

Vancouver Island Region

MANAGEMENT  
DIRECTION  
STATEMENT

September 2003

for Lower Nimpkish  
Provincial Park



Ministry of Water, Land  
and Air Protection  
Environmental  
Stewardship

# Lower Nimpkish Provincial Park Approvals Page

## Forward

This management direction statement for Lower Nimpkish Provincial Park provides management direction for the foreseeable future.

## Approvals:



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Date: Oct. 29 / 03



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Date: March 31 / 04

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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Management Direction Statement**

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for all protected areas that do not have an approved management plan but do not negate the need for more detailed management plans in the future. Management direction statements include protected area values; management issues and concerns; and priority management objectives and strategies. The implementation and completion of all these strategies to resolve management issues is subject to available funding. In addition, all development associated with these strategies is subject to BC Parks' Impact Assessment Policy within the protected area.

### **Context**

Lower Nimpkish Provincial Park is located on northern Vancouver Island, approximately 5 kilometres south of Port McNeill in the Regional District of Mount Waddington.

The park is comprised of a 200 hectare corridor of land along the Lower Nimpkish River, which extends downstream, approximately 4 linear kilometres from the north end of Nimpkish Lake. This corridor is approximately 300 metres wide on either side, measured from the centre of the river.

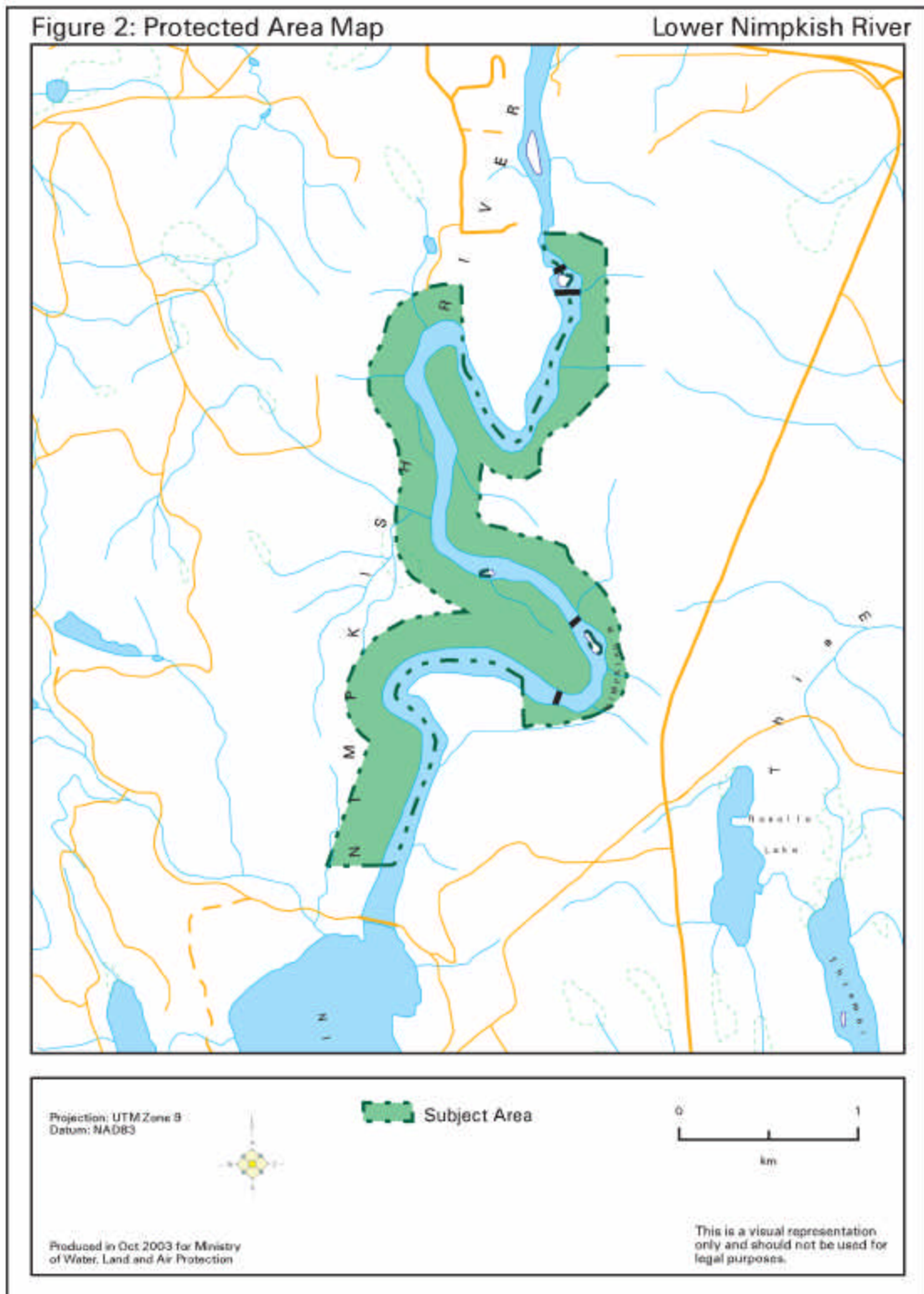
Lower Nimpkish Park was recommended through the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan and formally designated a Class A Provincial Park on July 12, 1995 by Schedule D of the *Park Act* and more recently by Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

The park is within the traditional territory of the 'N̓amgis First Nation who has asserted its aboriginal rights and title to Lower Nimpkish Provincial Park, and has identified it as an area of interest in its negotiation of a treaty under the British Columbia Treaty Commission process

**Figure 1: Regional Context Map**



**Figure 2: Park Map**



## **Protected Area Attributes**

### **Conservation**

- Contains 12% (200 ha) of the protected representation of Coastal Western Hemlock very wet maritime variant 1 biogeoclimatic zone (CWH vm1) in the Nahwitti Lowlands ecosection. This variant is under-represented in the ecosection with only 1.4% protected.
- Provides riparian components of habitat for sockeye, coho, chinook, pink and chum salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, kokanee and rainbow trout. Dolly Varden and cutthroat trout are blue listed regionally.
- Protects bald eagle nesting sites in scattered old-growth veteran trees. Canadian Forest Products (Canfor) mapped seven nests in park, two nests just outside park and six nests in 'Namgis First Nation reserves #4 and #5 adjacent to the park.
- Potential nesting habitat for marbled murrelet, a red listed species. A 16-hectare patch of old growth in the park is rated high for murrelet habitat.

### **Cultural Heritage**

- Protects a large number of traditional use sites, the highest density of known sites within the 'Namgis traditional territory.
- Includes a portion of important cross-Island trade route along the Nimpkish River from Broughton Strait by way of Woss Lake and the Tahsish River to Kyuquot Sound
- Protects the site of several ancient 'origin' stories that connect the emergence of some of the 'Namgis 'houses' or clans to the present day.
- Protects a large number of culturally-modified trees (CMTs) and several sacred and ceremonial sites.
- Includes numerous hunting, fishing, trapping, and traditional food and medicinal plant harvesting areas.

### **Recreation and Tourism**

- Provides opportunities for hunting and angling
- Protects scenic values along trails to the river from old logging roads and along the river for kayaking, canoeing and other boating.

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

- Contributes low-elevation moist coastal-forest habitat to the under-represented CWHvm1 variant in the Nahwitti Lowlands Ecosection.
- Protects a section of a major scenic and riparian corridor along part of the longest river system on Vancouver Island.
- Protects marbled murrelet and bald eagle nesting habitat.
- Protects significant First Nation cultural values
- Provides river-focused recreation including boating, angling and hunting.

## **Land Uses, Activities and Interests**

### **Access**

- Foot trails from adjacent residential subdivision, logging roads and old railway right-of-way.

### **Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances**

- Trapping License: TR0111T806
- Guide outfitter territory
- Permit #ST0110310 for research to Axys Consulting, expires 2006/06/30
- Permit #ST9810156 for educational and recreation program to Strathcona Wilderness Institute, expires 2008/06/30

### **Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities**

- First Nation traditional food and resource harvesting
- Recreational fishing and hunting
- Trails to river from adjacent lands

### **Adjacent Patterns of Land Use**

- Tree Farm License #37 and part of Canadian Forest Products (Canfor) forestry operations
- Two Indian Reserves, Ar-ce-wy-ee No. 4, O-tsaw-las No. 5 and a third, Ches-la-kee No. 3, at the Nimpkish estuary
- Commercial fish hatchery producing Atlantic salmon at Thiemer Creek
- Old railway right-of-way Plan 2T85 redeveloped as a forestry road defining, in part, the eastern boundary of the park
- Gwa'ni Hatchery operated by 'Namgis using net pens in northernmost portion of Nimpkish Lake
- Adjacent residential development (Nimpkish Heights)
- Forestry visitor centre on Highway 19
- Horse back riding on older roads in adjacent Crown land, west of river.

### **First Nations Interests**

- Within the traditional territory of the 'Namgis First Nation, and subject of negotiations in BC Treaty Process.
- Proximity to the contemporary home of the 'Namgis First Nation on Cormorant Island and of a high level of interest to this community.
- Continued access to important food and resource harvesting areas, including traditional salmon fishing area.
- Identification and protection of cultural and heritage sites within and adjacent to the park including village, sacred and ceremonial sites.
- Pursuing management of the park.
- Ability to access adjacent Indian Reserves.
- Restoration of overland trade and commerce route to the west coast.
- Reducing the use of pesticides to control noxious weeds along the highway corridor.

### **Other Agency Interests**

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) - anadromous fish habitat and populations.



- BC Ministry of Transportation - adjacent gravel deposits
- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management - historic aboriginal sites
- Mt. Waddington Regional District - planning and acquisition priorities

### **Private and Public Stakeholder Interests**

- Owners of adjacent residential properties
- Rod and Gun club
- Guide outfitter
- Trappers
- Canfor
- Environmental groups concerned about protected area management
- Mt. Waddington Regional District

### **Protected Area Role Statement**

The **primary** role of Lower Nimpkish Park is to provide day use opportunities in a riverside setting. Located about five kilometres south of Port McNeill, the park comprises a corridor of land centred 300 metres on either side of the Lower Nimpkish River extending downstream approximately four kilometres from the north end of Nimpkish Lake. The river itself is excluded from the park. The riparian corridor is an important scenic route for angling, hunting, swimming, walking, kayaking, canoeing and other boating. Access to the park is limited as it has no developed facilities, however it is possible to travel on foot through trails that originate from old logging roads, an old mostly overgrown railway right-of-way, and from the adjacent residential subdivision to the north, or from Nimpkish Lake to the south.

The **secondary** role is to protect a large number of traditional and cultural sites that are significant to the 'Namgis First Nation. It covers part of traditional First Nation trade routes across Vancouver Island.

The **tertiary** role is to protect the natural values associated with the moist temperate forest of northern Vancouver Island. Lower Nimpkish Park protects a low-elevation moist coastal forest, and a section of major scenic and conservation value along part of the longest river system on Vancouver Island. The park provides regionally significant riparian habitat for anadromous fish including sockeye, coho, chinook, pink and chum salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, kokanee and rainbow trout. A 16-hectare patch of old growth contains high nesting potential for the red-listed marbled murrelet and contains bald eagle nests.

Lower Nimpkish Park is one of six small protected areas that contribute to the representation of the Nahwitti Lowlands Ecoregion which is under represented in the protected areas system at 7%.

## Management Commitments and Issues

### Management Direction from Previous Planning

The original 2008 hectare study area proposed in the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan for Lower Nimpkish Park extended from the outlet of Nimpkish Lake out into Broughton Strait including the Nimpkish River estuary. The study area boundary added significantly to the representation of the C W Hvm1 biogeoclimatic variant within the Nawitti Lowlands Ecoregion.

A final technical review of the boundaries by the Protected Areas Boundary Adjustment Team (PABAT) revised the boundary to exclude private and developed lands, potential gravel deposits, Indian Reserves and transportation rights-of-way. Consequently, PABAT proposed the present 200 hectare boundary configuration to protect recreational hunting and fishing opportunities and regionally significant fish and wildlife habitat.

The Protected Areas Boundary Adjustment Team (PABAT) of the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan recommended;

- that the riverside portion of Lot 1134 be included in the protected area;
- that BC Parks work with First Nations to investigate the opportunity for cooperative management;
- that BC Parks cooperate with regional district regarding planning and land acquisition priorities.

In 1997 the boundary was adjusted to allow access to IR#4.

### Management Issues

Theme	Issue
Knowledge of values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information on natural, recreation and cultural values.</li> <li>• Evidence of high First Nations cultural values.</li> </ul>
Relationship with First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted the mutual understanding and cooperation to protect and manage important cultural, ecological and recreation features as a result of limited communication with 'Namgis First Nations.</li> </ul>
Protecting cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation use and lack of knowledge and appreciation of First Nation's cultural heritage resulting in removal or destruction of cultural features and artifacts.</li> <li>• Impacts of horseback riding on significant cultural values.</li> <li>• Unknown location and use of Overland Trail.</li> </ul>
Protection of ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent forest harvesting – windthrow and visual impacts.</li> <li>• Potential impacts of adjacent residential development.</li> <li>• Importance of acquisition of adjacent Crown land.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge and control over trapping in the park.</li> <li>• Lack of clear boundaries.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for non-native salmon to displace the native salmon species in the Nimpkish River system.</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boating hazards on river.</li> </ul>

## Management Direction

### Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

Objective	Strategy
Protect the park's cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop joint management strategies with 'Namgis First Nation regarding the interpretation, study and protection of cultural heritage in the park.</li> <li>• Support and protect current and traditional use opportunities for 'Namgis First Nation.</li> <li>• In conjunction with 'Namgis First Nation, develop educational information and signage about cultural features, 'Namgis relationship to the park, and appropriate behaviors. Utilize this information on the website.</li> <li>• In conjunction with 'Namgis, work with adjacent subdivision to develop an understanding and appreciation for the park and its values.</li> <li>• Support archaeological inventory of park and adjacent areas as funding permits.</li> </ul>
Protect ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a fish management strategy in conjunction with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Gwa'ni Hatchery that addresses protection of anadromous fish habitat while allowing a recreational fishery.</li> <li>• Work with Ministry of Forests and forest companies to minimize the effect of timber harvesting on park values.</li> <li>• Continue to issue permits to trappers.</li> <li>• Acquire riverside portion of Lot 1134-CTEB8366 (private land owned by Canfor) as recommended by PABAT.</li> <li>• Install park boundary signs in consultation with 'Namgis First Nation.</li> <li>• Ensure that steps to control noxious weeds do not impact the riparian and riverine habitats.</li> </ul>
Increase knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to gather inventory data on park and park values</li> </ul>

<p>Provide recreational opportunities for park visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and define day use walking trails for recreational access through the park.</li> <li>• Work with the ‘N̄amgis First Nation and the Rainforest Riders to develop options for protecting cultural sites along the river.</li> <li>• Maintain recreational fishing opportunities.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities with ‘N̄amgis First Nation to reconstruct trade route, in consultation with other groups such as the Tahsis Heritage Society.</li> <li>• Work with ‘N̄amgis First Nations and Forestry Centre to develop nature and heritage interpretative foot trail.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for tourism and education in park in consultation with ‘N̄amgis First Nation and other user groups.</li> </ul>
<p>Public Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information at the park and on the Internet on public safety on the river.</li> </ul>

## Consultation and Future Planning

- Preparation of a management plan for Lower Nimpkish Park is a low priority.

## Zoning Plan

**The entire park is zoned Natural Environment.**

The objective of this zone is to provide for recreation opportunities in a natural environment. Management is oriented towards protection of a high quality recreational and interpretive experience associated with sightseeing and nature appreciation.

## Appendix A: Acceptable Uses, Activities and Facilities In Lower Nimpkish Park

This table provides a summary of commitments made through land use planning processes with regard to acceptable uses, activities and facilities within this park.

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	N <sup>2</sup>
Horse Use/Packing	M
Guide Outfitting-Hunting:	Y
- Fishing	Y
- Nature Tour	Y
- River Raft	N*
Fish Stock/Enhance	Y
Motorized Water Access	N*
Fire Management:	
- Wildlife Management	M
- Prevention	M
- Prescribed Fire	N
- Suppression	Y
Forest Insect/Disease	M
Noxious Weed Control	M
Exotic Insect/Disease	M
Scientific Research (Specimens)	Y
Scientific Research (Manipulations)	M

- Y = allowed subject to management conditions  
M = may be allowed  
N = not allowed  
N<sup>1</sup> = allowed for expressed management purposes only  
N<sup>2</sup> = present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed  
N\* = river outside of park boundaries