain the quality of recreational experience.</p> <p>6.2 Levels of recreational use and associated impacts will be monitored and management applied where necessary to maintain the wilderness qualities, where appropriate.</p> <p>6.3 BC Parks will work with MOF to promote good visual design of logging and appropriate access management in areas adjacent to parks.</p>
<p>7. To plan and manage parks in a manner which reflects the cultural heritage.</p>	<p>7.1 Local First Nations will be consulted to establish traditional use in the area.</p> <p>7.2 Options to work in cooperation with First Nations in the management of areas will be identified in the treaty process.</p> <p>7.3 European history will be considered in the management actions.</p>



Table 4.1

**New Protected Areas (Class A Provincial Parks)  
Established as a Result of the Kootenay/Boundary Regional Land Use  
Plan**

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<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Approx. Area (ha)</b>	<b>Priority to Develop Park Master Plan</b>
<i>East Kootenay</i>		
Akamina-Kishinena	10,921	Moderate
Bugaboo	13,646	High
Upper Cummins	61,081	Low
East Purcells	36,938	Moderate
Elk Lakes	17,245	High
Gilnockie	2,822	Low
Height of the Rockies	53,964	High
<i>subtotal</i>	<i>141,717</i>	
<i>West Kootenay</i>		
Gladstone	39,361	High
Goat Range	78,936	High
Granby	40,845	High
Kianuko	11,677	Moderate
Lockhart Creek	3,751	Moderate
West Arm	25,254	High
Syringa	4,191	Low
Kokanee Glacier Extension	6,203	Moderate
West Purcells	32,662	Low
<i>subtotal</i>	<i>242,880</i>	
<b><i>Total Area</i></b>	<b><i>383,182</i></b>	

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Note: the Findlay corridor within the East Purcells is protected under the *Environment and Land Use Act*.

## **Appendix D**

### **SUMMARY / ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR BUGABOO PROVINCIAL PARK and HEIGHT OF THE ROCKIES / ELK LAKES PROVINCIAL PARKS**

In an effort to produce the best management plan possible for Bugaboos, Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes Provincial Parks that addresses the needs of the general public, a major public consultation process was included in the planning process. This is standard policy of BC parks which is also consistent with the management direction for the planning of new protected areas established through the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS).

#### **Public Process**

The planning process had two stages of public involvement; firstly, working draft plans for both parks were prepared and mailed to various key interest groups in early November 1997 for review. From the comments generated the plan was revised and presented to the general public through a series of open houses.

Secondly, open houses were held in December at communities in close proximity to the parks, including Golden, Invermere, Cranbrook, and Sparwood. Displays with photographs and maps were used by park staff to explain the draft management plan to the public. About 120 people in total attended the meetings. A one month period was set aside to receive letters and comment sheets. Written submissions were received from a wide spectrum of park users. For Bugaboo Park eleven written submissions were received, while Height of the Rockies/Elk Lakes received seventeen.

#### **General Public Comments**

A number of people voiced their appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the management plan. It has been nearly ten years since there has been public consultation for planning in the region. As many people were not very familiar with park planning concepts such as zoning or as familiar with some of the management strategies resulting from the KBLUP - IS such as recognition of existing tenures, many of the comments on the draft management plans reflected a need for clarification of these pre-determined conditions.

The following are the main comments provided by the public consultation process relating to the management issues for each park. These comments are not all inclusive. They do not include the numerous editorial comments or questions of clarification. In most cases these changes were incorporated in the revised plan and/or further explanation given for clarity. Also provided in the summary is a brief response and what the plan was recommending.

# Specific Public Comments for Bugaboo Provincial Park Draft Management Plan

## **Issue: Park Role, Vision, Zoning**

As Bugaboo Park is relatively large and has some outstanding natural features, there was a feeling that it should be managed as a wilderness area and that the park zoning should reflect this.

**Response:** The definition of Wilderness in the BC Parks Zoning Policy precludes the park from being zoned wilderness. Types and levels of use in the park exceed what is expected in wilderness areas. The concentration of climbers in the southern part of the park and the distribution of heli-hikers and heli-skiing throughout the rest of the core areas are key limiting factors.

**Plan Recommendation:** With the exception of zoning the riparian habitat in the valley bottoms of Vowell and Malloy Creeks as Special Features Zones, and a small Intensive Recreation Zone covering the main park road and parking lot, the rest of the park is zoned natural environment to reflect the requirements to manage backcountry recreation uses and their impacts.

## **Issue: Reduce and or Eliminate Air Access to the Park**

Air access is viewed by many, especially non-resident visitors, as unique and necessary for their enjoyment of the park, while others believe the impacts on solitude and wildlife are too severe and should be discontinued.

**Response:** Air access is a pre-existing use that began several years before the park was designated and it was recognized as important to continue in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan.

**Plan Recommendation:** To continue to allow air access, but within definable limits that would seek to reduce impacts. Mitigate impacts of helicopter activity on visitors by establishing flight paths and landing sites away from areas of concentrated visitor activity. Development of a backcountry management plan would also help to reduce impact on other users by establishing mechanisms where backcountry recreation could be coordinated between commercial and non-commercial users to avoid conflict.

## **Issue: Overcrowded Climbing/Poor Climbing Ethics**

Most agree that the Conrad Kain Hut is at its maximum capacity for use, but the perception of overcrowding on the climbing routes varies. Many people have expressed concerns about debris left at the base of climbs and unregulated bolting of new climbing routes. Bolting of climbing routes is a benefit to many climbers who appreciate the convenience and added safety of the bolts while others believe it takes away from the natural climbing experience.

**Response:** Overcrowding does occur at the most popular routes during peak times, as evidenced by line-ups, but there appears to be a lack of awareness of the numerous other routes in the park. There are ample opportunities to meet the climbing needs and aspirations of visitors. A balance needs to be achieved to ensure a variety of opportunities is available.

**Plan Recommendation:** Develop with the climbing community a climbing management plan that seeks to better balance and manage this world class climbing resource.

**Issue: Develop more trails and provide camping at the trailhead**

Several people suggested expanding facilities in the park, with specific proposals for camping at the trailhead.

**Response:** While some people do overnight in their vehicles at the trailhead, there is insufficient room to develop a campground at this location. A Forest Service Campground just outside the park boundary already provides overnight accommodation.

**Plan Recommendation:** The trailhead and road access will be improved but no camping facilities are proposed at the trailhead. Other hiking opportunities will be explored but no new trails are being proposed at this time.

**Issue: Minimizing Impact from Adjacent Areas**

The harvesting of resources adjacent to the park boundaries was brought forward as a major concern that needed to be brought to the attention of other governing agencies with the objective of ensuring that impact on park values is minimized. The impact of logging will affect both wildlife values and the visual integrity of the park.

**Response:** While adjacency issues are outside BC Parks statutory authority, all participants in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan recognized the need to work in a cooperative manner to ensure the land use plan is implemented to the optimum benefit of the public.

**Plan Recommendation:** Provide advice to the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees to help ensure, through the Forest Development Plan Review Process, that areas outside the park boundary are managed in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* to protect viewscapes.

## **Specific Public Comments for the Height of the Rockies / Elk Lakes Management Plan**

### **Issue: Role, Vision Zone**

Public opinion generally varied between having these parks developed and managed for increased recreational use and keeping these areas primitive and wild. The fundamental issue which would define the recreation role and affect the vision for the park was whether wilderness recreation zoning would be the dominant zoning of the park.

**Response:** The BC Parks Zoning Policy considers many factors in the selecting of zones, including existing uses and proposed management. A number of existing tenures; e.g., guide-outfitting, are required to be continued as a result of the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy. These uses, including hunting, preclude applying the wilderness conservation zone.

**Plan Recommendation:** Three zones have been established - special features, natural environment and wilderness recreation. The latter covers 98.5% of the park.

### **Issue: Long Term Management of Wildlife Values**

There was great concern expressed for a comprehensive strategy to manage wildlife for their long term sustainability. Mountain goats were of particular concern. The lack of good inventory and understanding of what needs to be done to accomplish this was emphasized, along with the need to do extensive monitoring of impacts.

**Response:** BC Parks is in full agreement with these comments.

**Plan Recommendation:** Develop a separate wildlife management plan for mountain goats including determining the requirements for sustaining viable populations.

### **Issue: Adjacent Land Management**

It is important to coordinate park management planning with land use planning outside the park. Currently there are plans to harvest the forests adjacent to the park as well as tenured coal resources which could be extracted at sometime in the future although there are no current exploration or development proposals.

**Response:** While adjacency issues are outside the statutory authority of BC Parks, all participants in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan recognized the need to work in a cooperative manner to ensure the land use plan is implemented to the optimum benefit of the public.

**Plan Recommendation:** Participate in coordinated management planning to address the impact on park values of industrial activities in adjacent resource management zones. Provide advice to the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees to help ensure, through the Forest Development Plan Review Process, that areas outside the park boundary are managed in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia* to protect viewscapes. Work with the Ministry of Employment and Investment and BC Environment to ensure adequate research and assessment to

minimize the impact on park values in the event that coal resources are extracted in proximity to the park.

**Issue: Stocking of Lakes**

Some people felt that it is inappropriate to be artificially stocking lakes in a wilderness area

**Response:** Most of the lakes in these parks are not natural fisheries. Prior to park designation they had been repeatedly stocked for decades and some are popular destinations for anglers.

**Plan Recommendation:** Assess the stocking of lakes in the parks in concert with BC Environment to determine which lakes should continue to be stocked. In the interim continue to stock Upper and Lower Aosta Lakes, Deep Lake, Driftwood Lake, Duck Lake, Frozen Lake, Riverside Lake and Monument Lake.

**Issue: Snowmobile Use**

Snowmobilers want to continue to use Abruzzi Creek while some people believe that they are having an impact on wildlife and certainly wilderness solitude values.

**Response:** While the impact of snowmobiles has been documented for other jurisdictions the impacts can vary with site conditions. The impacts of this activity have not been assessed for these parks.

**Plan Recommendation:** Continue snowmobiling in Abruzzi Creek, but monitor and assess the impact of continuing snowmobile and mountain bike use in the Abruzzi Creek corridor (seismic road), through the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process Policy, including an impact assessment of these uses on wildlife values.

**Issue: Expand trails and camping facilities**

Some people felt that more trails and campsites should be built.

**Response:** These parks are wilderness areas that currently experience very low use. Expanding facilities is neither justified nor desirable at this time. Increasing the man made elements in these parks reduces the quality of the wilderness experience and impacts natural values such as wildlife.

**Plan Recommendation:** Retain the existing level of facilities

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