



# Kikomun Creek Park

## Management Plan

March 2014

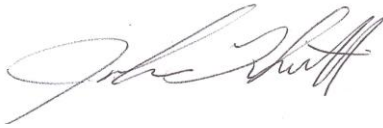


Cover Page Photo: Man-made lagoon connected to Lake Koochanusa taken by Greg Chin

This management plan replaces the approved November 14, 1980 Master Plan, and the approved 2003 Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan.

# Kikomun Creek Park Management Plan

## Approved by:



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March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014

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Date



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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this document is to guide the management of Kikomun Creek Park. This management plan:

- articulates the key features and values of Kikomun Creek Park;
- identifies the types and levels of management activities;
- determines the appropriate levels of use and development;
- establishes the long-term vision and management objectives to be met; and
- responds to current and predicted future threats and opportunities by defining a set of management strategies.

## 1.2 Planning Area

Located in southeastern British Columbia beside Lake Koochanusa (Figure 1), Kikomun Creek Park lies about 60 kilometres southeast of Cranbrook. Fernie, the closest community to the park, is about 32 kilometres to the east. The park is accessible by paved road from Highway #3 and Highway #93.

Covering 682 hectares, the park (Figure 2) has about 4 kilometres of lakefront with some beaches on Lake Koochanusa. The park also includes five smaller inland lakes lying in a rolling landscape of mixed grassland, and open pine and fir forests. The lakes and rolling hills are typical of the kettle and kame topography of a glaciated landscape and there is a prominent esker running the length of the park. There is a private property in the centre of the park that is used as a small hobby farm.

Kikomun Creek Park is a holiday destination area offering a wide range of recreational opportunities, with the main activities being camping and boating. The western boundary is formed by the shoreline of Lake Koochanusa, providing large lake recreational opportunities from power boating to fishing. The smaller lakes in the park are much warmer providing good beach and swimming opportunities and a more sheltered and quieter boating experience.

There are four other provincial parks (Gilnockie, Mount Fernie, Norbury and Wardner) within about 40 kilometres of Kikomun Creek Park. The latter two also provide road accessible frontcountry recreation opportunities, and act as overflow for Kikomun Creek Park, which is the primary destination for park visitors in the East Kootenay region. Just south of the park (700 metres) along the Lake Koochanusa frontage is a Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) covering 129.9 hectares. Established under the Forest and Range Practices Act, the WHA protects the blue-listed Long-billed Curlew – a species occasionally observed in the park.

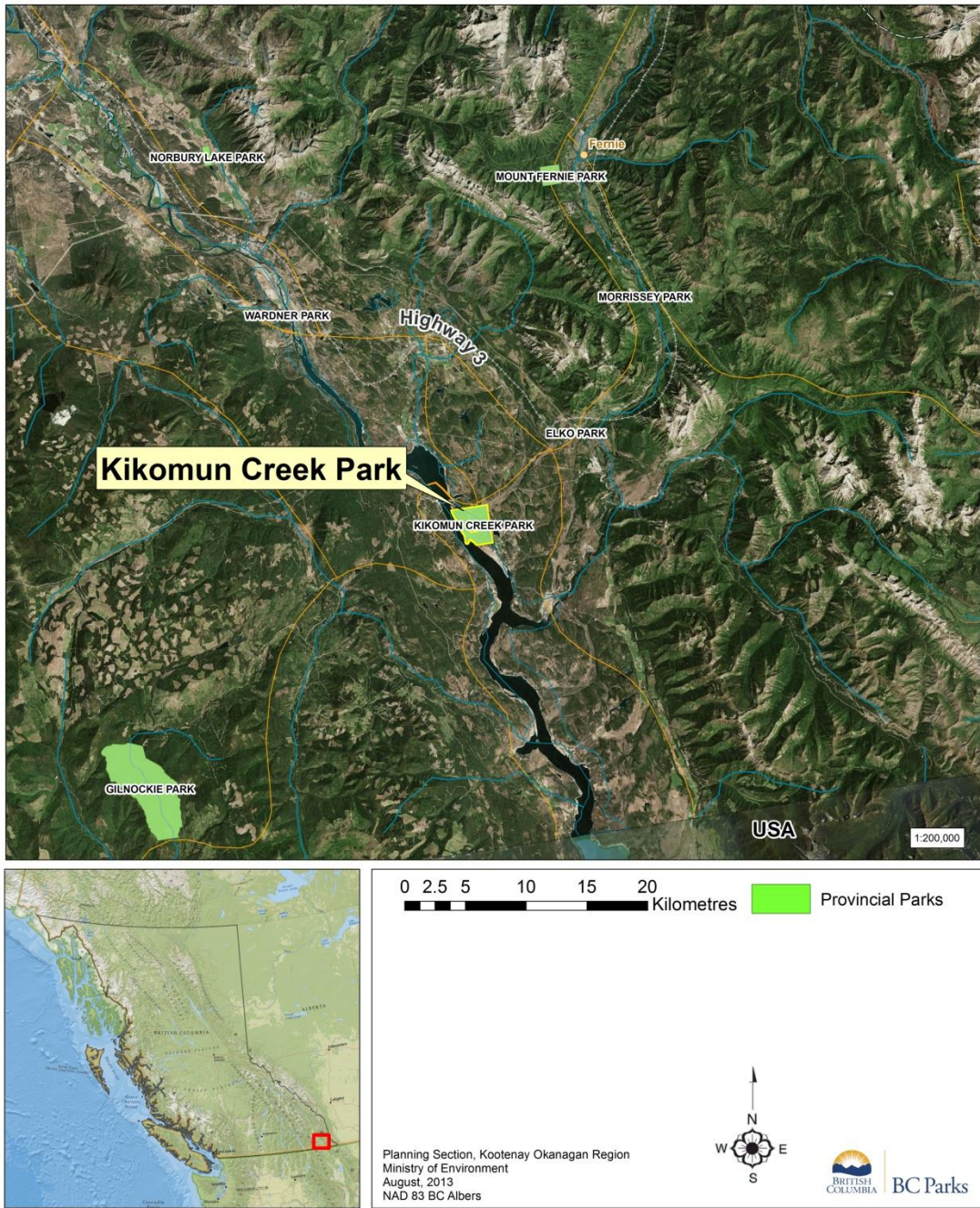


Figure 1: Context Map for Kikomun Creek Park

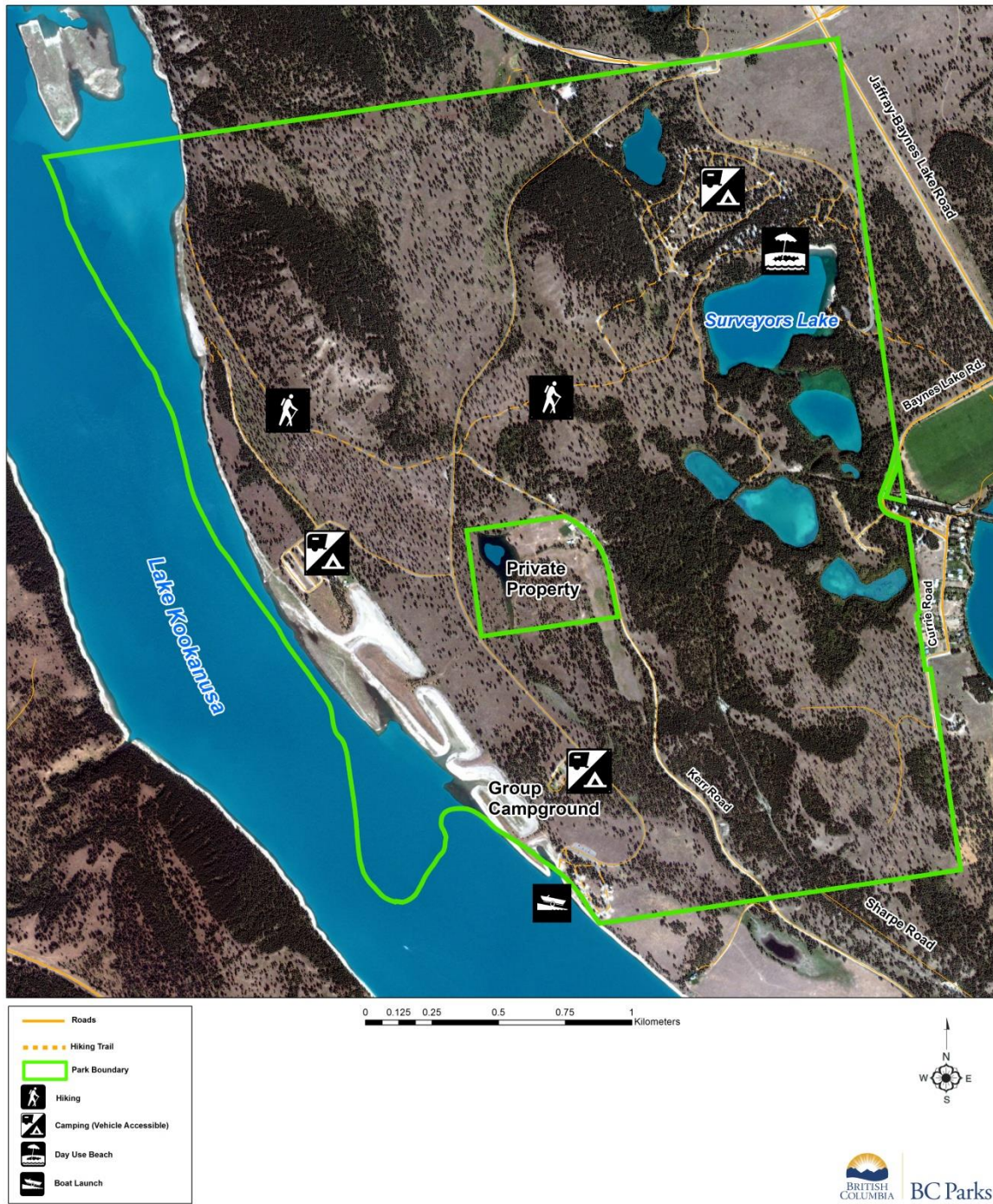


Figure 2: Map of Kikomun Creek Park

There are a number of local attractions within a 30 minute drive from the park that significantly contribute to the attractiveness of the area as a holiday destination, including historic Fort Steele, the town of Fernie, and the Kootenay Trout Hatchery. Just a little farther away, visitors will find the Canadian Museum of Rail Travel in Cranbrook, several championship golf courses, the St. Eugene Mission Resort and Casino, and the Ktunaxa Interpretation Centre.

Surrounding the park is a rural landscape made up of small farms and acreages, as well as a rural residential area centred on Baynes Lake adjacent to the eastern boundary of the park. The close proximity of the park to these residents provides them with convenient recreational benefits, such as easy boat access to Lake Kooconusa, and trails for walking and bicycling. However, public recreational use in the grasslands and mixed forest in the park potentially raises the threat of interface wildfire to nearby homes.

### **1.3 Legislative Framework**

Kikomun Creek Park was originally established as a Class A park in May 1972 by Order in Council 1956/72. In 1978, the park was expanded through a private land purchase to include Surveyors Lake and four other smaller lakes covering about 122 hectares.

The *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*, enacted in 2000, strengthened the legislative framework for many Class A parks that had previously been established by order in council including Kikomun Creek Park. The park is now named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*. Its management and development are directed by the *Park Act*.

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

### **1.4 Management Commitments/Agreements**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ktunaxa Nation Council was signed in 2005 to establish an effective government-to-government working relationship for the management of provincial parks in their traditional territory. The MOU identifies several areas for working cooperatively at a strategic level including: sharing information; adding land to, or deleting it from parks; participation in management planning; and to explore and develop economic and capacity building opportunities.



## 1.5 Management Planning Process

A management plan relies on current information on natural values, cultural values, and recreation opportunities within a park and resource activities occurring on surrounding lands.

The first step for the Kikomun Creek Park Management Plan was a review of previous planning documents and the collecting of updated background information on the natural and cultural values and recreation opportunities of the park.

The Regional District of East Kootenay completed a regional community planning process in 2012 for the Baynes Lake Area. This process determined how the area around the park will be managed for the next five to fifteen years. This information will help ensure the management direction of the park is co-ordinated with the surrounding area. The key community concerns relevant to the park include the spread of invasive weeds and the threat of interface fire with an increased risk in the northwest and southeast areas of the park and at Surveyors Lake.

The second step was the development of a draft management plan which was placed on the BC Parks website for the public to review and provide comments on. Local residents known to have an interest in the park were contacted by email for their input. Two First Nations (Ktunaxa Nation Council and Shuswap Indian Band) were also consulted through referral and a few follow-up meetings. After all input was received only minor changes were required to finalize the management plan.



Photo: Surveyors Lake beach

## 2.0 Values and Roles of the Protected Area

### 2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

The primary role of Kikomun Creek Park is to protect a rare open forest and grassland ecosystem within the East Kootenay Trench Ecosection. Most of these ecosystems are located on private land and utilized for resource use practices such as grazing and forestry. The East Kootenay Trench Ecosection is a major landscape component of the East Kootenay which is significantly underrepresented within the protected areas system. Although there are 15 parks in the ecosection, combined they cover only about 3,000 hectares in total area. Among these protected areas, Kikomun Creek Park is integral in sustaining a variety of “at risk” flora and fauna species. The prevalence of the remnant IDFdm2 biogeoclimatic zone within Kikomun Creek Park outlines the importance of this protected area in maintaining province-wide biodiversity.

The secondary role of the park is to maintain the outdoor recreation destination and tourism travel corridor opportunities oriented to a lake and grasslands setting.

Kikomun Creek Park is one of the major holiday destinations in south eastern British Columbia providing a wide range of recreational opportunities, natural features, facilities and services. It is strategically close to major population centres in southern Alberta and near the Canada – USA border.

The park also has a role in providing day use recreational opportunities to communities throughout the region. Kikomun Creek Park is the largest intensively developed day use area in the East Kootenay. It is unsurpassed in the diversity and quantity of recreational opportunities it provides to residents in the region.

### 2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values

The park falls within the southern portion of the broad, flat plain known as the Rocky Mountain Trench, which lies between the Rocky Mountains to the east and the Purcell Range of the Columbia Mountains to the west. Kikomun Creek Park was a place where the main continental glacier that occupied the Rocky Mountain Trench converged with a branching glacier from the Elk Valley to the east. The resulting complex terrain includes four large drumlins, an esker, several kettle lakes and an outwash plain.

The East Kootenay Trench Ecosection (EKT) is a 2600 km<sup>2</sup> area defined by terrain and climate that encompasses Kikomun Creek Park. The EKT extends from the Tobacco Plains in the south to Dutch Creek by Columbia Lake in the north. While Kikomun Creek Park is the largest protected area in the ecosection, it covers less than 0.01% of the ecosection. There is, however, significant biodiversity in its relatively compact size. The park sits at the transition of two biogeoclimatic variants: the Kootenay Dry Mild Interior Douglas-fir Variant (IDFdm2) and Dry Hot Ponderosa Pine Variant (PPdh2) and contains aquatic features like lakes and streams in an otherwise dry environment.

Kikomun Creek Park is one of two protected areas in the ecosection that contain the PPdh2 Variant: the other is Wasa Lake Park about 80 kilometres to the north. There are four other parks in the ecosection that contain the IDFdm2 Variant but its co-occurrence with the PPdh2 Variant is only found in Kikomun Creek Park. Because of the close proximity and overlap of these two variants, it is difficult to determine the precise amount of each variant in the park. The PPdh2 is the more prominent. Only 0.87 % of the PPdh2 Variant is protected in British Columbia and 82% of this representation is found in Kikomun Creek Park.

There are a number of species at risk that are found in the park including a red-listed plant community (Douglas-fir/common snowberry/arrowleaf balsamroot IDFdm2/03 site series) and the blue-listed antelope-brush/bluebunch Wheatgrass IDFdm2/02 site series. The park also protects four red-listed species (American Badger, wild licorice, little bluestem, and mock-pennyroyal) and three blue-listed species (Grizzly Bear, Western Painted Turtle and Bull Trout).

In terms of ongoing natural processes, the main influence on the park's natural values is wildfire. The park is classified as Natural Disturbance Type 4 (NDT4) which normally experiences frequent stand maintaining fires. It is estimated that the fire frequency for the surrounding area is on average 6.4 years with a range from 2 – 13 years. Small lightning strike fires have occurred in the last 10 years but all have been quickly contained.

The hydrology in the park has been significantly altered over the years. The construction of a long abandoned railway blocked the natural flow between the lakes and a portion of a connecting stream was also diverted for agricultural purposes for the private land inside the park. Despite these interventions, the lakes are pockets of aquatic life with a diversity of aquatic plants and animals.

The lakes in the park have Smallmouth Bass that have been introduced. Surveyors Lake and some of the creeks in the park also have Rainbow Trout and Dolly Varden. Lake Koochanusa is a fishers' destination well known for its abundance of Kokanee Salmon and a variety of other species, including Rainbow Trout, West Slope Cutthroat, Brook Trout and Whitefish.

There are regionally important wildlife values in the park as well with roughly 25% of the northern portion of the park lying in Class 1 Ungulate Winter Range and the rest of the park in Class 2 and Class 3. Browsing occurs year round for Elk, Mule Deer and White-tailed Deer but most use occurs in the winter by Elk (200 plus animals in one herd were counted). In terms of wildlife use of the terrain, forest covered areas are used for bedding, hiding and travel while the grasslands are used for foraging.

No wildlife species inventory has been developed for the park but from observations there are many other wildlife species including a diversity of song birds and birds of prey, Flying Squirrel, Cougar, Grizzly Bear and Black Bear.

### **2.3 Cultural Values**

There is evidence that early indigenous people used the park. A pre-contact archaeological site (DhPt-17) registered in 1972 showed the presence of rock flakes (lithic scatters) from working rock into tools. The park is believed to have also been used traditionally for hunting, fishing, trapping and plant root harvesting based in a temporary summer camp. The Ktunaxa called the area Qikmin which refers to the trait of a creek drying or shrinking in warm summer months. Today there has been no indication that traditional use practises are occurring in the park, however, from general knowledge there are 10 species of plants in the park that have been known to be used for food, medicine, tools, shelter and sustenance. There is a high probability that a plant species inventory of the park would identify many more species that were used traditionally by First Nations.

In 1901, the construction of a spur line of the Great Northern Railway from Montana went through the park linking the United States to the Elk Valley and enabling the importing of goods from the United States and exporting of coal and timber. Portions of the now abandoned rail bed can be found in the park.

Another transportation route of the past that traversed the park was a mud wagon trail called the Kalispell Trail. Used between 1895 - 1899, the trail served both passengers and freight between Kalispell, Montana and Fort Steele: a journey of 36 hours. Today there are no visible signs of the trail.

### **2.4 Recreation Values**

Kikomun Creek Park is the primary camping destination in southeastern British Columbia. The major recreation features contributing to this popularity include access to a large reservoir lake about 40 kilometres in length, about 4 kilometres of accessible shoreline and gravelly beaches, a series of six picturesque kettle lakes and an open forest/grassland landscape of rolling hills with distant views of the Rocky Mountains. Lake Koochanusa reservoir is a major focus for recreation in the East Kootenays. The combination of the kettle lakes with the Lake Koochanusa reservoir creates a provincially significant, unique recreation destination that offers a wide diversity of recreational opportunities.

Access to the park entrance is via Highway #3 to two rural routes that provide vehicle access from the north and east. Within the park, a 13 kilometre paved road network provides access to the campgrounds, beaches and boat launch. The main recreation activities include hiking, mountain biking, camping, small lake fishing, swimming and picnicking. Lake Koochanusa provides motorized boating and associated opportunities such as fishing, water skiing and float tube towing that is accessed from a boat launch in the park.

Kikomun Creek Park has three campgrounds with a collective capacity of 170 vehicle accessible campsites. Electrical power is available at one of the campgrounds. There are also two group use campgrounds available and two log cabins provide an additional option for overnight accommodation.



Photo: Main rental cabin in the Ponderosa Campground

There are three day use parking/picnicking areas, a boat launch, about 16 kilometres of hiking and cycling trails, and three beach areas with about 800 metres of sandy beach frontage.

The park has many opportunities to experience and interpret nature and the cultural history of the area from exploring the aquatic environment of the small lakes and creeks to viewing birds and small mammals in the grasslands and forests. At the right time of year, Elk, deer, Cougar and Coyote can be viewed. A self-guided interpretation trail that meanders through the park enhances visitors' awareness of the cultural and glacial features of the park.

The park is a well known holiday destination for Albertans coming from Calgary, which is just four hours away. Visitor surveys show that visitors from Alberta make up nearly 60% of park users, while British Columbians account for about 32%. The majority of visitors (59%) who stay overnight have travel trailers, while those tenting make up about 35%. Visitors to the park tend to stay more than 4 days and are mostly repeat visitors, confirming the holiday destination role that the park plays.

On average over the last 10 years, annual camping attendance has been around 9800 camping parties and annual day use has averaged about 33,000 vehicles. In 2012, camping attendance was higher at 11,800 camping parties and day use was down to 29,600 vehicles.

While some of the increase in camping can be attributed to the increase in the number of campsites available over the last few years, the reason for the decline in day use is not known.

## **2.5 Research and Education**

Research has taken place in the form of monitoring the success of grassland ecosystem restoration work that has been ongoing in the park since 1998. In addition to standard photo monitoring that occurs before and after ecosystem restoration work, long-term ecological restoration monitoring sites have been established in the park. These sites measure vegetation response, non–native invasive plants, fire history and ungulate use. Monitoring is carried out at three, five and ten year intervals. Educational efforts have focused on grasslands and their importance to society and future generations. Through interpretive signs, brochures and occasionally park interpreters, these values are shared with park visitors.

A number of workshops and grassland-oriented field tours have also taken place over the past twenty years on the ecological restoration treatment areas with grassland management specialists. The ecosystem restoration work in the park has been recognized by many grassland conservation organizations as ground breaking in park management. The information from these monitoring sites is also benefiting those carrying out grassland ecosystem restoration work in the areas surrounding the park. In terms of future research, there are opportunities to establish Long Term Ecological Monitoring (LTEM) sites in grassland and wetland ecosystems that will contribute to BC Parks' long-term monitoring network. Research into the potential impact of Elk grazing on treated grassland ecosystems is another opportunity in the park that could provide insights into more effective restoration of bunchgrass species.

There are broad benefits to increasing knowledge of the occurrence and in some cases prevalence of some of the species of conservation concern in this ecosystem such as the American Badger or the Western Painted Turtle. With the presence of some rare ecological values in this park combined with popular recreational uses, there is the potential to explore this interaction and gain insights into park management needs.

## **2.6 Climate Change**

A warmer and drier climate is predicted to affect the park's ecosystems. Grassland ecosystems are expected to expand under these conditions while the dry forests are expected to contract. The process of forest in-growth is expected to be halted and may even be reversed. Drier soils and an increase in drought, along with more frequent and severe fires, would make grasslands more resilient while preventing the regeneration of dry forests species such as Ponderosa Pine and Interior Douglas-fir. At higher elevations these species may persist. Although the park does have some higher elevation terrain, there is only a 60 metre differential which may not be sufficient to sustain these species for the long term.

## 3.0 Management Direction

### 3.1 Management Vision

Kikomun Creek Park has outstanding provincially significant conservation values and recreational opportunities that continue to attract large numbers of tourists and residents. The park's grassland and open forest ecosystems and associated rare species contribute to the conservation legacy of the BC Parks system. A variety of recreational opportunities, valued by visitors, are provided in a manner sustainable in this environment through well-planned management and monitoring of environmental impacts.

### 3.2 Management Objectives and Strategies

#### 3.2.1 Grasslands Ecosystems

Grassland ecosystems in the park are rare and highly vulnerable. Forest in-growth, excessive fuel loading, invasive plants and over-grazing by Elk are ongoing issues due to natural forest succession combined with historic wildfire suppression throughout the Rocky Mountain Trench, and other human uses of the grasslands. Management direction is required to determine the long-term strategy for protecting, restoring and managing the grassland and open forest ecosystems in Kikomun Creek Park during its predicted transition due to climate change. A common strategy for ecosystem response to climate change has been towards strategies that increase ecosystem resilience. However, the lack of a coordinated global response has moved managers beyond resilience into a strategy of managed ecosystem transformation. As the forests in Kikomun Creek Park are expected to transform into grasslands, transformation strategies such as ecological restoration of grasslands can help support transformation and avoid issues such as the establishment of invasive species.

An ecological restoration management plan was developed in 1998 to restore approximately 400 hectares of the park to a pre-contact distribution of grasslands and open-forests types. The park was divided into 23 priority polygon treatment areas. This plan has been followed for the last 15 years resulting in over 300 hectares of in-grown forest restored to open forest grasslands.

Invasive plants are a significant threat to the grasslands in the park. St John's wort is the most commonly found invasive plant followed by sulphur cinquefoil, spotted knapweed, hounds-tongue and burdock. The latter three species are more prevalent near trails, roads and parking areas.

A potential emerging threat to the bunch grass that is being restored is grazing by Elk. The impacts from grazing by Elk are not known but may be a significant negative factor in the sustainability of restored areas.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<p><b>Support grassland ecosystem transformation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to implement the Ecosystem Restoration Plan including tree removal, vegetation management and prescribed burning.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor the restoration of treated areas and establish monitoring to determine the effect of high Elk populations on native bunch grasses.</li> <li>• Develop a long-term maintenance program for treated areas (e.g., thinning and prescribed burning).</li> <li>• Continue to assess and monitor non-native invasive species including spotted knapweed, burdock, sulphur cinquefoil, hound’s-tongue and St John’s wort.</li> <li>• Develop treatments for highest priority invasive plants to eradicate them from the park as funding is available.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increase the landscape level effectiveness of the ecosystem function of the grasslands.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with adjacent land managers to increase the size of functional grassland ecosystems in the area.</li> <li>• Encourage research on connectivity through the Great Northern Landscape Connectivity Cooperative.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Restrict recreational use in ecologically significant areas of the park.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure recreational use does not occur in the Hunts Hill area of the park zoned for conservation values by creating awareness through information and signage.</li> <li>• Implement signing, messaging and monitoring related to recreational use restrictions.</li> <li>• Conduct periodic compliance and enforcement patrols to ensure compliance is achieved.</li> </ul>



### 3.2.2 Wild Land Urban Interface Fire

Part of the eastern boundary of the park is heavily forested and is adjacent to 8 single family residential units of the Baynes Lake Community. About half of the boundary that affects these residential areas has been treated for interface fire hazards through tree removal.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<b>Continue to reduce the wild-land urban interface fire hazard along the eastern boundary.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop and implement treatment plans for forest fuel reduction.</li><li>• Secure funding to implement required treatments.</li></ul>

### 3.2.3 Lakes and Streams

Past management practices and development have changed the natural hydrology of the kettle lakes and streams in the park. Roads and a flume (on private land) have affected the natural flow of surface water through the site to Lake Koochanusa and a causeway built for the Great Northern Railway causes a significant change in water flow from Surveyors Lake and Engineers Lake to Fisher Lake, which is itself also bi-sected by the causeway. The effect of these water flow barriers on aquatic ecosystems, including species such as the blue-listed Western Painted Turtle and Bull Trout, is unknown. The hydrology of these dry ecosystems is an important component of their ecological function.

Aquatic invasive species are a growing concern. Like many lakes in the Kootenays, Smallmouth Bass are present in the lakes of the park and represent a threat to the aquatic environment. Although no invasive species associated with boating, such as Zebra Mussels, Quagga Mussels or Eurasian Water milfoil, have been found in the park or Lake Koochanusa, there is a major concern for this threat in the region. Visitors can be travelling from distant locations that may have infected water bodies. A Regional District boat launch across the lake from Kikomun Creek Park has installed a boat wash station to help prevent infection and on the United States side (majority of the lake is managed by the state of Montana), there are numerous boat wash stations. An international inter-agency invasive species rapid response team has been formed that serves the Columbia Basin and uses Lake Koochanusa for training exercises.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<p><b>Determine the extent and significance of the disrupted hydrology.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct hydrological assessment of the kettle lakes system and determine the ecological benefit of restoring the natural flow of surface water.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protect against invasive aquatic species and support efforts from other jurisdictions.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the Smallmouth Bass impact on the lakes in the park and threat to the Columbia River and develop an appropriate response strategy.</li> <li>• Provide opportunity for park visitors using the boat launch to wash their boats.</li> <li>• Provide education and prevention information in the park and on BC Parks' website concerning invasive aquatic species.</li> </ul>

### 3.2.4 Species at Risk

Some of the species at risk that use the park, such as Grizzly Bears and Bull Trout, range over large areas with the park representing only a small fraction of the utilized habitat. Other species, such as Western Painted Turtles and American Badgers, are more focused on the park.

All of the lakes in the park are used by Western Painted Turtles. A survey carried out in 2001 showed a maximum population of 1190 turtles. Considering the significant recreational use on the small lakes in the park and potential influence of climate change, there could be some impact on the Western Painted Turtle population.

Not much specific information is known about the American Badgers in the park. Both the badgers and their burrows are known to be present in the park.

The occurrence of little bluestem in the park is based on data that is very old and may no longer be valid. Little bluestem was recorded in the park in 1996 at two locations. Other plant species at risk do have more contemporary survey data, but there is no ongoing or periodic monitoring.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<b>Improve information on species of conservation concern, their occurrence and habitat needs.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update survey information on Western Painted Turtles.</li> <li>• Confirm occurrence of little bluestem and other listed species.</li> <li>• Establish monitoring plots to periodically monitor impacts from recreational use.</li> <li>• Provide public information on trails and at information boards to encourage visitors to stay on trails.</li> </ul>

### 3.2.5 Cultural Heritage

Archaeological site (DhPt-17) is a cultural value that is potentially vulnerable to being impacted in the future along with any others that might be discovered in the park. No immediate threats are present but, as these values lie in the ground and are not very visible, their protection requires awareness and vigilance. The Ktunaxa Nation is interested in ensuring the archaeological and cultural resources of the park are protected.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<b>Provide direction to park staff and park operators on protecting archaeological values in the park.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure when maintaining or providing new facilities, that the existing archaeological site is avoided and that archaeological assessments are done for those management actions requiring soil disturbance in areas of the park not previously disturbed.</li> </ul>

### 3.2.6 Recreation

The recreation opportunities at Kikomun Creek Park have generally reached a balance where current levels of recreational use appear to be sustainable considering the sensitive grassland ecosystem that the recreation use takes place in. This is based on observations that current impacts of recreation on the grasslands are within a limited manageable scale not requiring major levels of intervention. If the demand for recreational opportunities significantly increases in the future, it may not be possible to meet those demands without severely affecting natural values or without increasing the area of the park.

Overnight opportunities and capacity appear to be adequate considering the increased additional capacity in camping and the introduction of cabins over the last few years. Overnight use records show that the campgrounds and cabins are near capacity for the months of July and August.

Day use recreation at Surveyors Lake is arguably the most popular activity in the park and, at peak times during summer weekends, there can be congestion. Given the inherent popularity of day use beach opportunities, the demand is expected to grow over time and the need to address expanding day use opportunities will need to be addressed. The Lake Koocanusa shoreline in the park was originally planned to provide day use beach recreation with the construction of three lagoons, however, water levels of this reservoir lake have rarely been high enough for the lagoons to be used. There may still be potential for these areas to be used in the future considering that water levels governed by the Columbia River Treaty are being re-considered or there may be future engineering solutions.

Cycling is another popular activity that is expected to grow. Increased use of trails can help disperse visitors throughout the park and take pressure off the more popular sites such as Surveyors Lake. Two new short trails have been developed recently that have been important in creating better linkages to existing trails resulting in a more integrated trail network that expands capacity and diversifies the cycling experience.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<b>Maintain existing overnight recreation opportunities and facilities at current levels.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep and maintain all overnight facilities with future improvements limited to upgrades for efficiency, convenience and impact reduction without expanding the ecological foot print unless the area of the park is expanded.</li> </ul>
<b>Relieve growing day use congestion on Surveyors Lake.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the feasibility of expanding the beaches at Surveyors Lake when capacity warrants.</li> <li>• Encourage higher summer water levels for Lake Koocanusa through the Columbia River Treaty and consider potential engineering solutions to improve the usability of the lagoons.</li> <li>• Encourage use of the existing trail network. Only consider new trails for recreation use if increased trail capacity or diversity is required in order to meet new demands and/or to minimize and disperse impacts to park values.</li> </ul>

### 3.2.7 Potential Park Additions

Opportunities exist to increase the land base of the park both within the park boundaries and in adjacent areas. Areas A, B and C (Figure 3) were proposed in the mid-1970s for additions after an assessment of the interpretive potential identified areas where some of the park features, such as drumlins, were cut off or other features such as Kikomun Creek (Area C) were left out.

Acquisition of the private property in the centre of the park (Area A) could provide more land for recreation as well as providing support to the enhancement of the ecological integrity of the park. The property has a pond and is a mostly open area that was grazed by horses. It has vehicle access by a separate public road from the southern boundary of the park. There is good potential for many recreational opportunities from camping to day use. In terms of conservation, the strategic location of this property in the heart of the park is a potential threat to the surrounding park land if in the future an incompatible use were to be established on it. The property also has an old man-made flume constructed many decades ago that disrupts the natural water flow from the small lakes in the park to Lake Koocanusa. The change in water flow appears to have displaced a wet low lying habitat that has conservation value for diversifying the dry grassland environment. One of the drumlins in the park is also partially situated on the private land.

Area B is Crown land contiguous with the existing park boundary that would add more open forest grassland habitat and Class 1 Ungulate Winter Range to the park. It may help cushion dispersed types of recreational use pressure on the ecosystem in the future.

Area C (Kikomun Creek) addition would significantly diversify the biodiversity of the park by including a sizeable aquatic ecosystem.

Area D and Area E are also contiguous with the park boundary and could support expansion of existing park activities such as camping and day use or add to the open forest grassland ecosystem representation.

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
<p><b>Reduce threats to the ecological integrity of the park and increase the potential for enhanced recreation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify Area A for acquisition if it becomes available and investigate options for expanding the park to the north and northeast (Areas B, C, D and E). Acquisition of private lands will only be pursued on a willing seller-willing buyer basis.</li> <li>• Recommend realigning the foreshore boundary of the park to better reflect the shoreline configuration so that the boundary is more easily understood.</li> </ul>

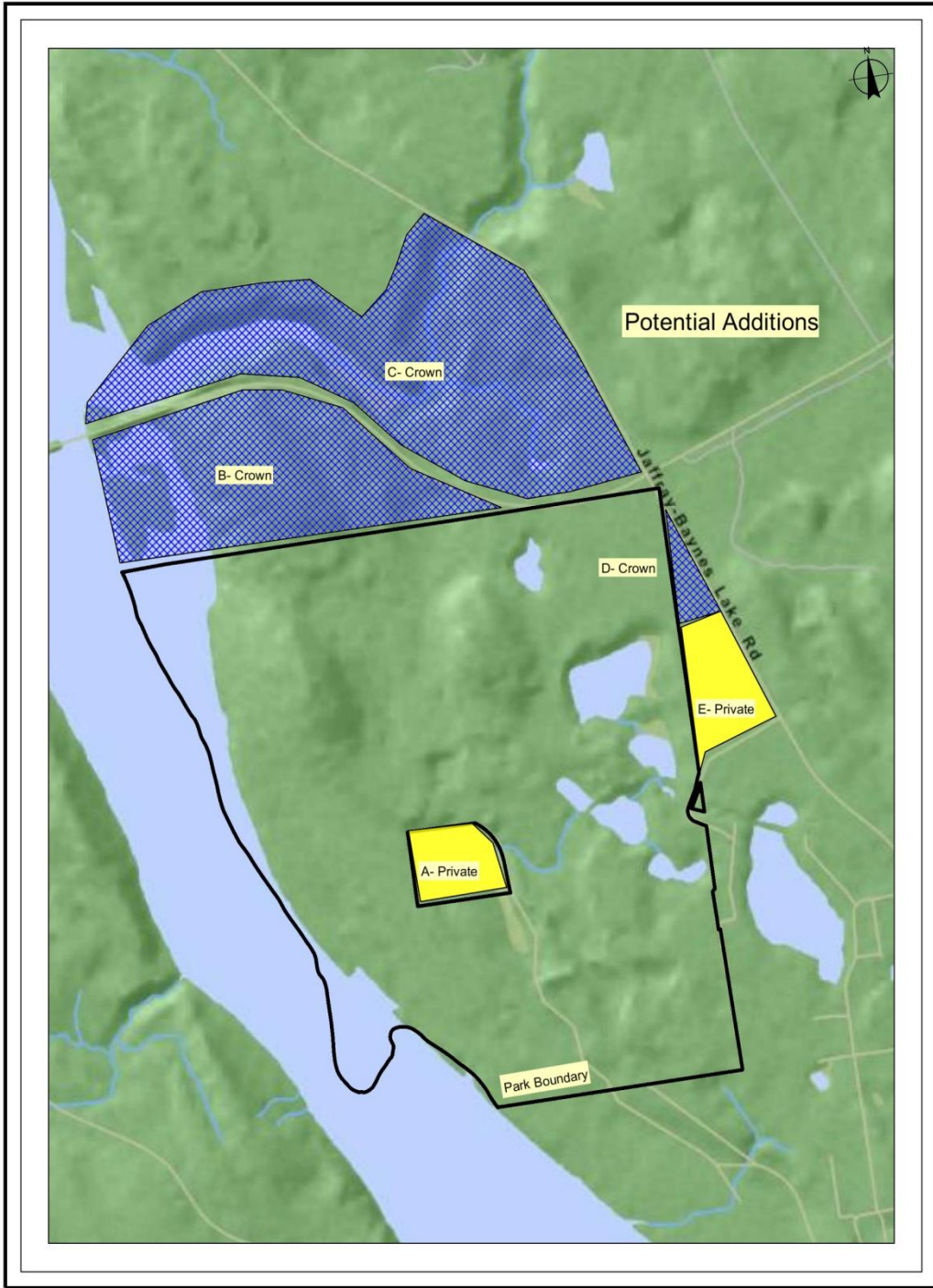


Figure: 3 Potential Park Additions Map



Photo: Area A (private) in the centre of the park

### 3.3 Zoning Plan

In general terms, a zoning plan (Figure 4) divides a protected area into logical management units within which certain activities/uses are permitted and a particular set of management objectives apply. Zoning is often used to physically separate incompatible activities or uses within the protected area and provides visitors and managers with a quick visual representation and appreciation of how a particular protected area is managed. Zones are designed to reflect the physical environment, existing patterns of use and the desired level of management and development in a given management unit.

#### 3.3.1 Intensive Recreation Zone (IRZ)

***Description:***

Three Intensive Recreation Zones, encompassing the three most highly developed areas of the park including all the campgrounds, day use areas and group use sites, have been identified. About 19% of the park, or 129 hectares, is included in this zone.

***Objective:***

- To provide a variety of readily-accessible, facility-oriented recreation opportunities.

***Management Intent:***

Management of these areas is focused on maintaining high-quality and diverse recreational opportunities. There is intensive management of resources, such as hazard trees and invasive weeds. Provision of a wide range of facilities and services to enhance park users' experiences, as well as control their impacts, also occurs.

#### 3.3.2 Nature Recreation Zone (NRZ)

***Description:***

This zone includes all the areas of the park where dispersed recreation occurs along trails and in areas that have a high degree of naturalness. About 59% of the park, or 402 hectares, are included in this zone.

***Objective:***

- To protect scenic values and to provide for dispersed recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.

***Management Intent:***

The recreation experience in this zone is dependent on a high level of natural qualities where development is subordinate to the natural setting. Appreciation of the natural and cultural values is highlighted by providing multi-use trails, interpretation information and boating experiences that enhance park users' interaction in the natural environment.



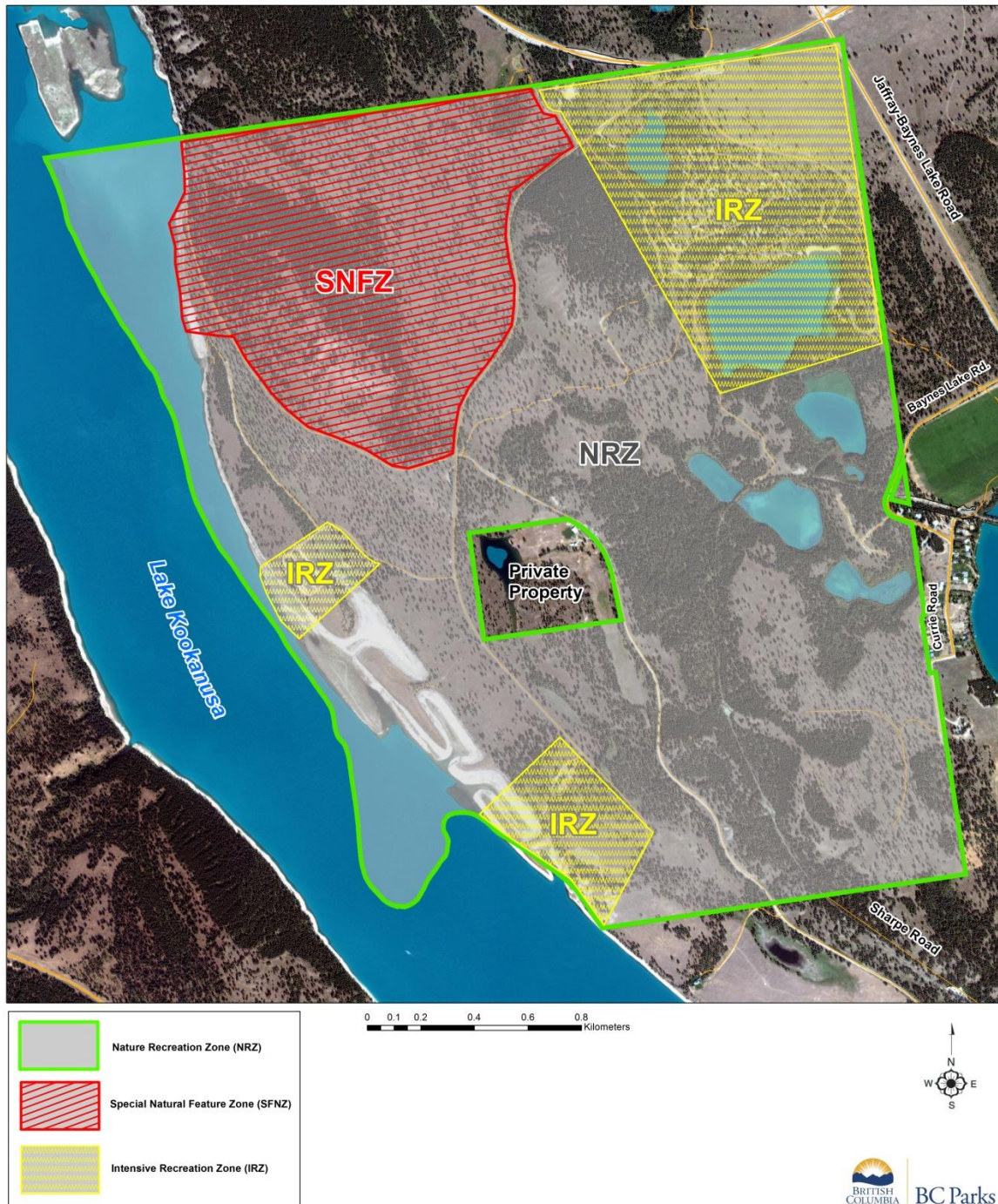


Figure: 4 Zoning Map

### 3.3.3 Special Natural Feature Zone (SNFZ)

**Description:**

This zone includes the main grassland areas that have been restored. About 22% of the park, or 151 hectares, are included in this zone.

**Objective:**

- To protect and present significant natural values, features or processes because of their special character, fragility or natural value.

**Management Intent:**

As this area of the park has significant conservation importance for the grassland values that have been restored, the scientific research that is ongoing and for the potential ongoing educational opportunities, the management intent is to minimize recreational use and provide limited facilities such as trails that are specific to educational or research purposes. Having a large portion of Kikomun Creek Park with only minimal recreational facility development and low recreational use is intended to create a balance with the more intensively developed and used areas of the park.



Photo: Restored ecosystem area of the Special Natural Feature Zone

## 4.0 Plan Implementation

### 4.1 Implementation Plan

BC Parks will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement high priority strategies and to monitor key performance measures. Specific projects will be evaluated for their priority in relation to the overall protected areas system. Many of the initiatives contemplated are not funded as part of core BC Parks activities so jointly seeking funds or outside partners will be a key aspect of the management plan implementation.

### 4.2 High Priority Strategies

- Continue to implement the Ecosystem Restoration Plan including tree removal, vegetation management and prescribed burning.
- Continue to monitor the restoration of treated areas and establish monitoring to determine the effect of high Elk populations on native bunch grasses.
- Ensure that recreational use does not occur in the Hunts Hill area of the park zoned for conservation values. Develop management strategies for protecting values and restricting public use.
- Implement signing, messaging and monitoring related to recreational use restrictions.
- Conduct periodic compliance and enforcement patrols to ensure compliance is achieved.
- Develop and implement treatment plans for forest fuel reduction and secure funding for implementation.

### 4.3 Plan Assessment

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

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

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

## Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table

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

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

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

Activity/Facility	Intensive Recreation Zone	Nature Recreation Zone	Special Natural Feature Zone	Comments
<b>Activities/Uses</b>				
Beach activities (swimming, sunbathing, etc.)	Y	Y	N	
Boating (non-power)	Y	Y	N/A	
Boating (power)	Y	Y*	N/A	*only on Lake Koochanusa
Camping – vehicle accessible	Y	N	N	
Camping – motorised boat accessible	Y	N	N	
Fish stocking	Y	Y	N/A	
Fish habitat enhancement	Y	Y	N/A	
Fishing	Y	Y	N/A	
Hiking/Backpacking/Walking	Y	Y	Y*	*for research and education purposes
Horse use/pack animals (not exotic)	N	N	N	
Hunting	N	Y*	Y*	*restricted to small areas of the park by existing 400m from road regulation
Mechanized Off-road Access (non-motorised – i.e. mountain biking)	Y	Y	N	
<b>Facilities/Infrastructure</b>				
Administrative buildings and compounds	Y	N	N	
Boat launches	Y	N	N	
Campgrounds and picnic areas (vehicle access and serviced)	Y	N	N	
Interpretation and information buildings	Y	Y	N	
Huts, shelters and Lodges	Y	N	N	
Roads and parking lots	Y	Y	N	
Trails (hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking)	Y	Y	Y*	*for research and education purposes
Utility corridors (power/transmission lines and other rights-of-way)	Y*	Y*	N	*applies to existing rights-of-way under park use permit
Wharves/docks	Y	N	N/A	