

**Garibaldi/Sunshine Coast
District**

**MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
STATEMENT**

June, 1999

**for Homathko Estuary Provincial
Park**



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

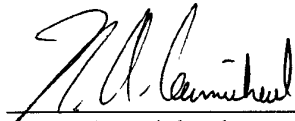
Ministry of Environment
Lands and Parks
BC Parks Division

HOMATHKO ESTUARY PROVINCIAL PARK APPROVALS PAGE

Forward

This management direction statement for Homathko Estuary Provincial Park provides management direction until such time as a more detailed management plan is prepared.

Approvals:



Drew Carmichael
District Manager

Date: June 10, 1999



Denis O'Gorman
Assistant Deputy Minister
Park Management Committee
Parks Division

Date: 990610

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Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements provide strategic direction for all protected areas which do not have a full management plan. MDS do not negate the need for future, more detailed management plans. Management direction statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, directional statements form other planning processes.

INTRODUCTION

Setting and Context

Homathko Estuary Provincial Park lies 220 km. north-west of Vancouver, B.C. at the head of Bute Inlet. Nearby parks in B.C.'s Coast Ranges include Homathko River/Tatlayoko, Ts'yl'os, Bishop River and Upper Lillooet. To reach Homathko Estuary Park by boat, visitors will have the opportunity to travel near or through marine parks such as Desolation Sound, Roscoe Bay, Walsh Cove, Von Donop Inlet, Thurston Bay and Octopus Island (Figure 1). However, a lack of facilities, difficulty of access to the upland portion of the park and high biodiversity values means Homathko Estuary will not be encouraged as a destination park.

The park is comprised of 234 ha. of upland and 216 ha. of foreshore for a total area of 450 ha. (Figure 2). The park borders approximately 1 km. of the east side of the Homathko River and encompasses about the lower 500 m. of the Teaquahan River. "Homalco" Indian Reserve 1, 2, and 2A lie adjacent to the north and west of the upland portion of the park and the entire park falls within the Homalco Traditional Territory. Portions of T.F.L. 43 (Scott Paper Ltd.) lie to the north-east. Homathko Estuary falls within the Northern Pacific Ranges Ecosection and is comprised of the CWHds1 biogeoclimatic variant. Typical of coastal estuaries, the park contains important habitats for carnivores, ungulates, raptors, shorebirds and waterfowl. However, due to its relatively small size, this area's contribution to long term viability of wide ranging carnivores such as grizzly bears and wolves is minimal.

Photograph unavailable

Plate 1: View of tidal mud flats and the Homathko Valley in the background.

Historically, the estuary was harvested during the early 1900s primarily for the Black cottonwood and other hardwoods that grow on valley bottom floodplains. These floodplains typically are rich growing sites and recovery from harvesting can be expected to be relatively quick compared to upslope areas where soil and moisture conditions may not be as conducive to regeneration.

The area was originally part of a much larger area submitted to the Lower Mainland Inter-Agency Management Committee (IAMC) for consideration under the Lower Mainland Protected Areas Strategy process. In 1995, the Province established the Regional Public Advisory Committee to continue the work of the Lower Mainland IAMC. Under this process, the Homathko Estuary was forwarded to Cabinet for recommended designation as a protected area at its current size of 450 ha. On July 28, 1997, the area was designated as a Class “A” Park under the *Park Act*. The primary purpose of this park will be the protection of conservation values of a Pacific Coast estuary.

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Plate 2: Tidal marsh ecosystem with mud flats beyond.

Figure 1. Protected Area Location

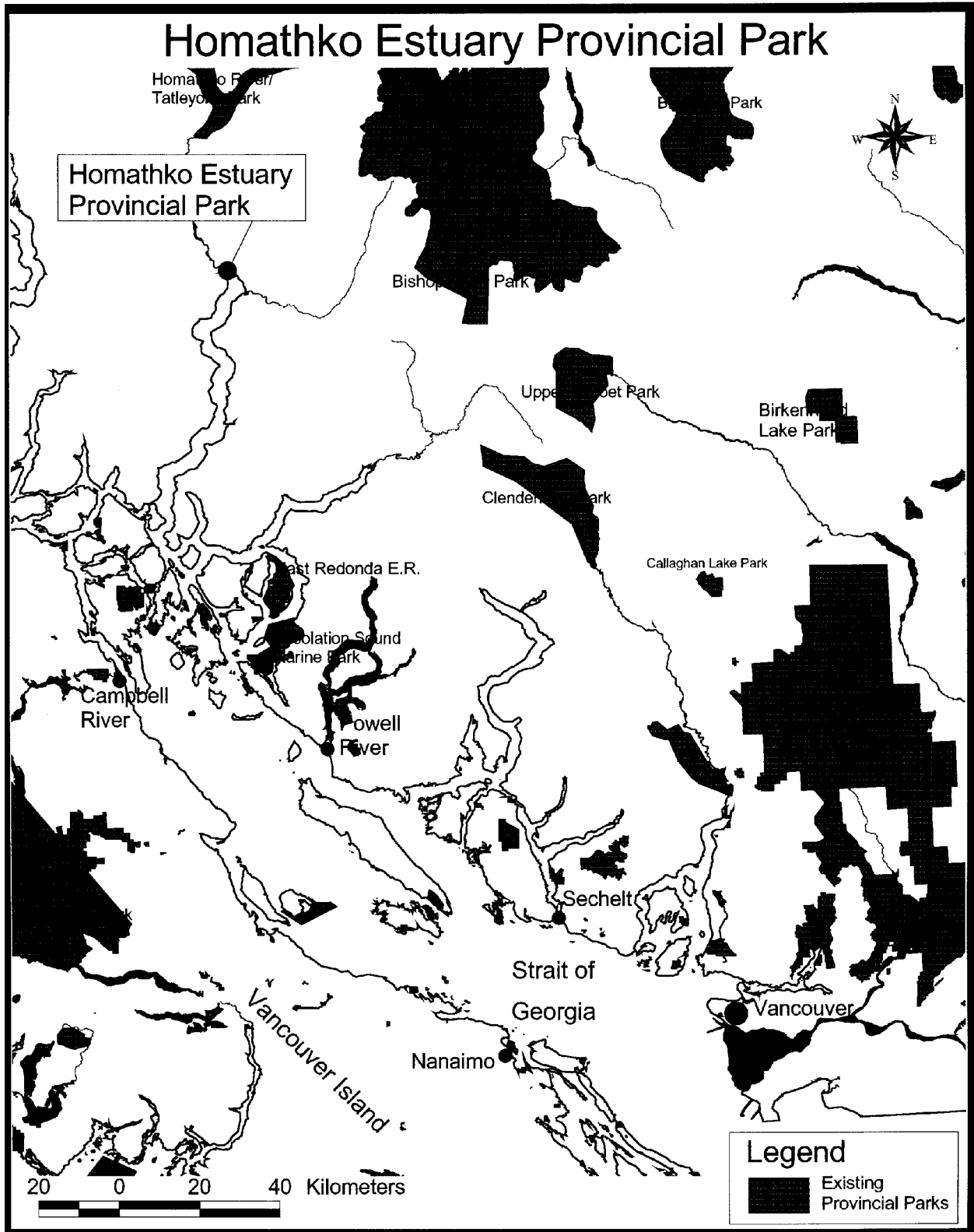
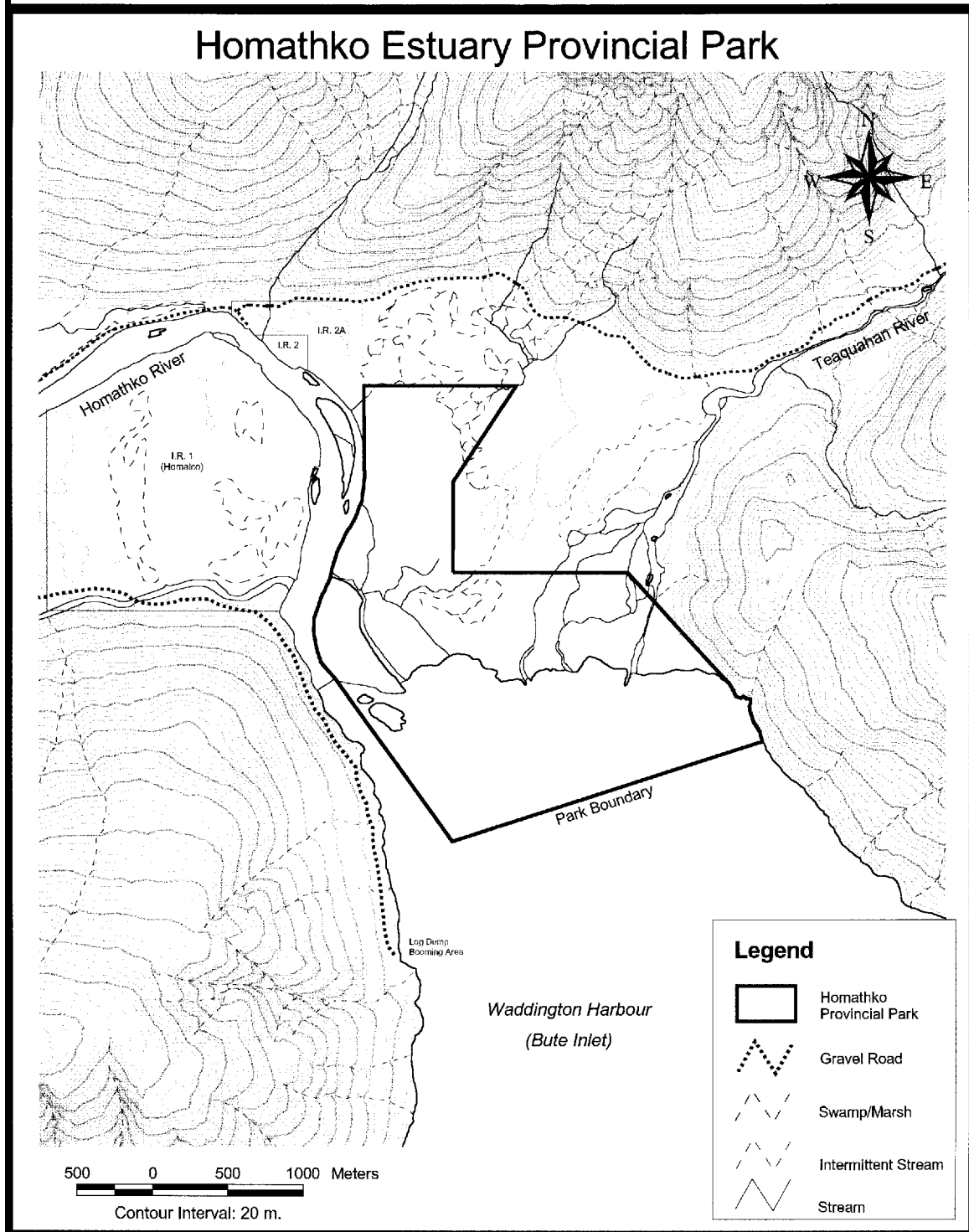


Figure 2. Homathko Estuary Provincial Park



PROTECTED AREA ATTRIBUTES

Conservation

- Comprises 0.43% of the CWHds1 biogeoclimatic variant in the Northern Pacific Ranges Ecosection.
- Protects a portion of a coastal estuary and wetland ecosystem.
- Contains small areas of old-growth forests (approximately 50 ha.).
- Protects portions of important habitats for coastal wildlife including grizzly bear, black bear, black-tailed deer, wolves, cougar, resident and anadromous salmonids, shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl.
- Site classification for the protected area is not known. Likely contains some or all of three provincially significant floodplain site series within the CWHds1 biogeoclimatic variant. Sitka spruce- salmonberry site series is provincially red listed. The Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood and the Black cottonwood - Willow site series are provincially blue listed (1998 data)¹.

Cultural Heritage

- Within the traditional territory of the Homalco First Nation.
- Limited knowledge of cultural values known.

Recreation and Tourism

- Low recreation value due to minimal opportunities, difficult access, and no facilities.
- Beach walking and exploring possible during low tides.
- Wildlife viewing.

¹ RED LIST: Includes any indigenous species or subspecies (taxa) considered to be Extirpated, Endangered, or Threatened in British Columbia. Extirpated taxa no longer exist in the wild in British Columbia, but do occur elsewhere. Endangered taxa are facing imminent extirpation or extinction. Threatened taxa are likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed. Red-listed taxa include those that have been, or are being, evaluated for these designations.

BLUE LIST: Includes any indigenous species or subspecies (taxa) considered to be Vulnerable in British Columbia. Vulnerable taxa are of special concern because of characteristics that make them particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events. Blue-listed taxa are at risk, but are not Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened.

Significance in the Protected Area System

- High conservation values - protects important habitats associated with coastal estuaries. Estuaries are considered one of the most biologically productive ecosystems on Earth. Currently, only twelve protected areas exist on the coast of British Columbia that protect portions of estuaries. Moreover, conservation values within the park have further significance as estuary habitats outside the park have been fragmented due to development activities.
- Protects a portion of a larger wetland, estuary complex that has high wildlife values. Known wildlife for this area includes grizzly bear, black bear, black-tailed deer, wolves, resident and anadromous salmonids, shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl.
- May contribute towards protecting provincially significant site series within the CWHds1 variant (see Conservation section above).

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Plate 3: Foreshore area at low tide.

LAND USES, TENURES AND INTERESTS

Access

- Boat access via Bute Inlet to Waddington Harbour. However, moorage facilities do not exist and moorage near the park may be difficult due to extensive mud flats and shallow water.
- An active forestry road exists from Waddington Harbour to forestry operations further up the Homathko Valley. A small portion of a former forestry road on the east side of the Teaquahan River is within the park though this road is no longer active and is currently overgrown. This road is not required for any purpose and will be allowed to continue to naturalise.
- An airstrip exists approximately 2 km. north-west of the park and is primarily used for forestry operations. Helicopter access is feasible.

Tenures

- Trapline tenure 0215T011 includes the protected area.
- The park falls within Management Unit 2-15. A current guide outfitters licence exists covering this management unit.

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- No facilities exist within the park.
- Two commercial tenures (guide outfitting and trapping) pre-existed the park. These tenures include the park area within their overall area but it is not known if active guide outfitting or trapping occurs in the park.
- No other commercial activities occur in the protected area.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- I.R. 1, 2, and 2A (Homalco) occur adjacent to the park on the west and north-west sides.
- Portions of TFL 43 (Scott Paper Ltd.) exists on the north-east side of the park.
- Forestry operations occur adjacent to the park and further up the Homathko Valley.

- A log sort, wood watering site, and booming grounds occur within 1 km. of the park to the south on the west side of Waddington Harbour.

First Nations Interest

- Park is within the Homalco First Nation traditional territory
- Area may contain important cultural or archaeological sites though no archaeological sites are presently registered with the Archaeology Branch.

Other Agency Interests

- BC Environment - area is significant towards maintaining low valley, wetland and estuarine habitats.
- Ministry of Forests - adjacent forest development.
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans - anadromous fish habitat.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Environmental groups concerned with estuary and wetland habitats.

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENTS AND ISSUES

Management Direction from Previous Planning

- None

Management Issues

- Potential of adverse impacts to protected area values from forestry development activities on adjacent lands and upstream along the Homathko River.
- Lack of information concerning the park's wildlife species, habitats and vegetation.
- Lack of knowledge of First Nation's use and activities in the park and lack of present and historical cultural values important to the Homalco First Nation.
- Re-examining the designation of the park once more natural values information is obtained. If the park contains rare or threatened site series, vegetation or wildlife, or will primarily be managed as a recovering estuary and wetland, other designations may be more appropriate (such as Ecological Reserve designation).

Photograph unavailable

Plate 4 One of numerous small streams winding through the estuary.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies:

Objective	Strategy
<p>Increase knowledge of natural and cultural values within the protected area to determine appropriate management strategies to protect these values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish priorities for the inventory of natural and cultural values in the protected area. • Collect information and advice from the Archaeology Branch, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture about potential archaeological sites in the protected area. • Seek funding sources for inventories. • Continue to work with BC Environment to establish further information on natural values within the park and in the surrounding wetlands.
<p>Ensure natural processes are allowed to continue and ensure management decisions protect the conservation values in the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage the park to protect natural processes and conservation values by not developing park facilities and encouraging low human use in the park. • Discuss the use of the park with the holders of the trapping and guide outfitters tenures. If the park area is not used by the tenure holders, work to eliminate the area from the tenure licence.
<p>Increase knowledge of estuary environments in the protected areas system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share inventory knowledge with other BC Parks districts which have similar estuary ecosystems. • Establish links with such organisations as the Wildlife Habitat Canada, the Nature Trust of British Columbia, BC Federation of Naturalists and Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia to share information, data and ideas.
<p>Establish and develop a relationship with the Homalco First Nations regarding protected areas in their territory.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet and consult with the Homalco First Nations to gain an understanding and appreciation of the values, issues and concerns they have about this protected area.

Consultation and Future Planning Objectives and Strategies:

Objective	Strategy
Ensure natural values that extend beyond administrative boundaries are considered in development activities and ensure nearby development does not adversely impact park values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review development plans in adjacent areas to ensure values associated with the park that may cross the park's administrative boundaries (such as wildlife and recreation values) are considered and incorporated.
Develop and build a working relationship with First Nations regarding park management and protection of park values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the Homalco First Nation on issues such as management strategies and new information obtained that may be of benefit to both the Homalco and BC Parks.
Ensure a management plan is developed for the park as per BC Parks policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While a management plan will be required for this park as per BC Parks policy, it currently ranks low within the district priority list. Review any new or emerging issues during the Annual Management Plan process to determine if the Homathko Estuary Management Plan should be ranked higher in the district priority list.
Review existing designation and determine most appropriate level of designation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current designation as a Class A Provincial Park when more information on values is obtained. Determine if the area is more appropriate as an Ecological Reserve.

Zoning Plan

The park will be entirely zoned as a Special Feature Zone because of the high conservation values, rarity of estuary habitats within the park system, and low recreation values. Management strategies will focus on protection of natural and cultural values while discouraging recreational opportunities and development.

Acceptable Uses and Facilities

The following table provides a summary of acceptable uses, activities and facilities at Homathko Estuary Provincial Park.

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses
First Nation Traditional Use	Y
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	N
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	N
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	N2
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	N
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	N
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N/A
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N/A
Ski Hills	N/A
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Backcountry Huts	N
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N/A
Road Access	N
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorized Water Access	Y
Aircraft Access	N
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	M
Fire Management (prevention)	M
Forest Insect/Disease Control	M
Noxious Weed Control	N1
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	M
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed