

# MANAGEMENT PLAN

November 2006



for  
Kakwa Provincial Park  
and Protected Area



Ministry of Environment  
Environmental Stewardship  
Division

Kakwa Provincial Park  
and Protected Area

# MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by  
Environmental Stewardship Division  
Omineca Region  
Prince George, British Columbia

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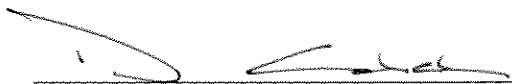
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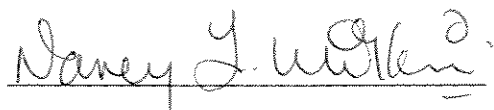
Management Plan

Approved by:



Date: OCT 10/06

Regional Manager



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Assistant Deputy Minister



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To the members of the Wilderness Advisory Committee and the members of the public who recommended the establishment of Kakwa Recreation Area in 1987.

To the members of the Prince George and Dawson Creek Land and Resource Management Tables who recommended the expansion and designation of Kakwa as a provincial park, and the members of the public who attended public meetings and submitted comments.

Specific acknowledgement is directed towards Dan Adamson who wrote the first Interim Management Statement and Mike Murtha who undertook the management planning process for Kakwa including the open houses, Background Document, newsletters and who wrote the substantial draft of this Management Plan. In addition, Mike researched and developed a collection of archival material on the history of the Kakwa area. Gail Ross completed the Management Plan.

From the field perspective, Wayne VanVelzen and Rick Roos have competently managed the area with the able assistance of many outstanding volunteers including Wayne McCrory (who conducted bear research for over 4 years); Jean-Guy Bergeron who has probably walked and explored more of Kakwa than anyone else and the many Park Hosts who have been the on-the-ground stewards of the park for over a decade.

This plan reflects the input received from the public during the planning process from 2001 – 2005.

And especially to the many visitors, who have recreationally explored and experienced Kakwa since the 1920s and who feel passionately about maintaining its wilderness values for future generations.

# Plan Highlights

- The vision for Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is part of an important heritage of Canadian mountain parks, the largest contiguous block of protected areas in southern Canada, where ecosystems and natural processes remain intact. The park will be managed to protect and support vulnerable species specifically focusing on grizzly bear, woodland caribou and bighorn sheep. Management for ecological integrity and wilderness preservation will be of highest priority, and is reflected by the park's predominant Wilderness Recreation Zoning.
- Sustainable and compatible low-impact backcountry recreation will be permitted, and will be managed on an ecosystem basis using precautionary principles so that risks to these conservation values are minimized.
- Snowmobile use will continue to be permitted within an area zoned as Nature Recreation, between December 1 and April 30 each winter. Kakwa Provincial Park will be managed to provide for world class wilderness snowmobiling, while ensuring impacts to conservation values and other wilderness users are minimized. New information regarding grizzly bear, woodland caribou, wolverine and mountain goat will be incorporated into the zoning as it becomes known.
- BC Parks will work cooperatively with other government agencies in Alberta and British Columbia to develop and manage towards shared objectives for Kakwa and adjacent Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park and Willmore Wilderness Park in Alberta. In April 2006, these three parks were designated as the first Interprovincial Park between the two provinces. Work will be undertaken to develop a framework for managing Kakwa within an ecosystem context by working within the context of the recently established Interprovincial Park, undertaking interagency management projects, and nominating Kakwa as an addition to the existing Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.
- New or improved access will be carefully managed to preserve the park's wilderness values.
- All Park Use Permit holders will be expected to be knowledgeable regarding BC Parks policies and the role and value of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area.
- The implementation of user fees to assist in recovering management costs will be explored.



# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 The Management Planning Process

This strategic plan is prepared by BC Parks as a document to guide park management over a ten-year term, while looking at least 50 years into the future. Under the direction provided by current legislation, such as the *Park Act* and the *Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation* and the *Wildlife Act*, the management plan sets out objectives and strategies for conservation, development, recreation, interpretation and operation of this park. The management plan relies on social and technical information relating to such things as natural values, cultural activities, and recreational uses in addition to activities occurring on adjoining lands. For Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area, much of this information is found in a Background Document prepared in 2001.

The process for preparing a management plan involves analysis of the overall goals of the park, patterns of use, natural, cultural and recreational values, management objectives and possible sources of conflict among park policies. A management plan establishes long-term management direction as well as dealing with immediate issues. The management plan contains numerous statements describing management actions to be undertaken, and sets out a schedule for implementation.

BC Parks consults with First Nations, other government agencies, public interest groups and the general public in the development and review of management plans. Many new parks have been established as a result of the Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE) and the sub-regional Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) that have set guidelines under which these parks will be managed.

Public input was an important factor in creating this long-range management plan for Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. Following completion of the Background Document, an initial mail-out of information was sent to 170 recipients. A series of open houses were held and attended by 60 people in Grand Prairie, 150 in Prince George, and 5 in McBride. A webpage was developed providing links to the Background Document and newsletter updates, and received over 800 hits. Feedback was received from personal contact and 140 completed questionnaires and written submissions.

A draft management plan was summarized in Kakwa Management Newsletter #5, which was sent to all participants on the mailing list along with another questionnaire. The newsletter had a link to the BC Parks website, where the complete draft management plan was posted. One hundred and thirteen organizations and individuals responded to the questionnaire, which further provided input to the final management plan. A summary of key elements of this feedback has been incorporated into Appendix IV.

In June of 2005, specific interest groups were invited to a facilitated meeting to resolve the boundaries of the snowmobiling area (Nature Recreation Zone) in the Kakwa Lake area. The final management plan has resulted from all of these elements of public involvement.

Public input confirmed that visitors have a strong attachment to the park, and an overwhelming majority would like to see Kakwa continue to be managed for its wilderness qualities. The top priority for this plan, therefore, will be to ensure the continued ecological integrity of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area, and to manage it in the context of surrounding protected lands in British Columbia and Alberta.

## **1.2 Background Summary**

The scenic, wild character and natural resources of Kakwa first attracted recreational use for hunting and climbing in the early 1900s. Steep terrain and difficult access helped maintain the area's wilderness character until the mid-1900s, when oil and gas exploration and logging began to encroach.

Kakwa was first proposed for protection in 1971 by the Peace River and Fraser-Fort George regional districts, following field reconnaissance and a favourable field report by the Provincial Parks Branch. As logging and mineral development threatened its wilderness character, the Kakwa area continued to be assessed, and was further reviewed by the Wilderness Advisory Committee through their public processes. The recommendations by the Wilderness Advisory Committee resulted in the establishment of Kakwa Recreation Area (121,000 hectares) in 1987. Many of the recommendations regarding zoning and use are being implemented in this management plan.

Through the next decade, the area was considered by provincial wilderness initiatives and the Protected Areas Strategy. Boundaries were fine-tuned and, under recommendations of the Prince George and Dawson Creek Land and Resource Management Plans, Kakwa was established as a Class A Provincial Park of 170,890 hectares under the *Park Act* in June 1999.

## **1.3 Relationship with Other Land Use Planning**

### **Prince George Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) - 1999**

The Prince George LRMP recommended 24 new protected areas and additions to protected areas, together totaling 251,000 ha. The largest of these was the existing Kakwa Recreation Area, with 121,000 ha recommended for Provincial Park status. An additional 18,000 ha, south of the existing Kakwa Recreation Area, was also recommended for protection. The Prince George LRMP also makes specific management recommendations for activities in this park:

- The existing Wishaw quartzite tenure and associated access will continue. If this tenure expires, opportunities for re-staking and new tenures will continue in the current tenure area.

- Trapping and commercial guiding (non-hunting) were recommended as selected permitted uses.

The following uses were deferred to the BC Parks planning process: hunting; fishing; fish stocking/enhancement; horse use and pack animals; cattle grazing; commercial guiding (hunting); lodges/cabins; snowmobiling; mechanized activities; water motorized activities; aircraft access; heli-skiing; and heli-hiking.

## **The Dawson Creek LRMP - 1999**

This plan recommended the Kakwa North Protected Area, an addition of 31,596 ha to Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. The plan also recommended:

- That BC Parks coordinate planning with Alberta Parks to identify, plan and manage for interprovincial resource values in the protected area management planning process.
- Endorsement of the 'Compatibility of Selected Activities, Services and Use in Protected Areas' with the following noted exceptions:
  - Allow snowmobiling within designated areas. In areas where past use has occurred, snowmobiles should not be limited to specific trails or areas unless required to protect important resource values. Use of snowmobiles will be addressed in protected area management plans.
  - Allow trapping as an acceptable use. The long term goal of maintaining trapping opportunities should be implemented in protected area management plans.

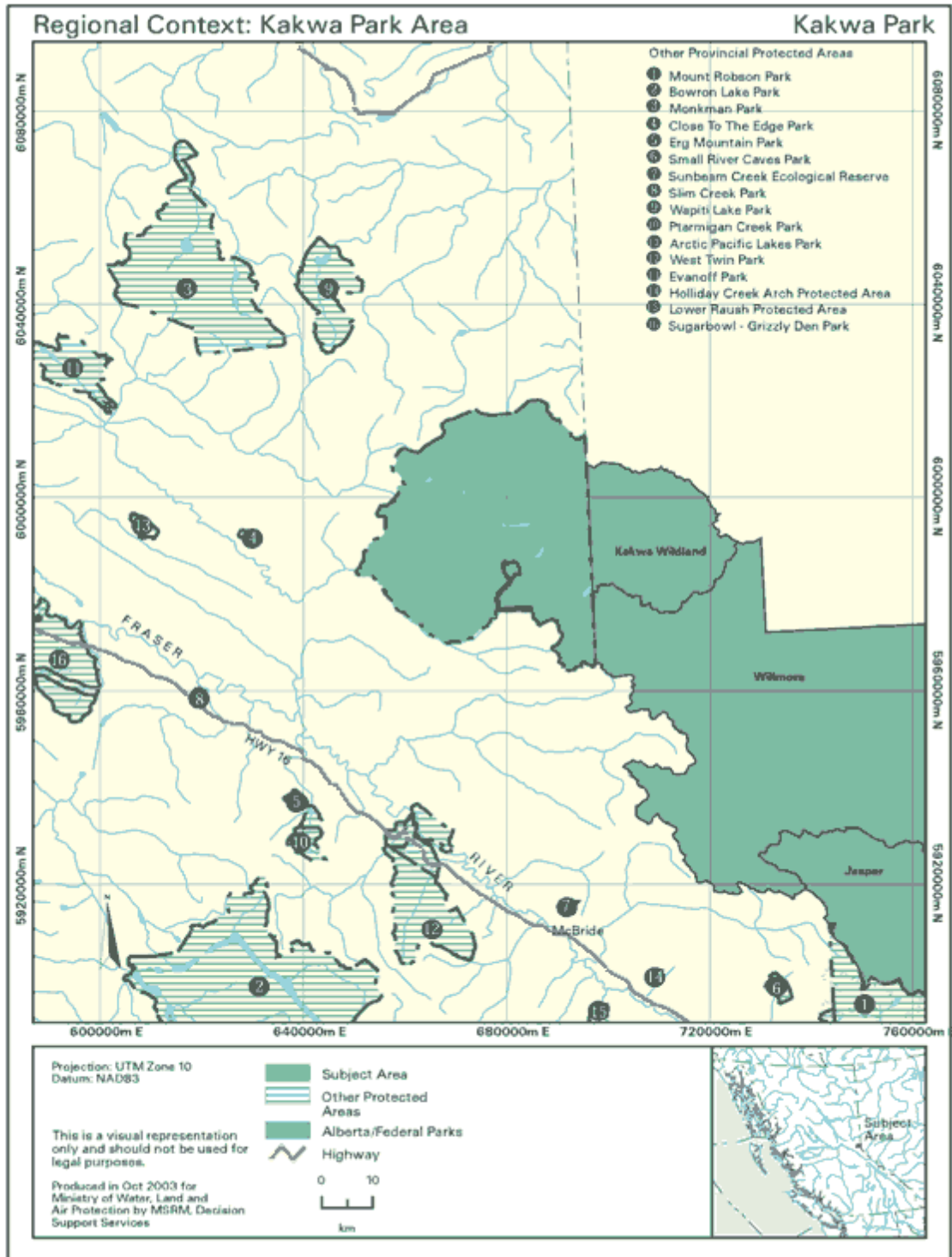
The plan also provides that some types of motorized recreational vehicles and boats may be restricted either by type of vehicle, time of year, or areas designated for use. Specific restrictions will be developed through the protected area management planning process which is a public process.

## **Interim Management Statement – Kakwa Recreation Area**

An Interim Management Statement (IMS) for the Recreation Area preceded establishment of the larger Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area, and defined four zones of distinct management objectives for conservation and recreational values - Nature Recreation Zone, Wilderness Recreation Zone, Special Feature and Wilderness Conservation Zone. Within the IMS, snowmobiling was permitted from Wishaw Lake to Kakwa Lake and the Alberta boundary. All other areas were closed to snowmobiling.

This management plan considers, but supersedes, the initial recommendations in the Interim Management Statement.

Figure 1: Regional Context for Kakwa Park and Protected Area



## 1.4 Kakwa Protected Area

Immediately adjacent to Kakwa Provincial Park, a small component (1,520 ha) of the former Recreation Area was recommended for protected area designation the *Environment and Land Use Act* to allow for access to pre-existing mineral tenures and for continued mineral-related activities. This protected area has not been formally designated at the time of writing, but it will be designated in the near future. Once designated, all existing uses in this protected area will be continued (e.g. commercial recreation, guide outfitting, trapping, quarry and road access for the quarry).

The protected area boundary leading to Wishaw Lake (125 m on either side of the existing road) will enable BC Parks to manage the recreational and industrial activities on the access road. Once a geo-technically stable road suitable for mining purposes is in place, the protected area corridor may be reduced to the width of the road right-of-way and the remaining land will be added to Kakwa Provincial Park . Although the road is currently not useable, should it be improved, access will be limited to industrial and park management purposes only.

In the Buchanan Creek area, another component of the protected area is being designated to allow for the construction, use and maintenance of a road for the purpose of providing access to forest lands and other resources beyond the protected area. If a road is established in this area, the protected area corridor may also be reduced to the width of the road right-of-way and the remaining land will be added to Kakwa Provincial Park .

Two tenured quartzite deposits, Babette and Wishaw, pre-dated the establishment of Kakwa Recreation Area. The tenure holder voluntarily agreed to relinquish interest at Babette Lake for improved long-term security of tenure and access to the Wishaw site and expansion of the mineral tenures above Wishaw Lake. This area is being designated as part of the protected area to allow for continued mineral-related activities.





## **1.5 Management Issues**

Several management issues were identified in the Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area Management Plan Background Document, and public input to the planning process identified additional issues. The resolution of these priority issues will ensure that the conservation and recreation objectives for park management are met.

The following management issues were identified and require management action.

### **Protecting Ecological Values**

The large intact Rocky Mountain ecosystem protected by Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area and the adjoining chain of parks in Alberta and British Columbia is of international significance. Grizzly bears, northern (boreal) caribou and other wildlife move extensively in and out of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area, making them vulnerable to a variety of human influences. The wildlife and ecological integrity of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area are therefore affected by the use and management of adjoining areas. Management of the ecological values of this park will require coordination and collaboration with resource management agencies in both British Columbia and Alberta.

Within the park, the precautionary principle will ensure that types, levels and areas of recreational use will not compromise the park's wildlife, ecological, and recreational values. Levels of visitor use and development will be carefully managed to ensure wildlife disturbance and displacement is minimized in the Kakwa Lake area, McGregor Pass (trans-mountain corridor) and in areas of sensitive habitat.

### **Protecting Recreation and Tourism Values**

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area provide outstanding opportunities for backcountry recreation in a spectacular wilderness setting. Wilderness is a limited and decreasing recreational setting in the province. Current recreational use in the park includes snowmobiling, hiking, backpacking, climbing, llama tours, backcountry skiing, horseback riding, and hunting. To ensure a sustainable balance of conservation values and recreational activities, the park will be seasonally zoned to provide for highly valued winter motorized recreational opportunities in some areas of the park, and at the same time maintain wildlife and wilderness values in other areas. During summer months, motorized use will be limited to air access points on Kakwa and Jarvis Lakes.

Many recreational users originate from Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park and Willmore Wilderness Park in Alberta. Inter-provincial cooperation between managing agencies is necessary to ensure a coordinated and sustainable approach to recreational opportunities within the greater ecosystem.

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area have a high capability for commercial recreation, and the demand for guided backcountry adventure tourism will likely continue to grow. Careful management and coordination of the types and levels of commercial recreation use and development is required to ensure a balanced approach between recreational opportunities and ecological integrity.

## **Protecting Cultural Values**

Little is known about the cultural features in Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. Because they have not been inventoried, cultural features may be at risk from park use or development. Within the park, the precautionary principle will help ensure that types, levels and areas of recreational use do not compromise the park's cultural values. Opportunities for appreciation of the cultural values of the park are not addressed because of lack of information.

## **Protecting Special Features**

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area contain many special geological and paleontological features of regional to international significance. Any research conducted in the park and protected area will be authorized by Park Use Permit and will require at least one member the party to demonstrate relevant qualifications and experience to conduct or supervise the project. Although information resulting from this work will be made available to the public, specific locations may be kept confidential.

## **Visitor Safety**

The remote nature of the park, lack of facilities and information, low levels of summer use, and natural hazards of wildlife, mountainous terrain and weather conditions all combine to create potentially hazardous conditions for recreation users who are unprepared. The condition of access roads and trails are unpredictable and they could be dangerous to use. The prominence of grizzly bears may result in conflicts with visitors, especially in areas of heavy use. Extreme hazards exist in many of Kakwa's caves. During winter months, some areas of the park are prone to avalanche dangers and all winter recreationalists should be trained in recognizing avalanche hazards and travel with avalanche beacons and probes.

## **Access Management**

BC Parks will work closely with adjoining agencies and interests to minimize impacts from any new or enhanced access to, or within the park, which could compromise the park's wilderness character and ecological integrity. BC Parks will encourage the Ministry of Forests and Range to provide vehicle access to the Bastille River.

## **Non-Conforming Uses**

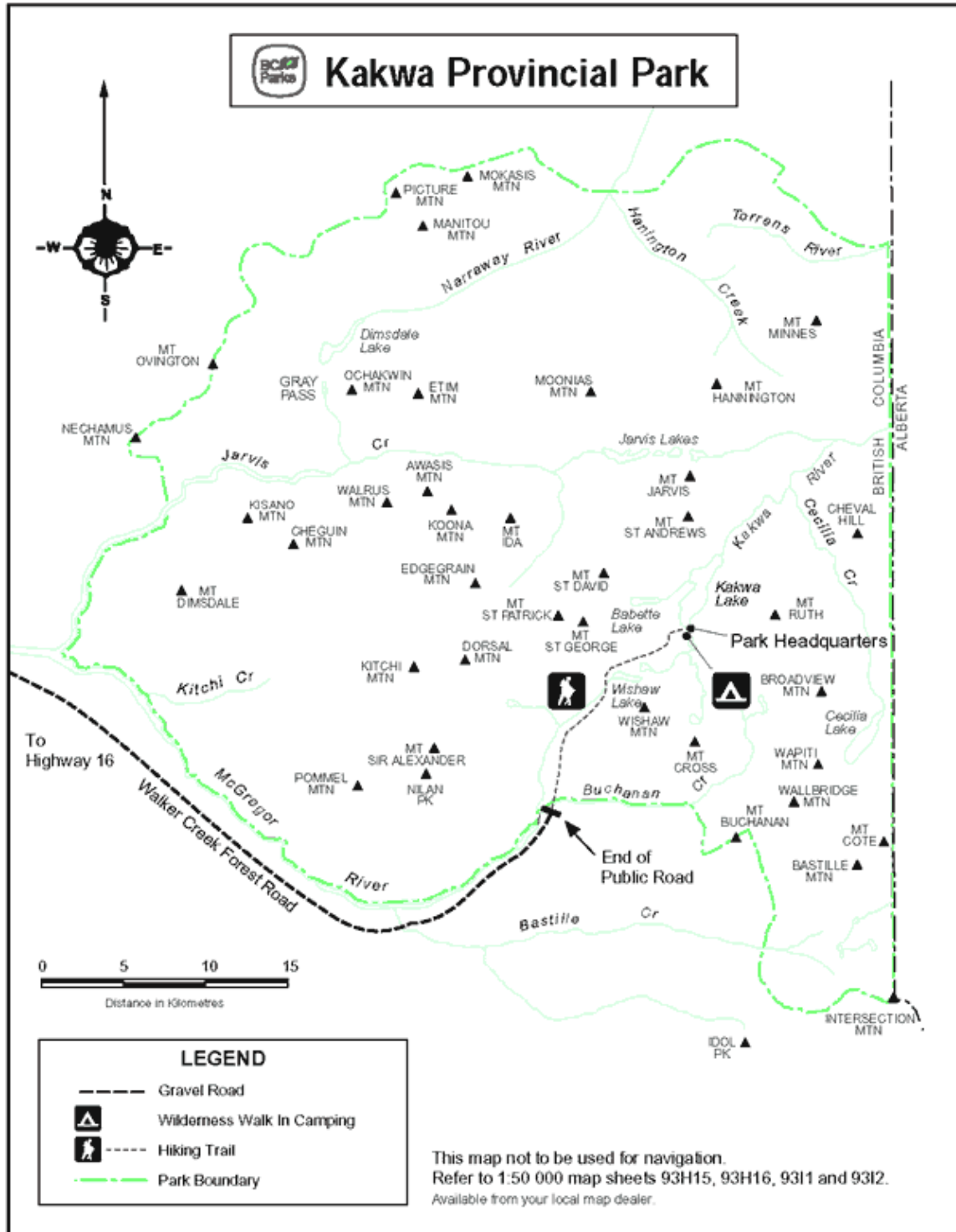
Through the LRMP process, some uses were approved for this park which could be considered incompatible with its long term management as a wilderness Class A Park. The Wishaw quarry is located at the high point of MacGregor Pass and road access to the quarry creates a significant management challenge. The long term management objective for this area is to designate it as a Class A provincial park. If in the future, an opportunity to extinguish the existing mineral

tenures on a willing seller basis arises, the future use of this area for quarrying purposes should be re-assessed in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. In the interim, the mineral tenures will be continued and new opportunities for staking will be permitted in the area.

## **Adjacent Non-Park Land**

BC Parks will work with other agencies to ensure that the effects of industrial activities on adjacent Crown land (logging, mining, oil and gas) which may affect the ecological integrity and recreational value of Kakwa are minimized as much as possible. Of key concern are any activities which may permit new opportunities to access the park.

Figure 3: Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area: Park Features



## **2.0 The Role of the Protected Area**

### **2.1 Provincial and Regional Context**

Kakwa Provincial Park is located in east central British Columbia, along the provincial boundary with Alberta. The nearest communities in British Columbia are Prince George and McBride and in Alberta, Grande Prairie and Grande Cache.

There is no public road access into the park. Very rough forest roads provide surface access to the park boundary. In British Columbia, the Walker Creek Forest Road from Highway 16 currently provides access to the Bastille River at km 75. From Grande Prairie, roaded access leads to the eastern boundary of Alberta's Kakwa Wildland Park. Trails enter the southeast corner of the park from Willmore Wilderness Park.

Kakwa Provincial Park is the most northerly protected area in a continuous 600km chain along the spine of the Rockies. Wapiti and Monkman Parks are located a short distance to the northwest. To the southwest, across the Rocky Mountain Trench, lies another long, continuous chain of parkland in the Cariboo Mountains, connecting Wells Gray, Cariboo Mountains and Bowron Lake parks. West Twin Park occupies a section of the Rocky Mountain Trench between the two mountain ranges and provides a connecting wildlife movement corridor.

The eastern boundary of Kakwa Provincial Park is contiguous with Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park and Willmore Wilderness Park, both established and managed by the Alberta government. These three parks have recently been designated as the first Interprovincial Park between British Columbia and Alberta. Willmore Wilderness Park is, in turn, connected to Jasper National Park, Mount Robson Provincial Park and Rock Lake-Solomon Creek Park. Collectively, the unbroken stretch of park land north of Highway 16, approximately 1.3 million hectares in total, forms the largest protected and un-roaded wilderness in southern Canada. Much of the adjacent British Columbia Crown land is presently undeveloped and further buffers the wilderness nature of Kakwa Provincial Park.

### **2.2 Significance in the Protected Areas System**

- Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is the only park in British Columbia which includes the Front Ranges Ecoregion characteristics of the open, rolling ridges found on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. 43% of the Front Ranges Ecoregion lies within the park and this area constitutes 52% of the park. The remaining part of the park, in the Southern Hart Ranges Ecoregion, contains the areas of highest elevation, highest relief and greatest vegetation diversity in the park.

- Kakwa Provincial Park protects regional to internationally significant Special Features including Mt Sir Alexander (the second highest peak in the Canadian Rockies); Mt. Ida; caves; fossils; and dinosaur track sites.
- The park provides habitat and travel corridors for blue listed (vulnerable) grizzly bears, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goat and northern (boreal) caribou. Northern caribou are blue listed provincially but threatened federally using the national Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) system, which takes precedence under the *Species at Risk Act*.
- Because of its contiguity with other large wilderness parks in Alberta and British Columbia, Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area are part of a much larger protected ecosystem and of the largest protected and un-roaded wilderness in southern Canada.
- Kakwa Provincial Park straddles the Continental Divide, and the sharp contrast between the two sides produces dramatic scenery and a spectacular backdrop for visitor activities.
- The open, rounded ridges and meadows of the Front Ranges provide an outstanding variety of backcountry hiking opportunities, paralleled only by parks such as Banff and Jasper national parks.
- The terrain and climate of the Front Ranges Ecoregion, coupled with a seasonal absence of large mammals (goats and sheep are the exception) makes Kakwa Provincial Park a premier destination for snowmobiling.

## **2.3 Park and Protected Area Roles**

### **Conservation Role**

- To protect British Columbia's only representation of the Front Ranges Ecoregion.
- To protect British Columbia's best representation of the Interior Cedar Hemlock (vk2) and Engelmann Spruce Sub-alpine Fir (mv2) biogeoclimatic zones.
- To protect significant cave, fossil and dinosaur track sites.
- To protect identified Special Features of outstanding (Kakwa Lake and Mount Ida) and important (Mt. Sir Alexander and Narraway Falls/Gray Pass) significance.
- To contribute to the maintenance of ecological integrity in the regional ecosystem, especially in association with contiguous parks.
- To provide habitat and travel corridors for grizzly bear, mountain goat, northern caribou and wolverine.

## **Tourism and Outdoor Recreation**

- To protect a cross-section of the Rocky Mountains that provides outstanding opportunities for low impact wilderness recreation, including hiking, backpacking, llama and horse trips, backcountry skiing, hunting and mountaineering.
- To provide an area of outstanding backcountry snowmobiling opportunities.

## **Cultural Heritage**

- Due to lack of information, the cultural heritage role of this park is unknown at this time.

## **2.4 Values at Risk**

In 2000, BC Parks conducted a Conservation Risk Assessment for all the parks in the District. This project consisted of three elements: conservation values (ecosystem representation, species/habitats at risk); design risk factors (watershed integrity, shape); and stresses and threats (transportation and utility corridors; external recreation development/internal facility development; recreation use; adjacent forestry/mining activity; gathering/harvesting; and exotic species).

Kakwa scored medium high for conservation values, medium low for risk factors, and very high for stressors and threats. The items identified as being of highest risk to the long term conservation values of the park included: motorized recreation; adjacent impacts from forestry and mining; and tourism development. This plan tries to address all three issues.



## 2.5 Vision Statement

The vision statement below is intended to provide direction for the long-term management of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. The vision statement describes the condition of the park 50 years from now if the intent of the management plan is followed. It is not meant to describe the current condition of the park. The vision statement is used to provide context and guidance for park managers to make decisions about stewardship, recreation and other activities in the park. The appropriateness of any new activities that may not have been contemplated when the plan was written should be considered in the context of the vision statement.

*Kakwa is the northern anchor of the Canadian Rocky Mountains national and provincial parks, which together, form the largest protected area in southern Canada. Kakwa Provincial Park's status as part of Kakwa Interprovincial Park with Alberta and part of the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site reflects its significant contributions to the regional ecosystem. In co-operation with neighbouring parks in Alberta and surrounding undeveloped lands in British Columbia, Kakwa Provincial Park protects a core area for natural processes to continue unimpeded, a benchmark in a world of change.*

*Kakwa is managed within a context of neighbouring parks to protect vulnerable species, with an emphasis on grizzly bears and woodland caribou. At the same time, outstanding wilderness recreational opportunities will be provided and managed using precautionary principles to ensure risks to conservation values are minimized. Ecological integrity and wilderness preservation are the highest priorities in Kakwa Provincial Park .*

*Kakwa Provincial Park is renowned as a wild, scenic and spectacular microcosm of the Rocky Mountains, a memory of the Rockies as they were. Visitors treasure and respect the park's ecological integrity and wilderness values and work with park managers to ensure their impact on the park is minimal so that future visitors may also enjoy the same awe and exhilaration, the solitude and wild viewscapes that are Kakwa.*

# 3.0 Protected Area Zoning

## 3.1 Introduction

Zoning assists in the planning and management of provincial parks and protected areas. In general terms, zoning divides an area into logical units to apply uniform and consistent management objectives for conservation and recreational values. The zones reflect the intended land use, existing patterns of use, the degree of human use desired, and the level of management and development required to protect and maintain park values.

At one end of the spectrum, the **Intensive Recreation Zone** indicates a portion of a park or protected area that is appropriate for high levels of recreation and facility development. At the opposite end, the **Wilderness Conservation Zone** delineates an area of a park that receives the highest level of resource protection and minimal human presence. Three additional zones provide for a range of conservation and recreation priorities - **Nature Recreation Zone**, **Special Feature Zone** and **Wilderness Recreation Zone**. Additional information on park zoning can be found in Appendix III.

An objective of this management plan is to implement a park zoning prescription which reflects Kakwa Provincial Park's role in the provincial protected area system and which is understood and supported by visitors. Because of the importance of the park's conservation and wilderness role, the most protective category of zoning which is appropriate for each part of the park has been applied. This conservative approach to zoning is supported by the 1986 Wilderness Advisory Committee's report, The Wilderness Mosaic, which provided the recommendation to Cabinet for the establishment of Kakwa Recreation Area. In the report, the Parks Division was directed to regulate snowmobile use and to establish a Nature Conservancy (similar to Wilderness Conservation zoning) in lands adjacent to Willmore Wilderness Park in Alberta.

Not only is it important to harmonize zoning with contiguous parks in Alberta, but also to implement zoning along other boundaries of the park that reflects the park's significance and that conveys this significance to the managers of adjacent resource lands.

Because there are great seasonal variations in the park's ability to support visitor activities, spatial zoning has been used for both the summer (May 1 – Nov. 30) and winter (Dec. 1 – April 30) periods.

The **Wilderness Recreation Zone** (hunting and aircraft access are permitted) is differentiated from the **Wilderness Conservation Zone** where these activities are not permitted. Although **Nature Recreation** zoning would not normally be found in a wilderness area such as Kakwa, this zoning recognizes that snowmobiling is a well established and compatible activity in parts of the park. However, over the years improvements in snowmobile technology have facilitated the

expansion of this activity into more and more areas of the park. This expansion must now be controlled and managed to ensure wilderness and wildlife values are not compromised.

Zoning for this park also acknowledges the non-conforming nature of the Wishaw quartzite quarry and access tote road, located within Kakwa Protected Area. The Protected Area will be zoned, along with the rest of the park, in a way that is consistent with long term objectives.

## 3.2 Zoning Rationale

### Summer Zoning (May 1 – November 30)

For the summer season, the majority of Kakwa Provincial Park is in a **Wilderness Recreation Zone**. The intent of the Wilderness Recreation Zone is to protect a remote undisturbed natural landscape, and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment. The primary direction is to allow natural ecological processes to continue without human interference. Facility development is limited to trails and primitive campsites.

A small **Nature Recreation Zone** applies to the existing cabin and dock facilities at Kakwa Lake and Jarvis Lake. The intent of the Nature Recreation Zone is to protect scenic values and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities (and float plane access) in a largely undisturbed setting.

On the eastern side of the park, a relatively small **Wilderness Conservation Zone** is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized activities are allowed. This zone provides a buffer to the adjacent protected lands in Alberta (following the Wilderness Advisory Committee's recommendation) and includes part of the area of the park that is closed to hunting under the *Wildlife Act* (see p. 43 for hunting closure area).

### Winter Zoning (December 1 – April 30)

During the winter season, Kakwa Provincial Park is zoned as:

**Nature Recreation Zone** in those areas where snowmobiling is permitted.

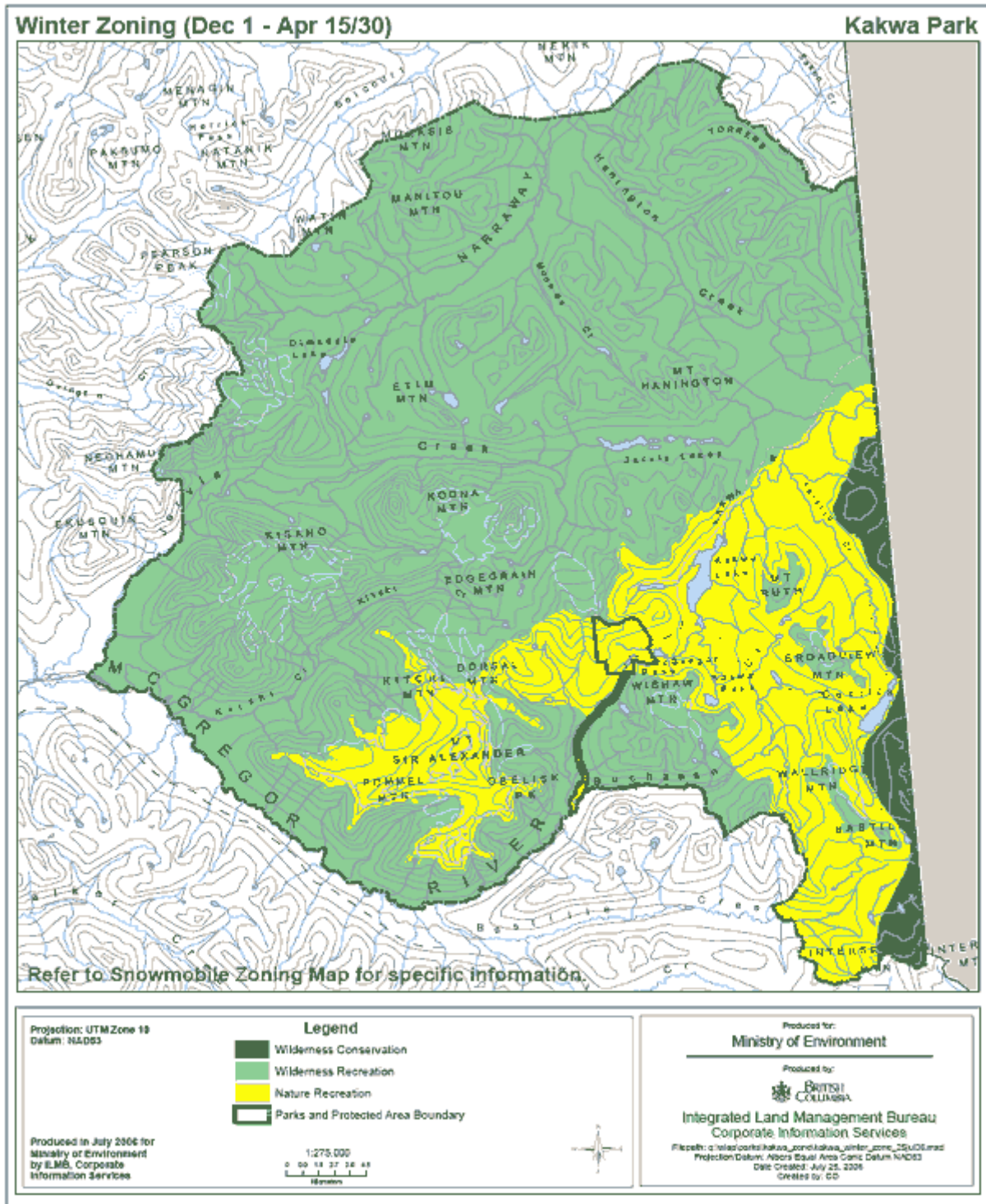
**Wilderness Recreation** and **Wilderness Conservation** (non-motorized recreation) zoning is in place for all other areas. The intent is to maintain Wilderness Recreation and Wilderness Conservation zoning consistency on a year - round basis wherever possible.

**Special Feature** zoning has not been applied to fossil, dinosaur trackway, and geological feature sites, since to do so would make the locations known. Park managers will ensure that these sites receive maximum protection and will consider implementing access closures should these features become threatened.

The Wishaw quartzite quarry and access road, within the Protected Area, are non-conforming with the zoning; however the zoning does not impede the legal right of the quarry owner to continue operations. For hunting and aircraft access, direction is provided in the relevant sections of the plan.



Figure 5: Park Zoning Map – Winter Zoning



## 4.0 Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

### 4.1 Access Management

The wilderness qualities and ecological integrity of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area are largely due to its remote setting, rugged landscape that historically deterred access, and adjacency to other protected areas where access has been limited.

Vehicle access to, or close to the park boundary, requires travel over long distances and rough road conditions. In British Columbia, access to the south side of the park is via the Walker Creek Forest Service Road, 85 km from Highway 16. However, new Ministry of Forests and Range (MoFR) policies regarding maintenance of roads under their jurisdiction (roads which are not used for industrial purposes are no longer a priority for maintenance funding) will have significant impact on park visitor access to Kakwa as the entire Walker Creek Forest Service Road is under MoFR jurisdiction. Ideally, the Walker Creek Forest Service Road will be maintained to the Bastille River, which is 10 km from the park boundary. The section of the road between the Bastille and Buchanan rivers is under Special Use Permit by the tenure holder of the Wishaw quarry, who is responsible for maintaining the industrial road from the Bastille River to Wishaw Lake. Should this road no longer be maintained, summer access from British Columbia will most likely revert to hiking, biking, horse and float plane access.

From Alberta, the closest vehicle access comes within about 5 km of the park via roads to Kakwa Falls, 155 km southwest of Grande Prairie mostly by rough road. There is no public road access into the park from Alberta.

Trails currently enter Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area from the end of the Walker Creek Forest Service Road in British Columbia, and from Willmore Wilderness Park and Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park in Alberta. In British Columbia, the Buchanan bridge is owned and maintained by the tenure holder of the Wishaw quarry, and this too, will influence both summer and winter access to the park. Discussion is currently underway to provide a snowmobile/pedestrian bridge over the Buchanan River to facilitate year round access.

Floatplane access is allowed at Kakwa and Jarvis Lakes only. The Cecilia Lake watershed within the Wilderness Conservation Zone is closed to aircraft landings without prior authorization. Any commercial flight which lands in the park requires a Park Use Permit.

Within British Columbia, most of the lands surrounding the park will be managed as Special Resource Management Zones for natural habitat and backcountry recreation. These are not protected areas, so access and resource development could occur. Coal exploration activities are currently occurring to the north of the park.

Development and/or improvement of access to, or close to the park boundary, could change the types and levels of park recreation use and thereby impact the wilderness experience and ecological values.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Maintain the wilderness character of the park by managing access to and within the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with adjacent jurisdictions to try to minimize the impacts of adjacent land uses on Kakwa Provincial Park and especially to discourage new access to the park.</li> <li>• Cooperative, trans-boundary trail management will be pursued with managers of Willmore Wilderness Park and Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park in Alberta</li> <li>• Public road access into the park will not be permitted.</li> <li>• Restrict use of the quarry road from Buchanan Creek to Wishaw Lake to the quarry tenure holder, for industrial uses only. Should the quarry tenure ever be cancelled, the road will be de-activated and converted to a trail.</li> <li>• Coordinate with the Ministry of Forests and Range to continue to provide a parking area at the southern trailhead at Buchanan Creek (or at Bastille Creek at the end of the road which is under MoFR jurisdiction)</li> <li>• Should Ministry of Forests and Range no longer maintain part, or all of the Walker Creek Road, updated information will be provided on the BC Parks website.</li> <li>• Float plane access will be limited to Kakwa and Jarvis lakes. Monitor use levels, and if it becomes a concern, user limits may be considered.</li> <li>• A Park Use Permit is required for all commercial float planes and helicopter landings.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances Management

Current commercial tenures in Kakwa Provincial Park include guide outfitting, llama assisted hiking, mountain guiding, trapping and aircraft access. In the protected area, quarrying and road access are tenured. These uses are authorized by Park Use Permits.

Quarry and trapping tenures are listed as acceptable activities in the approved Prince George and Dawson Creek Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs).

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Maintain the wilderness character and ecological integrity of Kakwa Provincial Park .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit new land uses, tenures and interests to those which support conservation values and recreational enjoyment of Kakwa Provincial Park .</li> <li>• Ensure that all commercial recreation businesses operate at a level which complements the existing wilderness use of the</li> </ul>



Objectives	Strategies
	<p>park. Their role is to support sustainable use within acceptable limits for long term resource preservation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the existing tenures for guided hunting, llama-supported hiking and horse trips.</li> <li>• Accept new commercial guiding applications for the following activities: hiking/backpacking, ski touring and mountaineering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Issue only one tenure for each activity, with clear limits on the operations.</li> <li>➤ Any new commercial guiding applications will be awarded through a competitive process.</li> <li>➤ A maximum number of trips/season will be established for each activity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Prohibit commercial guiding tenures for other activities and especially for those which introduce more motorized uses. Specifically, commercial guiding tenures will not be authorized for snowmobiling, jet boating or any helicopter use.</li> <li>• Continue to manage for existing patterns of use, based on public cabins in the park and private/club facilities outside of the park.</li> <li>• Ensure that existing publicly-owned cabins remain available for park management purposes and public use. They will not be available for commercial operator use.</li> <li>• In order to maintain the wilderness character and to avoid concentrating public use into specific locations, new permanent structures, whether for commercial businesses or for clubs and organizations, will not be authorized in the park. (See page 38).</li> <li>• Commercial operations wishing to store equipment between trips will be allowed small, temporary caches in authorized locations, which must be removed at the end of each season; no helicopter supply to the camps will be authorized.</li> <li>• Continue to manage guided hunting and trapping on a sustainable basis.</li> <li>• Restrict all llama use to the current area (Kakwa Lake, La Glace Lake, Mt. Ruth) to ensure no transmittal of disease to Rocky Mountain sheep population. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commercial Llama trips will be operated from a base camp (with no permanent facilities) which is separate from the public camping area at Kakwa Lake.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>The conservation of viable, natural wildlife populations, their habitat, and ecological process in Kakwa Provincial Park will take precedence over human use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ If existing tenure holders demonstrate negative impacts on conservation and /or recreation values, consideration will be given to modifying terms and conditions of those tenures to minimize or eliminate these impacts.</li> </ul>

## Non-Conforming Uses

### Trapping

Three registered traplines partly overlap Kakwa Provincial Park . Part of the park, at the head of the McGregor watershed, is closed to trapping. The owners of the registered traplines use snowmobiles, under the authority of Park Use Permits, to maintain their lines.

Both the Dawson Creek and the Prince George Land and Resource Management Plans endorsed trapping as an acceptable activity within the park. As per park policy, existing tenures will be continued and are renewable. However, in the future, if there is the opportunity to purchase a trap line, or parts of a trapline, on a willing seller basis, this option may be pursued.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To permit trapping as an allowable non-conforming use endorsed by the LRMPs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to honour the current commitments to the owners of the traplines and issue Park Use Permits for registered traplines.</li> <li>• Inform the owners of BC Parks’ interest in acquiring the traplines on a willing seller basis when they become available.</li> <li>• Continue to permit use of snowmobiles for trapping purposes, including areas which are closed to recreational snowmobiling. ATVs will not be permitted.</li> <li>• Do not allow any new permanent cabins or seasonal camps in the park for trapping purposes.</li> <li>• Old trapping cabins will be left to deteriorate and will not be replaced. If public safety is a concern they will be demolished.</li> </ul>
<p>To minimize impacts from trapping and ensure conservation objectives are not compromised.</p>	<p>The priorities for acquiring traplines on a willing seller basis are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The area which is within the “No Hunting Area”.</li> <li>➤ Areas in the northern part of the park (the Torrens/Hanington/Narraway area), so that it can be managed as a completely wild area with no motorized access.</li> <li>➤ Remaining areas in the park.</li> </ul>

## Wishaw Quarry

Quartzite deposits in Kakwa Provincial Park were first staked in the 1960s, at the head of Babette Lake. The tote road from Alberta was built for exploration of the deposits. In the 1980s, as work was underway to designate the park, additional claims were staked at Wishaw Lake. The tote road from Buchanan Creek was built and a camp was established at Babette Lake.

During the development of the Prince George LRMP, an agreement was negotiated with the current owner to allow enlargement of the claims at Wishaw Lake, in exchange for extinguishing the claims at Babette Lake. The camp was subsequently removed, work was undertaken on site rehabilitation, and the tote road was abandoned north of Wishaw Lake. The Prince George LRMP table recommended that current tenures be honoured but that no future re-staking be permitted. However, the final approved LRMP allowed for indefinite re-staking.

The establishment of the Kakwa Protected Area is intended to allow expansion of the Wishaw Lake claims and to allow continued use of the access tote road from Buchanan Creek. Periodic exploration of the claims continues but no significant quarrying has yet occurred. The authorization of quarrying adjacent to the core area of the park, in a very scenic area along a major access route, is inconsistent with the wilderness conservation and recreation objectives for the park.

Objectives	Strategies
To eliminate all quarrying activities from Kakwa Protected Area over the long term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to honour the current commitments to the owner of the claims, including expansion of the claims as authorized by the LRMP</li> <li>• Inform the owner of BC Parks' interest in acquiring the claims on a willing seller basis when they become available. Investigate funding options for acquisition of the mining rights.</li> <li>• Work with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources to ensure that BC Parks receives notification of any proposed sale of the quartzite claim.</li> <li>• If in the future, an opportunity to extinguish the existing mineral tenures on a willing seller basis arises, re-assess the future use of this area for quarrying purposes in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. In the interim, new opportunities for staking will be permitted in the area.</li> <li>• If acquisition of the claim occurs, rehabilitate the quarry area and convert the access tote road to a trail.</li> </ul>
Reclassify the Protected Area to Class A park when possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a determination is made to eliminate quarrying in the area in the future, reclassify the protected area around the mineral claims and along the access tote road as Class A Park.</li> <li>• The protected area along the north side of Buchanan Creek will remain until a possible road is constructed to access the</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	headwaters outside the park. After the road is constructed and excepted from the park, the remaining area will be reclassified as Class A Park.

### 4.3 Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area are part of a core of trans-provincial wilderness parkland, surrounded partly by specially managed lands (to conserve old growth forest, wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities) and partly by general resource lands. The ecological integrity and wilderness recreation values of Kakwa are partly dependant on management of adjoining lands in Alberta and British Columbia. Likewise, the wilderness parks in Alberta could be affected by management of Kakwa. Because of these mutual concerns, British Columbia’s first Interprovincial Park has been established to include Kakwa Provincial Park, Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park and Willmore Wilderness Park.

Also of interest is that the province of Alberta is proposing Canadian Heritage River designation for Kakwa River in their province.

Significant coal interests and associated development are now occurring on tenures adjacent to the park boundary on the northern side of the Torrens River.

Objectives	Strategies
Work in cooperation with managing agencies of lands adjacent to the park to achieve mutual benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with adjacent jurisdictions to try to minimize the impacts of adjacent tenures on Kakwa Provincial Park and especially to control new access to the park.</li> <li>• Coordinate management with Alberta Parks, British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range, Minsitry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (for commercial recreation tenures,) and Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources.</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Relationship with First Nations

Kakwa Provincial Park lies partly within the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation's traditional territory and partly within the Treaty 8 Area. Members of the Cree/Metis communities from the south Peace area also have a history of association with the park, for example as hunting guides.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
To work with First Nations in ways which respect treaty and aboriginal rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in treaty negotiations with Lheidli T'enneh regarding shared interests in Kakwa Provincial Park.</li><li>• BC Parks will work with First Nations in the Treaty 8 area, including the Cree/Metis communities, to explore common interests in developing a working relationship.</li></ul>

# 6.0 Natural and Cultural Heritage Values Management

## 6.1 Geology, Soils and Landforms

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area contain a full range of the geological formations that represent the Rocky Mountains. Limestone and fragmented sedimentary rocks underlie the park, ranging in age from older than half a billion years to a little over 100 million years. Geological features of special significance include fish fossil occurrences, dinosaur trackways, flume and karst formations.

Karst terrain and a number of caves are found in the limestone formations of the park. Many of these caves are unexplored and others are likely to be found. Cave resurgences, or places where underground streams reappear at the surface, are common features of the Mount Sir Alexander and Mount Ida areas.

The geological history of the area also resulted in formation of quartzite, a mineral of industrial interest.

Typical of mountain settings, soils in Kakwa Provincial Park are quite variable. Factors such as soil drainage, texture, stability, and composition influence soil suitability for park use and development. In many alpine areas, fine textured soils are prone to “muddying” and erosion, especially in combination with late snow melt and summer rains. Alpine areas with wet organic soils are poorly suited for concentrated trail use. Wet meadows are easily damaged, as has occurred in Kakwa Pass through horse use. Recreational overuse, or poorly located facilities, could lead to accelerated erosion and soil compaction. If use levels continue to increase as seen over recent years, soil erosion and degradation will require trail re-location or closure.

Objectives	Strategies
To protect the park’s significant fossil formations, dinosaur trackways, and geological formations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to protect sites of significant fish fossils, dinosaur trackways, and geological formations.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Avoid publicizing the location of these features.</li> <li>➤ Any research undertaken in the park will require at least one member of the party to demonstrate relevant qualifications and experience to conduct or supervise the project.</li> <li>➤ If necessary to protect the resource, close the area to public access.</li> <li>➤ Display examples for public enjoyment and appreciation at suitable locations such as visitor centres, museums and park offices.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Encourage accredited researchers and museums to publish information about the fossils for public distribution.</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure all park activities contribute to maintaining the integrity of soils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage recreational facilities (trails, campsites, horse corrals) with recognition of the sensitive nature of soils in wet, valley-bottom locations.</li> <li>• Undertake soil impact assessments prior to authorizing any new facilities.</li> </ul>
<p>Take corrective action where impairment has already occurred.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate alternative locations for facilities where use has resulted in soil damage. Where possible, allow natural restoration to occur.</li> <li>• Rehabilitate the quarry area and convert the access tote road to a trail if the quarry tenure is extinguished in the future.</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Water

Aquatic features within Kakwa Provincial Park include subalpine lakes (Kakwa, Jarvis, Cecilia, Dimsdale and Babette Lakes), the provincially significant Narraway Falls, and watersheds that drain north and west from the Continental Divide.

Although information on water quality has not been collected, quality is expected to be good due to the limited human use of this park. Increased recreational use could impact water quality in the park, as this is a primitive area with limited facilities to handle waste disposal. Pollution from fuel spills (snowmobiling refueling) and exhaust emissions are known risks where snowmobiling activity is carried out. Waste disposal from increasing levels of human use is also of particular concern in areas where recreation use is centered, such as Jarvis and Kakwa lakes. Impacts to water quality could in turn affect the watershed and associated ecosystem.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Manage all activities to ensure minimal impacts to the park's water quality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct periodic water quality monitoring in the vicinity of horse corrals, the llama base area, Wishaw quarry and areas where snowmobiles are parked and refueled.</li> <li>• Develop snowmobiling re-fueling sites at Kakwa Lake and at junction of Kakwa River and Cecilia Creek to contain any spillage and to ensure water quality is not compromised.</li> <li>• Manage and locate recreational facilities (trails, campsites, horse corrals) with recognition of the high water quality in the park. Implement sediment control measures and ensure contamination of creeks and lakes does not occur.</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite user groups to assist with a water monitoring program and supply information to any user groups contributing negatively to water quality.</li> <li>• Make periodic monitoring a permit condition for commercial activities using horses and llamas.</li> </ul>
Take corrective action if impairment is detected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair or re-route trail sections where they are negatively affecting water quality (notably in Kakwa Pass and Jarvis Lake access).</li> </ul>

## 6.3 Ecosystem Values

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is part of a large wilderness area, largely free from the impacts of human use, with an intact ecosystem that extends well beyond the park’s boundaries. The park provides the only provincial protection of an area that represents the biophysical landscape of the Front Ranges Ecoregion. Extensive intact forests represent four of British Columbia’s biogeoclimatic zones and a variety of habitats support a full range of mountain plants and wildlife species (See Kakwa Background Report, 2001). Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area and adjoining areas support a functioning predator/prey ecosystem, and ecosystem connectivity that allows free movement of species, and maintenance of genetic diversity. These conditions support the long-term ecological integrity of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area.

BC Parks is committed to an ecosystem approach to managing all parks, using an understanding of the interrelationships between biotic and abiotic components towards achieving the goal of maintaining long term ecological integrity. With ecosystems that extend beyond park boundaries, interagency cooperation is essential. The ecosystem approach appreciates that conservation of natural biodiversity will ensure the maintenance of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity, and the processes that shape ecosystems. To do so, some areas may require a priority focus on managing endangered, threatened, or vulnerable species.

Where information requirements are currently limited, the precautionary principle will be applied to ensure the long-term ecological integrity of the park is not compromised. The 1998 Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle summarizes the principle this way:

“When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.”

Preserving the ecological integrity of the park is the primary goal of the management plan.



Objectives	Strategies
<p>Plan and manage Kakwa Provincial Park in recognition of the regional ecosystem context such as the trans-boundary movements of water, wildlife and visitors, and the shared nature of resources such as wildlife habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, formally recognize Kakwa Provincial Park 's regional and provincial significance through appropriate designations and agreements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implement the Interprovincial Park agreement for co-operative management of the shared trans-boundary parkland, signed in 2006 between the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, for Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park, Willmore Wilderness Park, and Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area.</li> <li>➤ Nominate Kakwa Provincial Park as an addition to the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.</li> <li>➤ Invite the managers of Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park, Willmore Wilderness Park, Rock Lake Solomon Creek, Jasper National Park and Mount Robson Provincial Park to formally recognize the significance of the parklands north of Highway 16 as the largest protected and un-roaded wilderness in southern Canada; seek formal inter-agency agreement for co-operative management.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to support and contribute to the work of the West-Central Alberta Caribou Standing Committee.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with vegetation management agencies to minimize negative impacts on park values from activities (road building, logging or forest management) adjacent to the park.</li> <li>• Inform visitors of Kakwa Provincial Park 's importance in the regional ecosystem and the resulting management regime in the park.</li> <li>• Work with managers of adjacent non-park land in British Columbia and Alberta to heighten awareness of Kakwa Provincial Park 's role in the regional ecosystem and to solicit co-operative and supporting management of resources and park zoning.</li> <li>• Continue to conduct and support research which improves understanding of the regional ecosystem and which strengthens appropriate management.</li> </ul>
<p>Minimize the negative impacts of activities, inside and outside the park, on the park's ecological integrity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply the standard BC Parks' Impact Assessment Process to all actions inside the park.</li> <li>• Work with other agencies to minimize impacts from adjacent industrial activity to the park. New access opportunities are of major concern.</li> </ul>

## 6.4 Research

BC Parks is committed to progressive environmental inventory and conservation research, results of which will be used in park management.

Objectives	Strategies
Initiate and support appropriate research to continually improve knowledge of Kakwa Provincial Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep databases current by periodically conducting surveys (e.g. wildlife surveys) in order to monitor trends.</li> <li>• Identify significant data gaps and initiate programs, when possible, to acquire the necessary information.</li> <li>• Work with staff in adjacent jurisdictions to co-ordinate research, especially with adjacent Alberta parks.</li> <li>• Consider requests to conduct research on their individual merits. BC Parks’ research policies will apply. All research must be non-destructive in nature and should contribute to improved knowledge of the park and the region. Any research undertaken in the park will require at least one member of the party to demonstrate relevant qualifications and experience to conduct or supervise the project.</li> <li>• Welcome volunteer contributions to authorized research projects.</li> <li>• Establish benchmarks for ecological features to facilitate trend monitoring.</li> </ul>

## 6.5 Vegetation

Kakwa Provincial Park is characterized by the sub - boreal forest that covers nearly half of the park’s area, and the alpine tundra, rock and ice that accounts for the remainder. Four of British Columbia’s fourteen biogeoclimatic zones (areas with similar climate, vegetation and site conditions such as soil and topography) are represented in the park:

- Alpine Tundra (AT); 53% of park
- Engelmann Spruce-Sub-alpine Fir (ESSF); 40% of the park
- Interior Cedar-Hemlock (ICH); 2% of the park
- Sub-Boreal Spruce (SBS); 5% of the park

Engelmann Spruce and Sub-alpine Fir dominate the sub-boreal forest, with the Interior Wet Belt Forest present in the lower portion of Jarvis Creek and Kitchi Creek valleys.

Vegetation cover in the park is mostly undisturbed, other than old cutblocks on the north side of the McGregor River from Jarvis to Kitchi Creek. Localized impacts on vegetation have occurred at popular campsites, along hiking and snowmobile trails, and at the Wishaw quarry.

A significant portion of the forest cover in Kakwa is classified as old, age class 8 (141 – 250 years) or age class 9 (> 250 years.) These stands provide old growth attributes and are a critical component of the ecology of the park. One blue-listed (vulnerable) plant species has been recorded in the park: Juncus arcticus ssp.alaska (a subspecies of Arctic rush, found on the east shore of Babette Lake).

Kitchi Creek protects an isolated population of Douglas-fir and other ecological features, and was earlier proposed as an ecological reserve.

BC Parks has a commitment to allow natural processes to predominate whenever possible. To maintain biodiversity, natural ecosystems within parks will be allowed to evolve from stage to stage. Only in specific instances, where the arrest of a natural process is necessary to protect other outstanding values, will BC Parks interfere.

Objectives	Strategies
Minimize the impact of all activities on the park's vegetation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an assessment to determine grazing capability. Monitor horse grazing areas in popular locations to ensure the sustainability of meadows and the avoidance of introduced species.</li> <li>• Locate trails so as to minimize impacts on vegetation communities.</li> <li>• A winter closure to all firewood cutting in the park will be implemented. Work with the snowmobile community to ensure they are aware of the need to supply a fuel source for winter cabin use. Winter fuel will not be supplied by BC Parks.</li> </ul>
Take corrective action as necessary to repair damage which has already occurred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor vegetation plots in heavily used snowmobile areas; invite the snowmobile community to participate in the program. If adverse impacts are detected, work with the snowmobile community to implement corrective action.</li> <li>• Allow the continued re-growth of vegetation along the former tote road beside Kakwa Lake; If snowmobile trail grooming is continued from the Alberta border to Kakwa Lake, it will be the responsibility of the snowmobile club to brush this area to BC Parks standards.</li> <li>• Take corrective action where trails have impacted park vegetation. ( i.e. Kakwa Pass area).</li> <li>• If the Wishaw quarry and access road are de-activated, ensure that the re-establishment of native vegetation communities is part of the site rehabilitation.</li> <li>• Periodically monitor the logged areas between Jarvis and</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
Recognize the role of agents such as fire and insects in maintaining natural vegetation diversity.	<p data-bbox="646 220 1089 247">Kitchi Creeks for invasive species.</p> <ul data-bbox="597 254 1430 600" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="597 254 1430 432">• In co - operation with park managers in Alberta and forest managers in British Columbia and Alberta, design a fire management plan which allows natural lightning-caused fires to burn wherever possible; in particular, treat the three parks as one common management unit for this purpose.</li> <li data-bbox="597 438 1430 600">• Work closely with the Province of Alberta to control mountain pine beetle populations in areas adjacent to Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park. Ensure a mountain pine beetle assessment and management strategy is completed prior to any control work being undertaken.</li> </ul>

## 6.6 Wildlife

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area contain a diversity of habitats that support the full range of representative mountain wildlife, including caribou, the northern most population of bighorn sheep in North America, grizzly and black bear, wolves, mountain goat, elk and moose. Kakwa contributes to wildlife conservation by extending to the north the large and contiguous protected areas of Willmore Wilderness Provincial Park, and Jasper and Banff national parks.

During the summer, large mammals are often seen throughout the park, but during the winter months, harsh climatic conditions and deep snow force many of the animals other than sheep and goats to move to lower elevations outside the Park.

Species of management concern found in the park include:

- northern ecotypes (wintering at low elevations and feeding on terrestrial lichens) of woodland caribou are provincially vulnerable (Blue listed – BC Conservation Data Centre [CDC]), and federally threatened (COSEWIC) and as such have high conservation priority. Kakwa can contribute to their conservation and recovery by maintaining their habitat within the park in relatively pristine condition.
- grizzly bears are provincially vulnerable (blue listed - CDC) and have a high management priority because of their public appeal as a symbol of wilderness, and the difficulty of trying to eliminate conflicts that arise when people and bears occupy the same environment. By giving bears a high management priority in Kakwa, conflicts can be minimized.
- Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep are provincially vulnerable (blue listed - CDC). Environmental conditions for bighorn sheep in Kakwa are marginal, because the animals in this population are on the northern edge of the species’ range in North America. Kakwa can contribute to their persistence by maintaining their habitat within the Park in relatively pristine condition, and preventing any additional environmental stress.

There is a relatively high density of bears, particularly grizzlies, in the vegetated areas of Kakwa Provincial Park . Mountain populations of bears generally don't exhibit seasonal migrations between low and high elevations. However, some recent work being undertaken by Wayne McCrory<sup>1</sup> indicates that male grizzlies may have such large home ranges that they may move from Kakwa Provincial Park to as far away as spawning salmon areas in the Fraser River system.

McGregor and Providences passes and Kakwa Lake, appear to be of exceptionally high value as components of wildlife movement corridors. If further research substantiates this, special management considerations should be applied to the area to reduce disturbance.

The prominence of grizzly bears, a major natural feature of the park, may result in conflicts with visitors. Some areas may be more hazardous than others, and research on bear hazards will be used to help direct management to prevent conflicts with recreational use. An assessment of the bear hazard has been completed for 35 different hiking trails/routes and 11 rustic campsites for the three bear seasons (spring, summer and fall). Key recommendations from this work have been implemented, and additional items will be completed as funding allows.

All areas other than the high elevation rock and snow in the park are used by small numbers of caribou (of the northern ecotype). Caribou winter in the Grand Cache area and move into Kakwa Provincial Park in the spring, where they stay during the summer months. Caribou migrate through the forest at all elevations, but from late June to late September, stay mostly in the alpine meadows and upper parts of the subalpine forest. Caribou move back to Alberta by November. Because the spring migration into the park may occur as early as April 15<sup>th</sup>, the park will be closed to snowmobiling south of Wallbridge Mountain as of that date. The range of the mountain caribou ecotype just touches the west boundary of the park, and it is possible that they enter the park during the summer and fall months.

Grizzly bears and wolverine are sensitive to disturbance during winter denning. Initial mapping work has identified potential denning sites.

Mountain goats are the most widely distributed of the mountain ungulates. Further work is required to determine the impact of snowmobiling activities on these animals.

An important concentration of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep use the open alpine ridges and basins of the northeast section of Kakwa Provincial Park in the summer. In the winter, most sheep migrate to winter range to the north and east of the park, but some stay in the northeast corner of the park. Efforts will be made to mitigate impacts to this population from the coal activity occurring on the northern boundary of the park.

Elk occur within Kakwa Provincial Park around the Narraway and Edgegrain drainages as well as in the Kakwa Lake area, Sheep Pass and Intersection Mountain area. Moose are frequently seen during the summer, and may be the most common large mammal in the park. Whitetail and mule deer frequent the Kakwa Lake area.

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<sup>1</sup> A Study of Grizzly Bear Movements, Corridor Design Attributes and Management to Minimize Grizzly-Human Encounters in A Protected Wildlife Corridor Across the Central Canadian Rockies, Kaka Provincial Park, B.C. 2003

Wolves and pine marten are widespread, as well as beaver, pika, snowshoe hare, squirrel, porcupine, hoary marmot, deer mice, vole, bushy-tailed wood rat, weasel and mink. In fact, the word “kakwa” is Cree for porcupine.

A variety of birds can be seen in Kakwa, typical of mountainous areas. The park, with its great diversity of habitats (including black spruce bogs, forests, alpine meadows and wetlands), and regional landscapes, support a mix of alpine, mountain, northern, eastern and western bird species.

Fish species reported in the waters of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area include bull trout (blue listed - CDC), arctic grayling and rainbow trout. Bull trout are extremely sensitive to water quality, fishing pressure and habitat disturbance, which will be an important consideration in managing park activities around water features. In June and July, rainbow trout spawn in the river between Kakwa and Wapumun lakes. The horse-crossing has been moved to avoid damage to the redds.

Wildlife resources provide an important attraction for consumptive and non-consumptive recreation opportunities. A self-sustaining rainbow trout population has been established in Cecilia and Kakwa lakes, since stocking in 1981 and 1983, which supports angling opportunities.

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area provides the opportunity to view mountain wildlife species associated with wilderness environments. Resident and guided hunting occurs throughout the park, except in the main areas of recreational use - the Kakwa River and Cecilia Creek watersheds, which are closed to hunting.

Objectives	Strategies
To conserve and sustain the natural diversity of fish and wildlife species and populations and their habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct periodic fish and wildlife surveys as resources permit and update habitat maps and databases.</li> <li>• Monitor the condition of critical habitats and implement habitat protection or restoration measures as appropriate.</li> <li>• Phase out trapping on a willing seller – willing buyer basis over the long term. This will require discussion at the LRMP implementation meetings since trapping was listed as an acceptable use in each LRMP.</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Concentrate efforts on maintaining and restoring Red and Blue listed species (threatened and vulnerable species).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue co-operation with Alberta and British Columbia agencies to monitor the health of the caribou population. Maintain caribou hunting closure for the park.</li> <li>• Implement any actions in the Caribou Recovery Plans which apply to the park.</li> <li>• Determine significance of McGregor and Providence passes and Kakwa Lake as wildlife movement corridor. If research substantiates this, special management considerations to reduce disturbance may be applied.</li> <li>• Develop Best Management Practices for Snowmobiling to minimize impacts to wildlife.</li> <li>• Determine distribution of bull trout in the park.</li> </ul>
<p>To ensure that recreational and commercial uses of the park do not have significant negative effects on fish and wildlife or their habitats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep recreational facilities at current low levels throughout the park. Limit maintained trails and facilities to the area between Kakwa and Jarvis lakes, along the access route from the Alberta border to the McGregor Valley, the Great Divide Trail and the Cecilia Creek horse trail.</li> <li>• Minimize potential conflicts between recreational use and grizzly bears through awareness and education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use the grizzly bear habitat assessment map to minimize potential for bear-recreational conflicts; periodically monitor the effectiveness of this approach and adjust as necessary.</li> <li>➤ Address bear safety issues (line of sight) along trail at Kakwa Lake.</li> <li>➤ Manage food and garbage to prevent access by bears. Maintain bear-proof caches at all established backpacking campsites (Kakwa Lake and Jarvis Lake).</li> <li>➤ Manage bear/human conflict in accordance with the BC Parks Bear-People Conflict Prevention Plan.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Allow only a recreational access trail along the McGregor Valley because of its apparent importance as a wildlife movement corridor, especially for grizzly bears. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Do not authorize any new cabins as they would concentrate use and potentially cause conflicts with bears.</li> <li>➤ Allow random camping in the meadow at Mariel Lake.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Manage all areas to the north of the divide on the north side of Jarvis Creek and Kakwa River (i.e. the Narraway and Torrens drainages) as an undeveloped wild area, with an emphasis on preserving undisturbed wildlife habitat.</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure that hunting and trapping are conducted on a sustainable basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to adjust regulations as necessary to ensure sustainable populations. Manage trapping and hunting on a regional basis that recognizes the larger ecosystem extending beyond the park.</li> <li>• Where possible, co-ordinate hunting regulations with park and wildlife managers in Alberta; aim for common</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	<p>regulations and seasons for ease of understanding and enforcement, and recognize the shared nature of trans-boundary wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the need to manage sheep hunting on a Limited Entry Hunt basis in order to stabilize and conservatively manage the harvest levels of the most northerly population of bighorn sheep in British Columbia</li> <li>• Maintain the “No Hunting” area to reduce impacts to wildlife populations.</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure that fishing is conducted on a sustainable basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to maintain the ice fishing closure.</li> <li>• Do not permit any more fish stocking in the park.</li> <li>• Monitor fish populations to ensure a sustainable population.</li> <li>• Involve interest groups and/or volunteers in monitoring fish and wildlife populations within the park.</li> </ul>

## 6.7 Cultural Heritage

No archaeological work has been undertaken in Kakwa Provincial Park . Historical accounts by early visitors refer to camps, teepee poles and caches, probably associated with First Nation and Metis hunters from the Grande Cache area. Records indicate extensive hunting in the Willmore area, partly to provide meat to Hudson Bay Company (HBC) posts. H.B.C. records from 1819 and 1820 suggest a crossing of Sheep Pass into what is now British Columbia Some archaeological work has been completed in the Grande Cache area and obsidian from the Anahim area in west central British Columbia was recovered.

Exploration accounts by early visitors are more readily available and much information has been obtained from archives in Canada and the United States.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To acquire information about the cultural heritage of Kakwa Provincial Park in order to best protect and present cultural resource values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with First Nations to document traditional knowledge of the park area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Contact First Nation and Metis communities in Grande Cache, Kelly Lake and Prince George and discuss the interest in documenting traditional knowledge.</li> <li>➤ Encourage opportunities for student interns from the University of Northern B.C. and from other universities to record oral histories.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Undertake archaeological surveys and collect historical information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As funding permits, conduct archaeological surveys in key locations such as lakeshores at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes and in Sheep Pass.</li> <li>➤ Continue to collect and document early exploration history.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Objectives	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that any work on the ground, such as trail relocations, is preceded by an impact assessment which includes an archaeological reconnaissance.</li> <li>• As opportunities arise, make the information available to park visitors and others through displays, books etc.</li> </ul>

## 7.0 Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Management

### 7.1 Introduction

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area showcase a spectacular cross-section of the Rocky Mountains including highly scenic alpine lakes and meadows. Park users have passionately expressed that Kakwa Provincial Park rivals, if not surpasses, the grandeur of the national parks to the south, and has been of high recreational interest for many years. Many uses extend beyond the park boundary to adjoining wilderness areas in Alberta.

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area are among the few areas that offers a truly primitive wilderness experience, with potential for multi-day wilderness experiences, while being reasonably compact in size.

Given the national and international significance of wilderness values, recreation and tourism opportunities will be managed with a priority to preserve and manage the park for wilderness recreation enjoyment, and to maintain ecological integrity.

### 7.2 Outdoor Recreation Opportunities and Facilities

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area offer opportunities for backcountry recreation including mountaineering, backpacking and hiking, horse riding, fishing and hunting, caving, snowmobiling and ski touring. The most popular destinations are Kakwa, Cecilia and Jarvis lakes, from which there are excellent day trip opportunities. The core area is at the south end of Kakwa Lake where the park headquarters and main campsite is located. The 1200 km Great Divide Trail, which begins at the US border, enters the park from the south at Sheep Pass and terminates at Kakwa Lake. The Great Divide Trail and other routes provide opportunities for extended, trail-oriented recreation both inside and outside the park boundaries.

Public response during this planning process (2000 – 2005) strongly supported maintaining the wilderness quality of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. This included maintaining the existing “footprint” of built facilities. Any change to this direction would require full public review and completing an amendment to the plan.

Facilities are limited to:

- informal, unmaintained trails.
- pit toilets and bear caches at the designated camping area at the south end of Kakwa Lake.
- cabins at the south end of Kakwa Lake which are the Park Ranger Headquarters. These cabins are available for public use during the winter and summer on a first-come basis, when not occupied or required by park staff or hosts.
- a cabin at Jarvis Lake
- horse campground at Kakwa Lake.

Unrestricted, no trace unmotorized wilderness camping is available throughout the park. Open fires will be discouraged except in emergency situations.

The provision of recreational opportunities must be managed in harmony with the park’s ecological, wilderness, and cultural values. Therefore, some limitations may be required, and areas most significant for wildlife habitat will be left completely wild.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<p>To keep facilities minimal and rustic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general intent is to maintain the status quo, that is, a small number of rustic facilities (i.e. log cabins that reflect the area’s history).</li> <li>• Retain existing cabins at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes for public use when not required for management purposes.</li> <li>• Fixed roof accommodations, such as lodges, cabins or huts, will be limited to the replacement of existing facilities only. Replacement facilities should be designed to minimize and mitigate existing impacts and should not exceed the “footprint” of the existing buildings.</li> <li>• Season-long camps will not be authorized. Trappers, hunting guides and recreationalists will be subject to the standard 14 day limit for camps set out in the regulations. Temporary caches in approved locations, for storing equipment and supplies between trips may be authorized but they must be removed at the end of each season.</li> <li>• Existing trails will remain rustic (Type 4) and will be repaired/relocated only where there are serious adverse impacts on the park environment (e.g. to correct erosion and multiple trails in Kakwa Pass).</li> <li>• New trails will not be developed.</li> <li>• Areas to the north of Jarvis Creek and Kakwa River (Torrens, Hanington and Narraway drainages) will be left completely wild, with an emphasis on maintaining undisturbed wildlife habitat. No</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	<p>facilities of any kind will be provided or authorized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The unofficial Great Divide Trail will terminate at Kakwa Lake. BC Parks will not formally designate a “Great Divide Trail” north of Kakwa Lake.</li> <li>• The designated campsite at Kakwa Lake will have minimal facilities, although designated camping pads may be constructed to minimize impact.</li> <li>• Other informal campsites around Kakwa Lake will remain closed because of grizzly bear use in the area.</li> <li>• Random camping will be permitted elsewhere in the park, with visitors encouraged to practice zero-impact camping and to avoid open fires except in emergency situations.</li> </ul>
<p>To manage commercial recreation in order to minimize impacts on the park’s ecological integrity, wilderness qualities, and public use and enjoyment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Torrens/Hanington and Narraway drainages will not be available for commercial recreation, except for the Guide Outfitter (and then only for hunting purposes). Strict environmental ethics and practices will be included in the Park Use Permit issued for this area.</li> <li>• The public cabins at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes will not be available for use by commercial operators; they will be retained for public use at all times when not needed for management purposes.</li> </ul>
<p>To limit motorized uses in order to protect the park’s wilderness values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ATVs will not be permitted in the park at any time;</li> <li>• In keeping with the wilderness character of the park, summer motorized use on any lake or river will not be authorized.</li> <li>• Heli-skiing, heli-hiking, flightseeing, fly-in picnicking, fly-in fishing or any other commercial motorized activities will not be permitted.</li> <li>• Aircraft landings will continue to be allowed at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes.</li> <li>• Commercial helicopters landings will not be permitted in the park except for research and limited management purposes and those authorized by Park Use Permit.</li> </ul>

## Snowmobiling

Snowmobiling is a popular winter recreational use of the park from both British Columbia and Alberta, mostly in the Kakwa and Cecilia lakes areas. The most popular snowmobiling areas are the watersheds of Babette, Cecilia, Jarvis and Kakwa lakes, McGregor Pass, and the Mount Ruth, Sheep Pass, Mount Sir Alexander and Mount Ida areas. There are many open ridges and meadows, and there is some spring use on the snowfields of the higher peaks.

When the Wilderness Advisory Committee recommended the establishment of Kakwa Recreation Area in 1986, they also recommended the need for snowmobile use to be regulated. In the years since then, snowmobile use and capabilities have increased considerably. This management plan, while recognizing snowmobiling as a legitimate recreational activity in Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area, also recognizes the need to manage the park for wildlife and non-motorized wilderness values. Areas open to snowmobiling will therefore be zoned Nature Recreation Zone.

In several areas of the park, traditional snowmobiling routes will serve as the Nature Recreation Zone border. For example, areas to the east of the Kakwa Lake to the Alberta tote road will be open as will areas to the west of the Cecilia Creek to Sheep Pass route. Although some areas of snowmobile activity have currently been included in the Nature Recreation Zone due to existing use, should information on impacts to wildlife become known, these areas will be further reviewed to determine how impacts can be reduced.

With the increasing capability of snowmobiles, the use pattern is changing from one of exploring Kakwa Provincial Park to testing the limits of the machine. While the role of this management plan is to ensure that legitimate wilderness recreational snowmobiling occurs, it is not the intent to endorse “high marking” or other high types of snow play which may impact on user safety and park conservation values. Avalanche training is strongly recommended for any winter recreational activities in the park. Therefore, with the intent of managing the park for ecological integrity and high wilderness values, management action will be reviewed and undertaken as required.

Specified seasons, based on best available biological knowledge, will be implemented to minimize disturbance of spring caribou migration into the park and bear denning emergence.

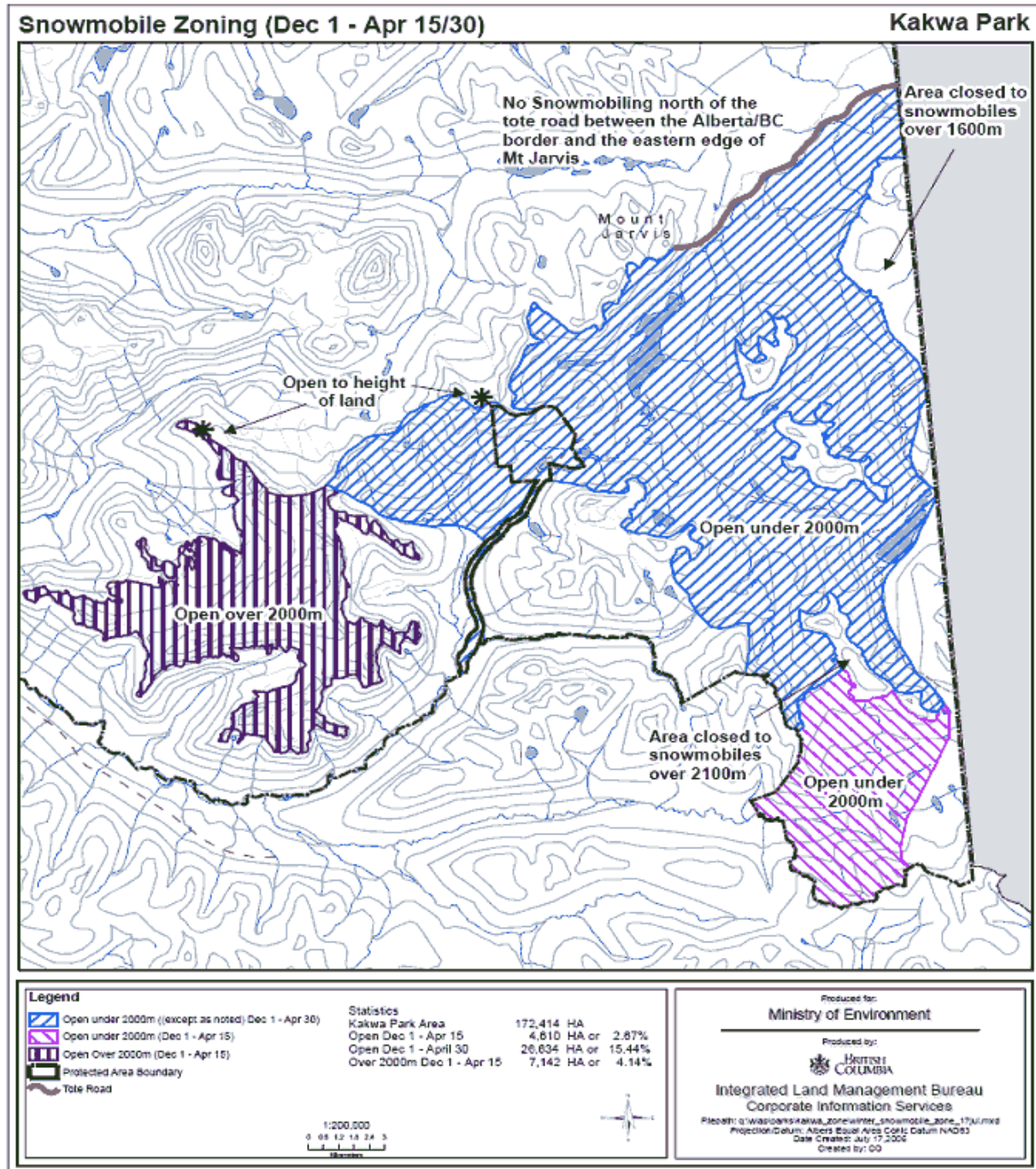
North of the Divide, areas above 1,400 meters are closed from May to November to avoid environmental impacts and disturbance to wildlife.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
To provide snowmobiling opportunities while minimizing disturbance to non-motorized wilderness users and wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The permitted snowmobiling season will be 4.5 to 5 months long, from December 1 to April 15/30 each winter.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mount Sir Alexander area will be open until April 15<sup>th</sup> each year to allow for motorized activities.</li> <li>➤ The motorized season for the Mount Sir Alexander area may be extended until April 30<sup>th</sup>, if motorized and non-motorized user groups submit a mutually acceptable agreement for joint use of the area from April 16 – 30<sup>th</sup> to the Regional Manager.</li> <li>➤ The area south of Bastille Mtn will be closed April 15<sup>th</sup> each year to minimize disturbance to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	<p>migrating caribou.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowmobiling will only be permitted in the Nature Recreation Zone (see pg 42). Remaining areas will be closed to snowmobiling, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ areas to the north and west of the tote road from the Alberta border to Kakwa Lake to minimize disturbance to bighorn sheep.</li> <li>➤ the provincial boundary area north from Intersection Mtn. to protect goat habitat and to provide an operational buffer to the Alberta snowmobiling closures.</li> <li>➤ all areas over 2,000 m (2,100 m for Bastille) to minimize disturbance to goat populations.</li> <li>➤ Jarvis Lake and Mount Idea area to provide non-motorized recreational opportunities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recommend that all backcountry users of the Mt. Sir Alexander/Mt Ida alpine area attend a minimum two-day winter backcountry safety course presented by certified members of the Canadian Avalanche Association.</li> <li>• Maintain a high quality snowmobiling experience in Kakwa by initiating a process, in cooperation with Alberta, to manage snowmobile use in the area. BC Parks will work through the Interprovincial Park MoU to establish a desired quota for use (currently 200-300 machines per day use the park) and mechanisms to implement that quota. This may include, but is not limited to, user fees.</li> <li>• Snowmobiling clubs will be encouraged to contribute to the gathering of further biological knowledge by reporting any wildlife sightings.</li> </ul>
<p>To provide overnight use opportunities which limit impacts to the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overnight snowmobile users will be restricted to the cabins at Kakwa Lake for sanitation reasons.</li> <li>• The standard 14 day limit will apply. Users must supply their own wood for fuel from outside of the park. A closure to firewood cutting in the park will be implemented.</li> <li>• Snowmobile tent camps will not be permitted in Kakwa Provincial Park.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop and promote adoption of Best Management Practices for snowmobiling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Best Management Practices for maintaining soil, air and water quality; vegetation communities and wildlife populations and maximizing outdoor recreational experience. Snowmobile clubs in Grande Prairie and Prince George will be encouraged to use this document to work towards a joint Stewardship Agreement for the area.</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use levels will be monitored to determine appropriate carrying capacities.</li> </ul>

Figure 6: Snowmobile Zoning



## Hunting

Hunting is a traditional recreational and commercial use for the area, especially for bighorn sheep in the northeast. Kakwa and Cecilia watersheds are closed for hunting, as they are the main areas used for general recreation.

Except for the “No Hunting Area”, Kakwa Provincial Park is open to hunting for game species, except for caribou, during open seasons. Sheep hunting in the Torrens area is open to residents only. There are two commercial guide-outfitting tenures within the park.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To provide hunting opportunities in a sustainable manner using sound science and accepted wildlife management principles and practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hunting will continue in the park, except in the “No Hunting Area”, which will remain at the current size. Recreational use at Jarvis Lakes will be monitored to assess implications of hunting to other users (see also the Wildlife section).</li> <li>• Guided hunting will continue in the two guide tenure areas (all areas outside the “No Hunting” area).</li> <li>• The “residents only” sheep hunting area in the Torrens area will be retained.</li> <li>• Where possible, season openings and regulations will be coordinated with the neighbouring park jurisdictions.</li> </ul>





## Horse and Llama Use

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area provides good opportunities for horseback riding and packing trips. Many of the trails in the park were originally developed through horse use. Travel through Kakwa Provincial Park is often part of a longer trip along the Great Divide Trail.

Objectives	Strategies
To permit sustainable horseback riding in the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a horse grazing assessment to determine appropriate carrying capacities.</li> <li>• Use levels will be monitored and maximum party size limits will be implemented upon completion of grazing assessments.</li> <li>• If limits of any kind become necessary, they will be applied first to commercial operators, and secondly to the general public.</li> <li>• Electric fences or tethering will not be permitted.</li> <li>• Open fires will not be permitted except for emergency situations</li> <li>• Separate campsites for horse and llama parties will be provided at Kakwa Lake, to minimize social and environmental impacts. An alternative site for the horse camp will be designated.</li> <li>• The need for a campsite at the north end of Kakwa Lake, primarily for horse users, will be investigated.</li> <li>• Do not permit access by horse-drawn wagons.</li> <li>• Horse use in the Torrens/Hanington /Narraway area will be discouraged to preserve the northern part of the park as a wild area with a focus on maintaining undisturbed wildlife habitat.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New trails will not be provided or authorized in this area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
To permit sustainable llama use in specific areas of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to permit llamas as pack animals, restricted to current use areas (Kakwa Lake, Mt. Ruth, La Glace Lake) to reduce the possibility of disease transmittal to bighorn sheep.</li> <li>• Designate a separate campsite at Kakwa Lake.</li> <li>• Monitor for impacts from llama use.</li> </ul>

## Hiking, Camping, Mountaineering, Caving, Ski Touring, Fishing and Mountain Biking

Climbing has been a long standing use in the park, and mountaineering opportunities exist on the park's high peaks and glaciers, including Mount Dimsdale, Mount Pommel, Mount Ida, Mount Sir Alexander, and others. There are good opportunities for backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and winter camping, but access limitations discourage use. Avalanche training is strongly recommended for any winter recreational activities in the park.

Hiking, backpacking and wilderness camping are also popular uses of the park. Primitive trails and routes radiate out from Kakwa Lake through valleys and to alpine meadows, providing many opportunities for day hikes and overnight trips. Most of the trails are not maintained, and many are routes rather than trails. The most popular destinations are Kakwa, Cecilia and Jarvis lakes which allow for day trip opportunities to Mount Ruth, Mount Ian Monroe, as well as Babette, Wapumun, Mariel and Wishaw lakes. Longer hiking trips are available to the Jarvis Lakes cabin, Cecilia Lake, Sheep Pass, and into the Kitchi Creek and Edgegrain Creek watersheds.

Fishing is most popular on Kakwa Lake, but also occurs on Cecilia and Dimsdale lakes.

The caves of Kakwa Provincial Park are only minimally explored, and subject to extreme safety hazards.

Objectives	Strategies
To permit hiking, camping, mountaineering, mountain biking, ski touring, and fishing in the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support facilities will continue to be minimal and rustic; random use will continue to be permitted except in the immediate vicinity of Kakwa Lake cabins.</li> <li>• Activities must have zero-impact.</li> <li>• Open fires will be discouraged except for emergency situations.</li> <li>• Should use warrant it, consider designating a wilderness campsite at the Buchanan Creek.</li> <li>• Should use warrant it, consider designating a wilderness campsite or emergency shelter in the Wilderness Recreation Zone.</li> <li>• Permit mountain bikes only on the old tote road, from Buchanan Creek to Kakwa Lake.</li> <li>• All winter alpine users will be encouraged to take an avalanche safety course.</li> </ul>
Allow continued recreational access to the various caves in the park, while managing for visitor hazards and feature sensitivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow continued exploration for new caves, providing information is shared with BC Parks.</li> <li>• Because of the dangerous nature of some caves, advertising and the provision of cave maps will be discouraged.</li> <li>• Develop a protocol with caving organizations to include agreements on such items as protection of surface and subsurface features, information sharing and cave rescues.</li> </ul>

## 7.3 Tourism and Commercial Recreation Opportunities

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area have been noted to have high capability for commercial recreation opportunities, particularly heli or cat skiing, ski touring and snowmobiling (Prince George Tourism Opportunity Study, 1999). The area is also regionally known as an outstanding area for llama packing and backpacking. Current commercial recreation tenures in the park are guide-outfitting, llama - assisted hiking, mountain guiding and aircraft access.

For some users, commercial recreation opportunities enhance their use and enjoyment of protected areas. Review of existing and potential commercial recreation activities in the park must consider the highest priority of managing for wilderness values and ecological integrity, and implications to public recreation use. Although demand for commercial recreation services may grow in the future, priority should be placed on maintaining the wilderness character of Kakwa.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Continue to permit low-key commercial recreation in support of visitor enjoyment of the park, as long as it does not interfere with general public use and enjoyment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow commercial aircraft drop-off and pick-up of passengers at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes. A maximum number of trips/season will be established for each activity, so that visitor numbers are kept low and a high value wilderness experience is provided.</li> <li>• Authorize a limited number of commercial permits for those activities most closely associated with the park's wilderness nature including hiking, climbing, horse use, ski touring and llama use. A maximum number of trips/season will be established for each activity, so that visitor numbers are kept low and a high value wilderness experience is provided. One permit for each activity type will be issued.</li> <li>• Commercial operators will not be permitted use of any existing cabins or to establish season-long base camps.</li> <li>• The precautionary principle and adaptive management will be used. Changes (in use, activities, management practices etc) will proceed only when there is assurance of no adverse impacts on social and environmental conditions. The onus will be on proponents to demonstrate that no adverse conditions will result from their proposals.</li> </ul>

## 7.4 Management Services

BC Parks is now part of the Environmental Stewardship Division of the Ministry of Environment, which is the provincial government agency responsible for the planning and management of Parks and Protected Areas. Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is administered from the Omineca Regional Office in Prince George.

The *Park Act* and the *Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation*, Ministry policies and procedures, and overall government policy and legislation guide the management of these parks. BC Parks undertakes a number of park management strategies and actions to ensure that government legislation and policies are implemented.

Park operations and management will require utmost respect for the wilderness values of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. The role of the park as part of the largest protected wilderness area in southern Canada will require coordination with land managers of adjacent and adjoining parkland in Alberta and British Columbia. Liaison regarding management of non-park land will be equally important. Park user groups will play an important role in monitoring and management activities, and partnerships of mutual benefit will be encouraged.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To ensure that all management activities contribute to maintaining the park as a wilderness area according to the guidelines of this management plan, and the established legislation, policies and procedures of the Ministry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize evidence of management activity throughout the park.</li> <li>• As far as possible, conduct management activities in ways that parallel public use of the park.</li> <li>• Management will limit wheeled vehicles in the park; winter patrols will be conducted by snowmobile; helicopters and aircraft will be used when necessary (e.g. for rescues, wildlife surveys, research, ferrying equipment and supplies and for winter patrol support).</li> <li>• A motorized boat will be kept at Kakwa Lake for emergency purposes and management use.</li> <li>• The park headquarters cabins at Kakwa Lake will be retained as the site is central to the core use area.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fixed roof accommodation will be limited to replacement of existing facilities only.</li> <li>➤ User groups, notably the snowmobiling community, should be invited to participate in maintaining and/or replacing cabins.</li> <li>➤ The implementation of user fees to assist in management costs will be explored.</li> <li>➤ A firewood cutting closure will be implemented.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>BC Parks will no longer continue to provide heat</p>

Objectives	Strategies
	<p>or fuel for the cabins.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the signed Memorandum of Understanding in the Interprovincial Park for the three adjoining parks (Kakwa, Kakwa Wildland, and Willmore Wilderness). The objectives of the agreement are coordinated policies and regulations, joint mapping and wildlife surveys, and other management initiatives including a common approach to trans-boundary trails and the provision of visitor information.</li> <li>• Develop a World Heritage Site nomination for Kakwa Provincial Park to be added to the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.</li> <li>• Support Alberta’s nomination of Kakwa River as a Canadian Heritage River.</li> <li>• Promote the establishment of a wilderness management working group, consisting of staff from the three adjacent parks plus Jasper and Mount Robson parks. The objective is to recognize and manage the parklands north of Highway 16 as the largest protected wilderness area in southern Canada.</li> <li>• Work with managers of adjacent non-park lands to encourage resource activities and access management which support the wilderness objectives for Kakwa Provincial Park.</li> <li>• A winter host program will be investigated as a priority. The summer host program will continue.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, participate in other programs which contribute to park objectives (for example, the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative),</li> <li>• Impact Assessments will be done prior to undertaking any new management activity on the ground.</li> </ul>

## 8.0 Visitor Information

### 8.1 Introduction

Visitor communication is an important component of park management. A variety of tools can be used to assist the public in planning for a park visit, to promote outdoor etiquette and visitor safety, and provide for awareness, appreciation and education of the park’s natural and cultural values. For Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area it will be essential to address public

expectations relating to the park experience by communicating its wilderness character, user responsibility and lack of facilities.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To provide accurate information for visitors to enjoy the park appropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited information will be provided at Kakwa Lake, Buchanan Creek and at the Walker Creek Road turnoff.</li> <li>• Develop a winter use brochure and zoning map. Liaise with snowmobile users to provide information as needed.</li> <li>• Ensure all information conveys the message that Kakwa Provincial Park is a wilderness area.</li> <li>• Discuss with Alberta Parks the possibility of regional brochures, maps and other information sources that provide common information about all three parks.</li> <li>• As Kakwa Provincial Park is a wilderness park, no interpretive signs or displays will be installed.</li> <li>• Maps and other information will be provided at the cabins at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes. Information shelters will be provided at the Alberta border and at the Bastille/Buchanan trailhead. Off-site information may be provided at visitor centres and park offices.</li> <li>• Provide the most current information on the BC Parks' website.</li> <li>• Known publishers of hiking and outdoor guidebooks will be asked to provide appropriate information.</li> </ul>

## 8.2 Visitor Experience

### Awareness

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is largely a wilderness area with low use levels and little infrastructure. Visitors expect undisturbed wilderness when they travel to this area, but also have the responsibility to help preserve this environment during their stay. Visitors should also be aware that the park will be proposed as an addition to the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site because of its outstanding natural values.

For summer visitors, knowledge of bear safety, wilderness survival and no trace visitation is essential. Visitors need to be prepared for all weather conditions, including snow, which can fall during any month of the year. Motorized access (float plane or vehicle access along the Walker

Creek Forest Road) can be unpredictable due to weather or poor road conditions and visitors should have supplemental supplies in case their departure is delayed. Many of the trails within Kakwa are little more than routes, so good map reading and navigational skills are essential. Information on the kilometer point which is accessible on the Walker Creek Forest Road is posted on the website at ([www.BCParks.ca](http://www.BCParks.ca)).

Winter visitors (predominantly snowmobilers) need to be knowledgeable regarding winter survival skills and avalanche hazards and practice safe, minimal impact snowmobiling. Specific concerns relate to any disturbance to wildlife or vegetation, no trace visitation and care when refueling machines. Although cabins exist at Kakwa and Jarvis lakes, all visitors must be self-reliant in case the cabins are full or are being used by park staff or volunteers. Mechanized visitors to Kakwa should appreciate that snowmobiling in a provincial park has been authorized as our knowledge at this time indicates that the use in Kakwa has less impact on wildlife values than in the adjacent Willmore Wilderness. The park has been zoned to provide opportunities for snowmobilers, but also to ensure areas of the park provide recreational opportunities for non-motorized users. Snowmobilers using the park are not only requested to comply with park zoning, but to report violators to BC Parks. Should zoning non-compliance occur, closures or quotas may be implemented.

## Specific Protected Area Themes and Management Messages

All visitors, and those interested in Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area should have access to information that provides them with a **Sense of Place** (what are the key values of Kakwa Provincial Park), the **System of BC Parks**, and how both the public and BC Parks are jointly responsible for the **Stewardship** of the park. Although the web does provide information on all of these components, the following section will focus on the two key delivery themes of a **Sense of Place** and the responsibility of **Stewardship**.

Interpretation and Information provide an opportunity to increase the public’s understanding and enjoyment of their provincial parks. It is through knowledge and appreciation that users care enough to become stewards of these special places. Reducing visitor impacts on the natural and cultural resources and increasing visitor capacity to travel safely in the backcountry are essential to the successful management of protected areas.

### Management Messaging

Theme	Theme	Management Message
Sense of Place	<b>Special Features</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kakwa Lake – water colour,</li> <li>• Fossils, dinosaur trackways, and geological features.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining water quality</li> <li>• Feature protection</li> </ul>
	<b>Species of Concern</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grizzly bear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High grizzly habitat and movement corridors.</li> <li>• Potential denning site closures.</li> </ul>

Theme	Theme	Management Message
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (most northerly herd).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Snowmobiling closure.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caribou</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seasonal snowmobile closure.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wolverine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential denning site closures.</li> </ul>
<b>Stewardship – Protecting the Resource and Visitor</b>	<b>Visitor Safety - Bears</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include safety information in park brochures and on the web.</li> <li>Provide written information to all commercial operators within park with a requirement that a brief bear safety orientation be provided to all clients.</li> </ul>
	<b>Visitor Safety - Caves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a safety warning on Kakwa web page as many of the caves in Kakwa are extremely hazardous.</li> <li>Liase with caving groups.</li> </ul>
	<b>Visitor Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide web links to map suppliers.</li> <li>Provide links to backcountry skills and safety information.</li> </ul>
	<b>Feature Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fossils/trackways/features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all visitors and Park Use Permit holders are aware that removal or disturbance of any fossils/features is a violation of the <i>Park Act</i>.</li> </ul>
	<b>No Trace Visitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct link to No Trace program on Kakwa web page.</li> <li>Include information in park brochure and on signs.</li> <li>Provide written information to all commercial operators within the park with a requirement that a no trace orientation be provided to all clients.</li> </ul>

## Education and Interpretation Messaging

Primary Themes	
Theme – Sense of Place	Key Message Elements
<b>Special Features</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mount Sir Alexander and Mount Ida</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The two most northerly Rocky Mountain peaks over 10,000 feet.</li> </ul>



<b>Primary Themes</b>	
• Kakwa Lake	• Water colour
• <b>Ecosection Representation</b>	
• Front Ranges Ecosection	• Key features, Rocky Mountain bighorn
• Hart Ranges Ecosection	• Fossils, karst, grizzly and goat habitat
• <b>Species of Concern</b>	
• Grizzly bear	• Components of high habitat values. • Possible migration corridor to Fraser River salmon.
• Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (most northerly herd)	• Habitat values found in the Torrens.
• Caribou	• Seasonal migration to Alberta.
• Wolverine	• Habitat requirements
<b>Theme – A System of Protected Areas</b>	
• <b>World Heritage Site</b>	• Proposed addition of Kakwa to the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.
• <b>Interprovincial Park</b>	• British Columbia’s first Interprovincial Park.

As Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is neither accessible by road nor closely associated with a nearby community, the key methods of messaging will be:

- The web
- Park brochure
- BC Parks will co-ordinate with Alberta park managers to ensure a common approach to transboundary trails and the provision of park information. Limited information will be provided at Kakwa Lake and Bastille/Buchanan Creek and the Alberta boundary.
- A map at the trailheads and Kakwa cabin of the Kakwa area showing grizzly habitat.
- An interpretive sign at Kakwa Lake cabin on the values of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area.
- Information on no trace visitation.
- Information will be provided to all commercial Park Use Permit holders.
- Opportunities will be pursued with key users (i.e. snowmobilers) to sponsor information initiatives.

## 9.0 Plan Implementation

This management plan provides direction for the management of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area, and the basis from which BC Parks and other agencies can set priorities to meet management objectives. Implementation of most of the strategies will be of an operational nature, but others may require more detailed planning. BC Parks will ensure that First Nations, other agencies, public interest groups, and stakeholders are consulted where appropriate.

Implementation of these strategies is dependent on availability of staff and resources, and other regional priorities.

### 9.1 High Priority Strategies

#### Conservation

- Ensure all research conducted in the park is by accredited professionals.
- Implement user limits for horses in the park based on results of grazing capability studies.
- Implement a winter firewood cutting closure. BC Parks will no longer supply fuel or permit tree cutting in the park. Snowmobiling clubs will be encouraged to assist in supplying the cabins with firewood.
- Further research is needed to determine numbers, seasonal habitats, migration corridors, threats and recreational impacts to woodland caribou and mountain sheep.

#### Recreation

##### Winter

- Develop a winter snowmobile brochure/zoning map. Include Best Management Practices.
- Implement a winter parks presence to provide information, monitoring and compliance. The implementation of user fees to assist in management cost will be explored
- Provide annual management update to Prince George and Grande Prairie snowmobile clubs.

## **Summer**

- Accept new commercial guiding applications for the following activities: hiking/backpacking, aircraft drop-off and pick-up at Kakwa Lake and mountaineering (one permit for each activity will be issued). Establish a maximum allowable number of annual commercial trips/activity.
- Re-route trail in Kakwa Pass.
- Mark route into Jarvis Lakes to reduce trail braiding in wet areas.
- Determine need for horse user campsite at north end of Kakwa Lake.
- Locate horse user campsite along Cecilia Creek.
- Develop a separate campsite for llama groups at Kakwa Lake.

## **9.2 Task or Project Strategies**

- Designation of Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area as part of the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.
- Inform quarry tenure holder of BC Parks' interest in quarry tenure purchase, on a willing seller basis, should it become available. If so, work with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources to re-assess the use of this area for quarrying.
- Ensure "No Trace" program is posted on web site.
- Develop a protocol with caving organizations regarding protection of surface features, information sharing and cave rescues.
- Inform trappers of BC Parks' interest in trapline purchase, on a willing seller basis, as they become available.

## **9.3 On-going or Monitoring Strategies**

- Conduct periodic water quality monitoring in the vicinity of the horse corrals, the llama base area and Wishaw quarry. Undertake periodic snow/water testing in areas where snowmobiling are parked and refueled.
- Snowmobile and horse use will be monitored including impacts to vegetation, tree cutting, wildlife impacts and garbage.
- Conduct on-going grazing capability study.

# Appendix I Protected Areas Strategy Goals and Guiding Principles

## Conservation Goals

### Goal 1: Representativeness

To protect viable examples of the natural diversity of the province that are representative of major terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems, the characteristic habitats, hydrology and landforms, and the characteristic heritage values of each ecosection.

### Goal 2: Special Features

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 such as trails.

## Guiding Principles

The first priority in the use and management of protected areas is to protect their ecological viability and integrity.

Recreational activities, facilities, services and cultural heritage policies in protected area must be compatible with each area's objectives and the long-term protection of ecological viability and integrity, while enhancing the public's experience of the natural and cultural heritage of the province.

## BC Parks Recreation Goals

### Goal 1: Outdoor Recreation Holiday Destination Opportunities

To provide park attractions which serve as or improve key destinations for outdoor recreation holidays.

### Goal 2: Tourism Travel Route Opportunities

To provide parks and services which enhance tourism travel routes.

### Goal 3: Regional Recreation Opportunities

To ensure access to local outdoor recreation opportunities for all residents of this province.

### Goal 4: Backcountry Recreation Opportunities

To provide outstanding backcountry recreation opportunities throughout the province.

# Appendix II Background Report Summary

(full report available at: [www.bcparks.ca/planning/mgmtplns/kakwa/back\\_rep.htm](http://www.bcparks.ca/planning/mgmtplns/kakwa/back_rep.htm))

Newsletter #2  
October 2001

## Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area Background Report Summary

### What is Kakwa and how did we get here?

#### ***Park establishment***

The 171,000-hectare *Kakwa Provincial Park* officially came into being in June 1999. Its Class-A Provincial Park status came after more than 30 years of consideration for parkland, and following 12 years of designation as a Recreation Area. The Protected Area has not yet been designated at the time of writing, but is expected to be legally designated shortly.

#### ***Location and access***

Situated 180 kilometers east of the city of Prince George and 70 kilometers north of the town of McBride, Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area abuts the British Columbia - Alberta border and extends the unbroken chain of Rocky Mountain parks northwards by nearly 60 kilometers. Access within British Columbia is via the Walker Creek Forest Service Road, that leaves Highway 16 just west of Ptarmigan Creek, about 70 kilometers northwest of McBride. This graveled road extends 85 kilometers from the highway to the park boundary at Buchanan Creek, although the last 12 kilometers from Bastille Creek are presently washed out. From Alberta, access is via the Kakwa River Forestry Road from Grande Prairie, and thence by old tote roads that are now used as trails.

#### ***Features***

Kakwa is a large, mostly undisturbed ecosystem that is home to a wide range of wildlife, including the northernmost population of Rocky Mountain big horn sheep, as well as grizzly bear, black bear, moose, caribou, mountain goat and many others. It contains within its borders a portion of the Front Ranges eco-section – the only occurrence in British Columbia; as well as the most northerly mountains over 10,000 feet (3,048 meters) in the Canadian Rockies. Kakwa also offers many backcountry recreational opportunities that must be balanced with each other and with the ecological characteristics of the park.

## Where do we go from here?

### *The planning process*

The development of a Management Plan for Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is the first planning priority of BC Parks in the Prince George District. To that end, we are seeking your input and involvement to help create a long-range Strategic Management Plan that will protect the ecological integrity of the park; and secondly, to identify compatible backcountry recreation opportunities within the park.

The Management Plan will be ecosystem based. In developing the plan, we will consider the adjoining Kakwa Wildland and Willmore Wilderness parks in Alberta, as well as land uses surrounding Kakwa in both provinces. The Management Plan will recognize that ecosystems, including watersheds, wildlife, and recreational activities, cross park and provincial boundaries and so are partly dependent on adjoining lands. Our first priority will be to ensure the continued ecological integrity of the area and to manage in the context of these surrounding lands.

In preparation for this planning process, we have prepared a Management Plan Background Report for Kakwa. The document you are now reading is a summary of that report and is one of a series of newsletters that will be published throughout the planning process.

### **Historical perspective**

The Beaver and Carrier First Nations were among the first people to use Kakwa; followed in the eighteenth century by the Cree, Iroquois and Metis who began to enter the area during the westward expansion of the fur trade. The name, Kakwa is derived from the Cree word for “porcupine.” In the winter of 1875, Canadian Pacific Railway surveyor Edward W. Jarvis led a mixed party of native and non-native men along the river that now bears his name, crossing the continental divide in the midst of Jarvis Lakes on February 25<sup>th</sup> of that year. Fortunately for the wilderness character of the future park, the grade was too steep for a railway. Indeed, the valley west of Jarvis Lakes with Mount Ida and the Three Sisters towering above on its south side is one of the most spectacularly rugged scenes to be found anywhere.

By the early 1900s, Kakwa had begun attracting international parties intent on big game hunting, exploring, climbing and surveying. The unavailability of the European Alps during the wartime period of 1914-1918 heightened interest in the Canadian Rockies; and Kakwa became accessible to extended horse packing trips staged from the new transcontinental railway in what is now Mount Robson Provincial Park.

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area’s highest peak, the glaciated 3,270-meter Mount Sir Alexander, was first climbed in 1929. The slightly smaller and more northerly Mount Ida, described and named by Jarvis in 1875, was not climbed until the 1950s. Both are challenging and dramatic-looking peaks: an icefield surrounds Mount Sir Alexander, and the beauty of Mount Ida is revealed in its classic pyramidal shape. Their relatively late first ascents reflect the difficulty of access, a situation that helped to keep Kakwa in a state of near wilderness for most of the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, logging roads began to be pushed towards Kakwa from the west. This prompted a

recommendation within the Provincial Parks Branch of the day that the headwaters of Kitchi Creek should be examined for their scenic qualities and recreation potential before the area was committed to logging. The recommendation included an opinion that this was “the most scenic and interesting area in the Prince George vicinity... this scenery is enhanced by the snowcap surrounding these peaks in a setting of undisturbed virgin forests.” In 1971, the Peace River and Fraser Fort George Regional Districts proposed that Kakwa be protected. As logging moved closer in the early eighties, BC Parks flagged Kakwa as being of high interest during a Deferred Planning Area program.

In 1987, it was officially given Recreation Area status following recommendations of the Provincial Wilderness Advisory Committee. As a result of recommendations made at the public hearings held in Prince George, Kakwa’s boundary was extended north into the Narraway River drainage to include the significant wildlife and backcountry recreation values that exist there. During the decade that followed, Kakwa was the centrepiece of protected area recommendations being negotiated in the Prince George Land and Resource Management Plan. This LRMP was a five-year public land-use planning process, and in 1999 Kakwa finally came to fruition as a Provincial Park under recommendations of the combined LRMPs of Prince George and Dawson Creek.

The progression from wild land, to Recreation Area, to Class-A Provincial Park coincided with significant and growing recreational use of the area. In addition, a quartzite claim was explored at Babette Lake in the early eighties. A new quartzite quarry was then established at the nearby McGregor Pass, where it is still active. The combined forestry and quarry developments resulted in rough roaded access to Kakwa from the British Columbia side. On the Alberta side, oil and gas exploration were responsible for improved road access. These changes coincided with the increase in recreational use from both British Columbia and Alberta, giving rise to both access and usage issues. These issues necessitated the development of interim operating plans for the Recreation Area and an increased presence by BC Parks' staff.

## **Regional context – lands adjacent to the park**

Kakwa Provincial Park enjoys a biophysical continuity with the adjacent lands of Willmore Wilderness Park and Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park in Alberta. Because of its place in this parkland complex it is partly buffered from surrounding resource activities. As well, some adjacent lands in British Columbia are designated for special management of resource activities to conserve old growth forest, wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. Consequently, there is a core of trans-provincial wilderness parkland, surrounded partly by specially managed lands and partly by general resource lands.

### ***Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park***

Kakwa Wildland Park lies within the Rocky Mountain foothills, and is situated in alpine and subalpine terrain with extensive forests at lower elevations. Kakwa is the major river draining out of Kakwa Lake in British Columbia and flows across the northern section of the park into the Smoky River. For the most part, the streams and rivers in the park flow swiftly in deep, narrow valleys that have some canyon sections, waterfalls and rapids. Much of the area is in a wilderness condition and provides a northward extension to Willmore Wilderness Park. This undisturbed region is frequented by moose, deer, caribou, black and grizzly bear and contains some of the northernmost bighorn sheep range in Alberta.



## ***Willmore Wilderness Park***

Foothills and mountainous terrain with extensive alpine meadows characterize the natural landscape and support a wide array of plant communities in transition across the park. The spectacular scenery is popular for trail riding and trophy hunting. Wildlife migrates through Willmore and adjacent lands in search of summer and winter range. These include mountain caribou, bighorn sheep, and grizzly bears, and require special management consideration as they cross provincial and park boundaries. The predominant fish species is bull trout, which is a threatened species in Alberta.

## ***Adjacent lands in British Columbia***

The Prince George LRMP recognized areas of special interest:

- The upper Herrick Creek on the northwest corner of Kakwa conserves old growth forest, caribou and grizzly bear habitat while providing opportunities for backcountry recreation. No timber harvesting is permitted there.
- The McGregor and Dezaiko Ranges abutting Kakwa Provincial Park on its south and west sides have caribou habitat and backcountry recreation designated as priority values. Resource development is permitted provided measures are in place to protect these values.
- The McGregor River zone on the southwest boundary of Kakwa Provincial Park recognizes integrated management of a wide array of resource values. Much of this area was clearcut and replanted before the LRMP was completed and will provide opportunities for comparative study as it grows back.

The Dawson Creek LRMP recognized:

- The area north of Kakwa as a Wildlife/Coalfield Special Resource Management Zone. The management direction for this area recognizes important habitats for grizzly bear, Bighorn sheep and other large mammals, as well as wilderness outdoor recreation experiences. Other key resource values like timber, oil and gas, coal, minerals and commercial and motorized recreation are also present with potential for future development. The plan recommends managing the area to sustain all of these resource values while recognizing that this is not a protected area.

The Robson Valley LRMP recognized:

- The Morkill Resource Management Zone next to the southeast tip of Kakwa Provincial Park, for the integration of fisheries, wildlife, timber, subsurface resources and tourism values, as well as recognizing its high grizzly bear values.
- The Boundary/Horsey Creek Resource Management Zone, also at the southeast tip of Kakwa, to ensure that resource development and other land use activities minimize impacts on high scenery, recreation, wilderness and environmental values within the zone and adjacent park areas.

## **Why is Kakwa special?**

### ***Geographical context***

To answer this key question, we consider what makes it provincially, nationally and perhaps globally significant, and how it fits into this larger scheme. Then, we can look at its natural resources and review the striking visual and backcountry recreation features that have brought it to the fore as one of British Columbia's significant parks.

Kakwa Provincial Park is notable for the conservation role it has to offer through its natural resources and connections with other protected areas. The park reveals striking land formations from spectacular lake and valley systems to high, glaciated peaks that include the most northerly 10,000-footers in the Canadian Rockies. It lies on the border of British Columbia and Alberta and, unlike many other Rocky Mountain parks, roads and other transportation corridors have not dissected the park.

### Wilderness area

Kakwa is the terminus of more than a million hectares of unroaded parkland stretching northwards from Highway 16. This area is the largest block of protected wilderness in the central and southern parts of the combined Rockies, British Columbia and Alberta. The chain of parkland continues south of Highway 16 for a total of 600 kilometers from Kakwa to Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes parks in the Kootenays. This contiguous, northwest-trending belt of parks and wilderness areas includes Kootenay, Yoho, Banff, and Jasper National Parks, British Columbia's Mount Robson Provincial Park, and Alberta's Willmore Wilderness and Kakwa Wildland Provincial Parks. The latter two parks connect with Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area on its eastern border. Due to Kakwa's outstanding features and interconnectedness with these other protected areas, Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is proposed for inclusion in the *Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site*.

### Parks system significance

Kakwa is an important component of British Columbia's park system:

- It represents the only Front Ranges ecosection in the province. The Front Ranges consist of rounded ridges and peaks of limestone, hundreds of millions of years old, and parallel valleys underlain with younger shale. In addition to the Front Ranges, Kakwa has one of the best representations of the Hart Ranges and together they provide habitat that is important to mountain goats, as well as those species that migrate through including grizzly bears and caribou. The Front Ranges is host to the northernmost herd of Rocky Mountain big horn sheep.
- Kakwa is a wild and undeveloped predator/prey ecosystem with important wildlife travel routes including Jarvis Pass, McGregor Pass-Kakwa Lake, Providence Pass and Sheep Pass.
- It contains the headwaters of numerous rivers that flow to both the Pacific and Arctic Oceans.
- Extensive alpine meadows and ridges.
- Important fossils and cave systems.
- Through its linkage with the chain of Rocky Mountain parks, Kakwa provides a travel corridor for the many wildlife species that do not recognize human boundaries. This linkage is also of benefit to backcountry recreation enthusiasts; for example, the northern terminus of the Great Divide Trail lies within the park. For this reason, the future management of Kakwa Provincial Park must be examined not only at a local level, but also in a broader context.
- Kakwa provides opportunities for a wide variety of wilderness dependent recreation activities.

## Principal features of Kakwa:

### Nationally and internationally significant

- Mounts Sir Alexander and Ida – most northerly Rocky Mountain peaks over 10,000 feet.

- Most northerly range of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.
- Large undisturbed conservation zone for large carnivores including grizzly bears (which may migrate to feed on Chinook salmon) and wolves -- a complete guild of carnivores in an intact Rocky Mountain ecosystem.
- Triassic fish fossil sites.
- Karst terrain and caves.
- Cross-section of the Rocky Mountains combining boreal, montane and taiga tree species.
- Northern end of contiguous 600-kilometer stretch of Rocky Mountain parks.
- Backcountry recreation activities include mountaineering, backpacking and hiking; horse riding and hunting; snowmobiling; caving; skiing.
- Part of the largest protected wilderness area in southern Canada.

### **Provincially, regionally and locally significant**

- Spectacular section of the Rocky Mountains with many peaks, ridges, glaciers, cirques, alpine meadows, lakes, rivers, falls and valleys, with striking and often contrasting relief.
- Only representation of the Front Ranges eco-section in British Columbia and one of the best representations of the Hart Ranges eco-section.
- High capability habitat for mountain goats, and good habitat for grizzly bears, caribou, moose and bull trout.
- The Kakwa Lake area is a major trans-mountain corridor for grizzly bears and other wildlife.
- The Narraway watershed has good opportunities for hiking, wildlife viewing, hunting, and caving; and it includes the provincially significant Narraway Falls.
- Kitchi Creek protects an isolated population of Douglas fir and other ecological features, and was earlier proposed as an ecological reserve.
- Representation of Engelmann Spruce Subalpine Fir zone.
- Commercial and general backcountry recreation opportunities.
- Large, mostly undeveloped and unroaded wilderness.

## **Natural resources and conservation values**

### ***Physical geography***

Straddling the Continental Divide, Kakwa provides striking contrasts between the rugged glaciated peaks and deep valleys of its western side, and the rolling alpine meadows and open valleys of the central and eastern sections. The western side of the Divide ranges in elevation from 1,000 meters in the Jarvis Creek valley to over 3,048 meters around Mount Ida and Mount Sir Alexander. Glaciers and very steep cliffs cover much of the terrain on this side of the park; while on the eastern side of the Divide, valley bottoms become open revealing large water bodies and interconnected meadows.

### **Geology**

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area contains a full range of the geological formations that are found in the Rocky Mountains. Limestone and fragmented sedimentary rocks underlie the park, ranging in age from older than half a billion years to a little over 100 million years.

### **Significant geological features**

The discovery of well-preserved Triassic fish fossils in the park is of international significance. There are fewer than 20 areas throughout the world which house similar fossils and only six localities that have yielded more than five classes. Thus far, several types of bony fish have been identified in

Kakwa. Due to the sensitive nature of the sites, the locations will remain protected and open only to scientific study.

Many caves have formed in the park's limestone, often along contact lines with the same quartzite that gave rise to the two quarrying ventures in the park. Many of these caves are unexplored and others are likely to be found. Cave resurgences, or places where underground streams reappear at the surface, are common features of the Mount Sir Alexander and Mount Ida areas.

## Evolution of the land forms

Ice sheets covered Kakwa Provincial Park 10,000 to 20,000 years ago during the last glaciation period, known as the Wisconsin. During that time two major ice sheets coated western Canada: the Laurentide and the Cordilleran. The Laurentide originated in the eastern part of the Northwest Territories and moved southwest, while the Cordilleran originated from the west-southwest and flowed northeast across the mountains onto the plains of Alberta. The gradual meeting of these ice sheets created the deep wide valleys in the park, and the cirques and residual glaciers found along the northeast facing slopes of the Continental Divide. Kakwa has all the usual characteristics of glaciated scenery found in the Rocky Mountains.

## Soils

Soils in Kakwa Provincial Park are generally comprised of fine glacial till deposits in lower elevation and flatter terrain, and landslide and glacial moraine deposits closer to the mountains and the glaciers. The areas of fine silt are prone to "mucking" and erosion, especially in combination with late snow melt and summer rains. Wet meadows, common in the northeast half of the park, are muddy and easily damaged, for example by horse use at Kakwa Pass.

## ***Climate***

Because of its complex climatic conditions, weather in Kakwa Provincial Park can be unstable. Variables include elevation, terrain and the influence of major weather systems. During the summer season, air from the Pacific Ocean is moisture-laden and is captured on the western side of the Continental Divide, allowing warm dry air to suspend over the east fringe of the ranges. Throughout the winter months arctic air flowing south causes unrelenting conditions on the eastern section of the divide as it hits the barrier caused by the mountain range. The area generally experiences a high snowfall.

## ***Water***

Kakwa Provincial Park is situated on the Continental Divide, and consequently its rivers drain both north to the Arctic Ocean and west to the Pacific Ocean. The area encompasses the headwaters of the McGregor River, a major tributary of the Fraser. Kakwa River and Narraway River drain east and north of the Rocky Mountains, where they provide an important source to the Prairies. Rugged mountains form a picturesque backdrop to subalpine lakes such as Kakwa, Jarvis, Cecilia, Dimsdale and Babette. The watersheds are fed by snow accumulated over the winter months and later in the season by melting glaciers. Water quality information has not been collected, but quality should be good in a lightly used mountain area. Increasing volume of snowmobile use may warrant monitoring, especially at Kakwa Lake.

## **Biology**

### Flora

The vegetation mosaic in Kakwa provides a wide variety of wildlife habitats.

- The dominant zones of Kakwa Provincial Park are the Sub-Boreal Forest that covers approximately half of the area at lower elevations and the Alpine Tundra at higher levels. The forested area is mainly Engelmann-Spruce Subalpine Fir, with Interior Cedar-Hemlock present in the lower portions of the Jarvis and Kitchi Creek valleys. There is also a small pocket of Douglas-fir in the Kitchi Creek valley.
- These interior wet belt and sub-boreal zones are affected by the westerly airflow that delivers considerable moisture to the southwest side of the park. The high mountains that make up the Divide form the transition between British Columbia's wet interior and British Columbia's only representation of the Front Ranges eco-section. The Divide also marks the shift to the dry foothills of northern Alberta.
- There are extensive alpine meadows on the eastern side of the Divide. These respond negatively to disturbance and require a long time frame, decades or even centuries, to recover to their natural state.
- The north side of the McGregor from Jarvis to Kitchi Creek has been logged in the past; otherwise the vegetation cover in the park is undisturbed except for localized impacts at popular campsites, along hiking and snowmobile trails, and at the Wishaw quarry.

### Fauna

Wildlife research has so far been sporadic, mostly habitat capability and geographic use rather than numbers. During the winter months, harsh climatic conditions and deep snow displace many animals from the area. Key species commonly seen by visitors during summer months are:

#### **Grizzly Bears and Black Bears**

The bears in Kakwa benefit from excellent habitat in the park, and the fact that the area has not been significantly fragmented by human disturbance. As a result, there are good numbers of bears, with black bears being more common at lower elevations. Grizzly bears use low and high elevation habitats throughout the seasons, but are at higher elevations in the summer. Grizzly bears require large spaces, and in Kakwa the forested valley bottoms of the McGregor, Kakwa, Narraway and Belcourt Rivers provide good habitat due to their moderate relief and elevation.

Recent studies show that Kakwa Lake is on a major trans-mountain corridor for grizzly bears, wolves, caribou and other wildlife. Grizzly bears are using some of the park trails and old roads for travel but most avoid the main park facilities at the south end of Kakwa Lake. Research is also being done to determine whether grizzlies migrate in late summer and fall to feed on salmon in the Fraser River system. This habitat and bear movement data will be used to help BC Parks minimize bear-human conflicts.

#### **Mountain Goats**

Occupying high mountain crags throughout the park, mountain goats are a major wintering wildlife species in Kakwa Provincial Park and are the most widely distributed of the mountain ungulates. The Management Plan will consider the impact of winter recreation activities on these animals. In the context of summer recreation, the main access route into Kakwa, the Wishaw Mine Road, crosses a summer goat migration route.

### **Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep**

On the open alpine ridges and basins in the northeast corner of Kakwa Provincial Park and across the border in Alberta, is the most northerly band of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Microclimate plays an important role in their selection of areas, such as along rivers or creeks. Most sheep ranges are within easy reach of cliffs, with avalanche chutes and talus slopes used to escape from predators. This species, like others in Kakwa Provincial Park, continues to be of great importance due to the migration across park boundaries.

### **Mountain Caribou**

Caribou are frequent visitors to the mountainous areas of Kakwa and adjacent parks. Seasonal migration brings them from the foothills around Grand Cache into the park during the spring and summer months, the primary factor affecting their migration being snow conditions. The number of animals is small; the population in Alberta has declined twice in the last 50 years from 2,000 animals to a few hundred, and is also considered vulnerable in the Robson Valley.

### **Other ungulates: Elk, Moose and other deer**

Small numbers of elk occur within Kakwa Provincial Park around the Narraway and Edgegrain drainages as well as in the Sheep Pass and Intersection Mountain area. Moose are frequently seen during the summer, and appear to be the most common large mammal in the park. Tracks are found in the valleys, marshes and lower mountainous slopes, but are scarce in the alpine areas. Prime moose feeding habitat occurs in the lake shallows and at several mineral licks throughout the park. On the western side of the park, Moose spend their winters downstream in the McGregor River valley due to excessive snow depths in Kakwa Provincial Park, returning in the summer and fall months. Numbers of mule and white-tailed deer also occur within the park.

### **Birds**

A wide variety of birds can be seen in Kakwa, typical of mountainous areas. These include golden eagles, bald eagles, hawks, belted kingfishers, spotted sandpipers, phalaropes, ruffed grouse, willow ptarmigan, diving ducks, golden-crowned sparrows, savannah sparrows, horned larks and many others. For a more detailed list of bird species observed in Kakwa Provincial Park refer to the Master Plan Background Report.

### **Amphibians and reptiles**

There are no reptiles catalogued in Kakwa Provincial Park, and the only amphibian known to inhabit the area is the boreal toad that occupies forests and bogs throughout the park.

## **Fish**

Prior to the 1980s, fishing in Kakwa was rated poor to fair. Then in 1981 and 1983 – before Kakwa became a Recreation Area – Cecilia and Kakwa Lakes were stocked with rainbow trout fry. Since then, a self-sustaining rainbow trout population has emerged and contributes to present-day thriving angling activities in Kakwa. Other fish species have been reported in the waters of Kakwa Provincial Park including arctic grayling and bull trout, species of special concern and sensitive to habitat disturbance.

## **Ecology**

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is a large area whose ecosystems extend beyond its boundaries, and is comparatively little disturbed compared to some of the surrounding resource lands. It includes the mountain headwaters of rivers draining to both the Arctic and the Pacific oceans, and extensive intact forests. Factors such as climate, soil, elevation and moisture conditions mean that five of British Columbia's biogeoclimatic zones are represented in the park. These, in turn, provide a wide range of habitats that support a variety of species.

Except possibly for goats, populations of large animals move across park boundaries and do not spend the full year in the park. Kakwa is a fully functioning predator/prey ecosystem that supports all the animal species typical of the area. These factors, combined with its connectivity with other Rocky Mountain parks, mean that prospects are good to achieve British Columbia Park's goal of maintaining ecological integrity—that is to say, a fully functioning ecosystem with all elements intact. *Preserving the ecological integrity of the park is the primary goal of the Management Plan.*

## **Cultural values**

Explorers in the early twentieth century reported evidence of old hunting camps and trails. Aboriginal people visited the area for hunting, and passes were occasionally used for trading between the Peace and Fraser River watersheds. There have been no formal archeological investigations, and no archeological sites are known.

The first known people in Kakwa were the Beaver and Carrier, followed by the Cree, Iroquois and Metis during the westward expansion of the fur trade in the late eighteenth century. It was through the introduction of the fur trade that the lifestyles of these groups were modified from a hunter and gatherer society to trading furs for supplies. After the Jarvis and Hanington party of 1875, other European explorers arrived in the area as members of hunting and survey parties.

## **Visual and recreation values**

### ***Visual features***

Visitors to Kakwa Provincial Park enjoy superb mountain scenery, blue lakes, glaciers and spectacular alpine meadows. Two high mountain peaks dominate the area. Mount Sir Alexander reaches 3,270 meters and is surrounded by glaciers. 3,180-meter Mount Ida has a classically beautiful

pyramid-shape, especially when viewed across Jarvis Lakes or from Moonias Pass. Kakwa's visual appeal is enhanced by the contrast between the comparatively low rolling hills of the northeast and the high peaks of the southwest. This is typical of the Front Ranges, and is one of the only places in British Columbia where a difference of 1,500 to 2,100 meters is as apparent. The effect is that an observer in the alpine meadows always has a wide panorama of snow-clad peaks as a backdrop. One of the best visual features is the abundance of forests, plants and animals that a visitor is likely to encounter throughout the park.

### ***Recreational features***

Kakwa is a wilderness area, adjacent to others, that is ideal for backcountry recreational use. The most popular destinations are Kakwa, Cecilia and Jarvis Lakes, from which there are excellent day trip opportunities. The core area is at the south end of Kakwa Lake where the park headquarters and main campsites are located, and despite the existence of these basic facilities this is still wild country that visitors will often share only with its wildlife. Recreational features include:

- **Hiking and backpacking:** Primitive trails and routes radiate out from Kakwa Lake through valleys and to alpine meadows, providing many opportunities for day hikes and overnight trips. Extended backpacking and wilderness camping trips provide a means to experience most of what the park has to offer. Kakwa is also host to the north end of Great Divide Trail, which follows generally along the spine of the Rockies and provides opportunities for longer backpacking trips outside the park boundaries.
- **Mountaineering:** Climbing opportunities exist on the park's high peaks and glaciers.
- **Horses:** Kakwa provides good opportunities for trail rides and horse packing trips. Many of the trails in the valleys, around the major lakes, and through mountain passes were originally developed through horse use.
- **Hunting:** This is another traditional use for the area, especially for bighorn sheep in the northeast. Kakwa and Cecilia watersheds are closed for hunting, as they are the main areas used for general recreation.
- **Fishing:** Enthusiasts may choose from Kakwa, Cecilia, Dimsdale and Babette Lakes, with Kakwa Lake being the most popular.
- **Snowmobiling:** This has become a popular winter recreational use of the park from both British Columbia and Alberta, mostly in the Kakwa, Cecilia and Jarvis Lakes areas. There are many open ridges and meadows, and there is some spring use on the snowfields of the higher peaks. North of the Divide, areas above 1,400 meters are closed from May to November to avoid disturbing wildlife.
- **Backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and winter camping:** Good opportunities exist, although current access limitations may require the use of aircraft or snowmobile to reach the park.
- **Caving:** The caves of Kakwa Provincial Park are only partially explored, or unexplored, or yet to be discovered.
- Extreme hazards exist in these recently glaciated cave systems, and they are best entered only in the company of an experienced caving group.
- **Photography and natural history:** Good opportunities exist throughout the park, combined with many of the above activities.
- **Commercial backcountry recreation:** Operators have permits for trail riding, llama assisted hiking, guided hunting, and drop off flights to Kakwa Lake.



## **Current Uses**

### Recreation

Present summer and fall activities include wilderness camping, hiking, climbing, horse travel, hunting, fishing, and caving. Winter and spring activities include snowmobiling, skiing, climbing, caving, and winter camping.

Existing methods of tallying visitors are by volunteer hosts in the summer, occasional ranger patrols, and a voluntary guest registration book at the Kakwa Lake ranger cabin. Statistics are not complete, but the numbers show a few backcountry users appearing in June and July, with visitors peaking at over 150 in August and gradually falling off to below 50 in September and early October. In the winter and spring months, large numbers of snowmobiles (100 to 200 machines) use the park at peak periods such as Easter.

### Facilities

Presently limited to informal campsites, trails and cabins around Kakwa and Jarvis Lakes.

### Commercial tenures

Traplines, hunting guide/outfitting, llama assisted hiking, mountain guides, air access.

### Mineral claims

Quartzite quarry near Wishaw Lake.

### Access road

Used for quarry operations at Wishaw Lake.

## **Planning issues**

The development of a Management Plan for Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is one of BC Parks' highest priorities. The Management Plan will consider the following priorities and issues. BC Parks and the public may identify further planning issues and suggest ways to deal with them during the process.

### **Ecological integrity**

- Identify *ecological integrity* and how to maintain it in Kakwa.
- Consider Kakwa's role as part of the larger protected wilderness area of the Rocky Mountain chain of parks.
- Recognize and manage the special features that make Kakwa an important member of the provincial park system: high peaks; Front Ranges; key wildlife species; interprovincial wildlife movements; cross-section of Rocky Mountains; fossils, and alpine meadows.
- Consider sound resource management of wildlife, forests, meadows and water.
- Apply a *precautionary principle* in situations where there is limited natural resource inventory

information available.

### ***Recreation***

- Determine compatible types, amounts and locations of recreation use.
- Decide on an appropriate role for commercial recreation and tourism, in consideration of opportunities available throughout the region.
- Consider the commercial and non-commercial use of horses and llamas in the park.
- Consider appropriate motorized and mechanized use, including snowmobiles, mountain bikes, floatplanes and helicopters.
- Provide guidelines as to what level and type of park facility or interpretive development is appropriate.

### ***Bear-people conflict prevention***

- Few bear-human conflicts have occurred in the past in Kakwa. A bear-hazard study is nearing completion for the core area of the park that will help to minimize potential conflicts with grizzly bears. The study will recommend careful management of most trails to minimize the risk of encounters, as well as the relocation of one campsite along Kakwa Lake. Food and garbage management should also be improved, with bear-proof caches recommended at all established campsites.

### ***Access***

- Determine what access is appropriate to the park, and what if any development is desirable.

### ***Resource extraction***

- Review existing resource extraction: Wishaw quarry; trapping; hunting; fishing.

### ***Cooperative management***

- Consider cooperative, trans-boundary wildlife and recreation management efforts with Willmore Wilderness Park and Kakwa Wildland Park in Alberta.
- Coordinate management with Alberta Parks, the Ministry of Forests, The Integrated Land Management Bureaus (for commercial recreation tenures,) and the Ministry of the Environment.

### ***Promotion***

- Consider the manner in which the park is promoted to the local and traveling public, taking into account the direction of the park plan and local and regional tourism efforts already in place.

### ***LRMP recommendations***

- The Prince George LRMP, in recommending Kakwa for protection, gave only very limited direction as to permitted uses within the park. Trapping and commercial guiding (non-hunting) are recommended uses, while all others are deferred to BC Parks' planning process – i.e. to this

process.

- The Dawson Creek LRMP, in recommending the northern extension of Kakwa for protection, endorsed the standard compatible uses of protected areas, with the exception of allowing snowmobiling within designated areas, and recognizing trapping as an acceptable use. The plan also noted that some types of motorized recreational vehicles and boats may be restricted either by type of vehicle, time of year, or areas designated for use, those restrictions being developed through this public planning process.
- The Robson Valley LRMP recommends integrating uses on lands adjacent to the southeast tip of Kakwa to ensure that resource development and other land use activities minimize impacts on high scenery, recreation, wilderness and environmental values.

### ***Impact assessment***

Before any proposed activities or facilities are adopted in the plan, an impact assessment must be completed.

### **Conclusion**

Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area is a special place that already receives a wide range of enthusiastic visitors from British Columbia, Alberta, and around the world. It rivals the beauty and grandeur of the national parks to the south, with the added aspect of being almost entirely undeveloped. One can still experience what it might have been like in Jasper and Banff in the year 1900. Our goal, as we embark on the planning process, is to find a way to keep the sense of wildness in Kakwa while making this wilderness available to compatible use. Our challenge is to maintain the ecological integrity of this sensitive mountain environment and find an appropriate balance of recreational use through this public process.

# Appendix III BC Parks Planning Zone Description Matrix

Protected Areas Management Planning Zone Descriptions			
	Intensive Recreation	Nature Recreation Zone	Special Feature
<b>Objective</b>	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 Nature Recreation Zone.	To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.
<b>Use Level</b>	Relatively high density and long duration types of use.	Relatively low use but higher levels in association with nodes of activity or access.	Generally low.
<b>Means of Access</b>	All-weather public roads or other types of access where use levels are high (see "Impacts" below).	Motorised (powerboats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles), non-motorised (foot, horse, canoe, bicycles). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pickup points will be permitted.	Various; may require special access permit.
<b>Location</b>	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 mechanised means such as boat or plane.	Determined by location of special resources; may be surrounded by or next to any of the other zones.
<b>Size of Zone</b>	Small - usually less than 2,000 ha.	Can range from small to large.	Small - usually less than 2000 hectares.
<b>Boundary Definition</b>	Includes areas of high facility development in concentrated areas.	Boundaries should consider limits of activity/facility areas relative to ecosystem characteristics and features.	Area defined by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of cultural resources (adequate to afford protection).
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>	Vehicle camping, picnicking, beach activities, power-boating, canoeing, kayaking, strolling, bicycling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, snowplay, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, specialised activities.	Walk-in/boat-in camping, power-boating, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, bicycling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, river rafting, horseback riding, heli-skiing, heli-hiking, and specialised activities.	Sightseeing, historic and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.
<b>Facilities</b>	May be intensely developed for user convenience. Campgrounds, landscaped picnic/play areas, trail accommodation or interpretative buildings, boat launches, administrative buildings, service compounds, gravel pits, disposal sites, wood lots; parking lots, etc.	Moderately developed for user convenience. Trails, walk-in/boat-in campsites, shelters, accommodation buildings may be permitted; facilities for motorised access - e.g., docks, landing strips, fuel storage, etc.	Interpretative facilities only - resources are to be protected.

<b>Impacts on Natural Environment</b>	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.	None - resources to be maintained unimpaired.
<b>Management Guidelines</b>	Oriented toward maintaining a high quality recreation experience. Intensive management of resource and/or control of visitor activities. Operational facilities designed for efficient operation while remaining unobtrusive to the park visitor.	Oriented to maintaining a Nature Recreation Zone and a high quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation modes. Designation of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).	High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate, a high quality recreational and interpretative experience. Active or passive management depending on size, location, and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.
<b>Examples of Zoning</b>	Campground in Rath Trevor Beach Park; Gibson Pass ski area in E.C. Manning Park.	Core area in Cathedral Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.	Botanical Beach tidepools within Juan de Fuca Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park.

Protected Areas Management Planning Zone Descriptions		
	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
<b>Objective</b>	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 motorised activities will be allowed.
<b>Use Level</b>	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.
<b>Means of Access</b>	Non-mechanised & non-motorised - except may permit low frequency air access to designated sites; foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).	Non-mechanised & non-motorised (no air access); foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).
<b>Location</b>	Remote - not easily visited on a day-use basis.	Remote - not easily visited on a day-use basis.
<b>Size of Zone</b>	Large - greater than 5,000 hectares.	Large - greater than 5,000 hectares.
<b>Boundary Definition</b>	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features.
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialised activities (e.g., caving, climbing).	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialised activities (e.g., caving, climbing).
<b>Facilities</b>	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.
<b>Impacts on Natural Environment</b>	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.
<b>Management Guidelines</b>	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the Natural Recreation Zone and visitor experience.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the Natural Recreation Zone and visitor experience.
<b>Examples of Zoning</b>	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Wilderness Zone in Spatsizi Park.	Upper Murray River watershed within Monkman Park; Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy Area.

# Appendix IV – Public Feedback

## 1. Vision Statement

- Almost 90% of the respondents expressed support for the Vision Statement for the park.

### Revised Direction from Draft Management Plan

- Keep the same intent, but improve some of the wording as suggested by respondents.

## 2. Park Zoning

- There was very little concern expressed with the proposed summer zoning.
- However, for the winter zoning a majority of British Columbians (60%) supported the proposed zoning, although a clear majority of Albertans (82%) disagreed with the proposed zoning for the park. In addition, those who disagreed, mostly Albertans, disagreed on the basis that the zoning would be too restrictive – specifically to snowmobile use – while a significant number of British Columbians disagreed with the proposed zoning on the grounds that the zoning would not be restrictive enough. Uncertainty or misunderstanding related to the actual boundaries of the snowmobile restricted access zones may account for much of the strong opposition reported by the Albertan respondents.

### Revised Direction from Draft Management Plan

- The winter zoning has been modified as follows:

## 3. Access Management

- Just over half of the survey respondents commented on access management, While there were strong and divergent opinions and values expressed related to the access management recommendations in the Draft Management Plan, more than twice as many respondents agreed (70%) than disagreed (30%) with these recommendations. Some of the concerns expressed regarding access included:
  - Access should not be made easier
  - Reasonable to expect vehicular access to park boundary

### Revised Direction from Draft Management Plan

- Given the continuing degradation of the Walker Creek Ministry of Forest access road, and new policies regarding maintenance of this road, future vehicle access in British Columbia to Kakwa is uncertain. This now will be reflected in the plan.

## 4. Snowmobiling

- Next to responses to the Vision Statement, snowmobiling received the second-highest number of responses. Of the respondents, over 54% were from Alberta and 83% of them disagreed with the zoning. Some of the comments received from Albertans implied that perhaps some of the respondents may have drawn erroneous conclusions regarding the actual boundaries and extent of the proposed snowmobile exclusion zones in the draft plan. It should also be stated that whereas in British Columbia, organizations responded to the survey, whereas in Alberta the two snowmobiling clubs submitted comments individually, leading to a skewing of the results from Alberta. Of the British Columbian respondents, 64% disagreed and 36% agreed with the zoning.

### Revised Direction from Draft Management Plan

- Based on the concerns addressed in the public survey, a facilitated meeting was scheduled in June with two representatives invited from each of the key user groups to re-visit this issue.
- The revised recommendations which will be included in the plan include:
  - Closure of Jarvis Lakes to snowmobiling
  - Opening of alpine area of Mt Sir Alexander to snowmobiling
  - Inclusion of recommended Best Management Practices for snowmobile users

## 5. Hunting

- The response to hunting was nearly evenly split, with slightly more than half (52.3%) agreeing with the management plan overall. More British Columbians disagreed than agreed. However that disagreement also reflected those who felt that hunting should be reduced or eliminated from the park – as well as those that thought the area open to hunting should be increased.

### Revised Direction from Draft Management Plan

- Given that Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area has areas which are both open and closed to hunting, this provides a relative balance that is in keeping with the overall intent of the Vision Statement.
- Should a significant increase occur in summer visitors, a future review could assess the viability of extending the no- hunting area to include Jarvis Lakes and the height of land on the north side of lakes. (Moonias Pass or Netim Mtn).



# Appendix IV – Best Management Practices

## Kakwa Best Management Practices - Snowmobiling

1. The following results and desired behaviours apply *in addition* to any relevant policies or regulations; for example, area-based closures and existing statutes.
2. Safety remains the first priority under all circumstances.

### Maintaining Soil, Air and Water Quality

#### Air and Noise Pollution

Results	Desired Behaviours
Minimize air and noise pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use low emission engines (e.g., <b>4-stroke preferable</b> or efficient 2-stroke).</li> <li>• No rider can operate a snowmobile without a muffler. It is illegal to ride if your muffler has been cut off or disconnected; the baffle plate has been removed; an attachment or device that increases the noise has been installed; or an “aftermarket muffler” that increases noise has been installed.</li> <li>• Snowmobiles should be kept in good running condition.</li> <li>• Use of new machines is encouraged.</li> <li>• To minimize air emissions and safety concerns, park users are requested to avoid unnecessary idling and while on groomed trails conform to club standard speed limits of 50 km/h.</li> </ul>
Best Available Technology recommendations	Air Emissions (g/k W-hr) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 15 hydrocarbons</li> <li>• Less than 120 carbon</li> </ul> Sound Emissions (dBA) measured at idle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 73 or less</li> </ul>

#### Water Pollution

Results	Desired Behaviours
Minimize water pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use existing toilets (Kakwa Lake &amp; Cecilia/Kakwa Junction) for human waste.</li> <li>• Remove human waste wherever possible.</li> </ul>

#### Fuel Spills

Results	Desired Behaviours
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Minimize fuel spills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use designated fueling sites and fuel caches at Kakwa Lake &amp; Cecilia/Kakwa Junction.</li> <li>• Carry and use fuel-spill kits for refuelling at other locations.</li> <li>• Carry and store fuel in a spillproof skimmer.</li> <li>• Avoid refuelling within 20 m of waterways.</li> </ul>
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## **Maintaining Vegetation Communities**

<b>Results</b>	<b>Desired Behaviours</b>
Protect vegetative cover and root systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum snow depth of 1 metre is required to minimize impact – and ideally even more in wetlands.</li> <li>• Keep on designated trails where indicated.</li> </ul>
Firewood collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cutting of any trees (living or dead) is prohibited in Kakwa Provincial Park and Protected Area. All firewood for use in Kakwa cabins must be brought in by users.</li> </ul>
“No Trace” removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All users will ensure that all visible evidence of their activity (containers, garbage, etc) are removed from the park.</li> <li>• A signage plan will also be developed with the snowmobile clubs. Signs will be removed and stored during summer months.</li> </ul>

## **Maintaining Wildlife Populations**

### **Caribou and Mountain Goat**

<b>Results</b>	<b>Desired Behaviours</b>
<p>Minimize physiological or behavioural disruption of mountain goat and caribou.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure continued occupation of existing range by caribou and mountain goat.</li> <li>• Ensure that motorized activities are not a barrier to caribou population recovery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record and report to BC Parks all wildlife encounters and responses. Clubs to take lead in posting closure information of any areas due to any sightings. A procedure will be developed with clubs in this regard.</li> <li>• Remain on established trails.</li> <li>• Obey all signs and area/seasonal closures.</li> <li>• Stay at distances sufficient to prevent changes to the behaviour of animals (&gt;500 m in open areas for large mammals).</li> <li>• Implement recommendations of Recovery Implementation Groups.</li> </ul>

## **Grizzly Bear and Wolverine Dens**

<b>Results</b>	<b>Desired Behaviours</b>
Protect denning sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report any suspected denning sites to BC Parks as soon as possible. Clubs to take lead in posting closure information of any areas due to denning sites. A procedure will be developed with clubs in this regard.</li> <li>• Remain at distances sufficient to avoid disturbing grizzly bears and wolverines in known den sites (&gt;500 m)</li> <li>• Obey all signs and area closures.</li> </ul>

## **Maximizing Outdoor Recreational Experience**

### **Non-motorized Recreationalists**

<b>Results</b>	<b>Desired Behaviours</b>
Minimize disturbance to non-motorized users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce speed when around non-motorized users</li> <li>• If feasible, use an alternate route.</li> </ul>

## **Snowmobiler Safety and Enjoyment**

<b>Results</b>	<b>Desired Behaviours</b>
Snowmobile ethics	<p>Snowmobiling clubs will encourage all members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always travel on the right hand side of any groomed trail.</li> <li>• Adhere to all signs and area closures.</li> <li>• Pack out all garbage and items that you bring in the park.</li> <li>• Wherever possible avoid traveling on backcountry ski trails.</li> <li>• Adhere and enforce all elements of the Best Management Practices.</li> <li>• Be aware of local clubs (Swan City and Prince George) code of ethics for riding in area and adhere to them.</li> <li>• Never travel alone.</li> </ul>
Mountain safety	<p>Snowmobiling clubs will encourage all members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all members have proper avalanche safety training.</li> <li>• Carry survival equipment in a backpack including: transceiver, shovel, probe, spare batteries and other safety gear.</li> <li>• Let others know where you are going.</li> </ul>
Daily quota	<p>In order to ensure a high quality wilderness experience for all winter recreationalists and to manage for the park's conservation values, a maximum daily quota may be established if daily use continues to increase or if increased use has <u>documented</u> environmental impacts.</p>