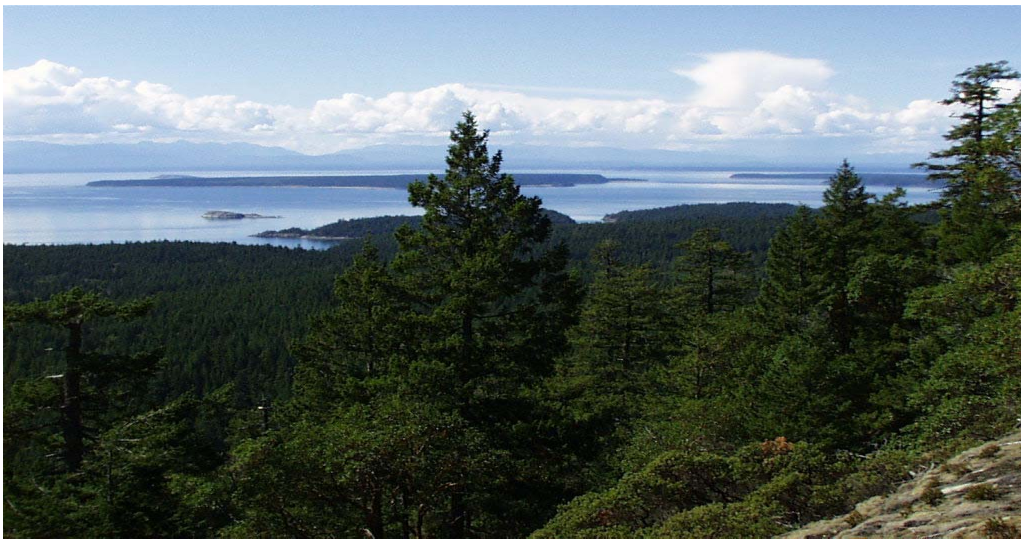


MANAGEMENT PLAN

October 2008



for Malaspina Provincial Park



Malaspina Provincial Park

MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared by
Lower Mainland Region
Parks and Protected Areas Division

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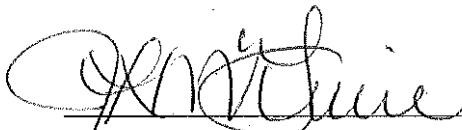
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Malaspina Provincial Park

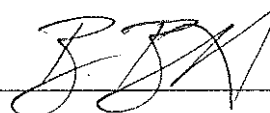
Management Plan

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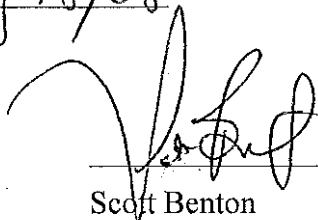
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| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
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Executive Summary

Malaspina Provincial Park is located in the Desolation Sound area and protects significant natural values while providing a low elevation coastal hiking and backcountry recreation experience. The greater Desolation Sound area was and continues to be a centre of First Nations settlement and culture, was a focus of early European settlement and industry, and was one of the first destinations for marine recreation activities in British Columbia.

Malaspina Provincial Park and the greater Desolation Sound area lies at the convergence of several ecosystem classifications with a resulting high diversity of species and habitats. The complexity of natural, cultural and recreation values protected by the park will become increasingly important within the larger Georgia Basin region which is seeing continuing development pressures.

This management plan provides strategic direction for the protection of the park values and for the continued provision of high quality public recreation opportunities. The management plan focuses on five key considerations:

- First Nation cultural and traditional use values;
- Protection of natural values within the context of the larger and more complex Desolation Sound region;
- Protection of marine and fresh water quality and support of adjacent mariculture industry;
- Provision of a high quality hiking and backcountry recreation experience; and,
- Support for the original guidelines under which the park was created.

The park was established with three fundamental guidelines – protection of the Georgia Lowlands ecosystems and adjacent marine water quality; recreation would be managed for low-impact, terrestrial opportunities; and, that the management plan would be prepared in consultation with shellfish producers, Sliammon First Nation, and local stakeholders.

First Nations values and uses will be managed in collaboration with First Nations, and will be protected through monitoring of sites, management of recreation activities, placement of recreation facilities, and educational messages. First Nations' spiritual, cultural and traditional use activities will continue within the park as described within the management plan.

The information on natural values within the park is incomplete. Therefore, management direction focuses on both increasing knowledge and understanding of those values and continuing appropriate protective measures. As large areas of Malaspina Provincial Park are second growth forests, one of the key approaches will be supporting these areas to develop old growth status and attributes.

Malaspina Provincial Park contains the most northern fifteen kilometres of the Sunshine Coast Trail and provides excellent hiking, viewing and backcountry recreation opportunities. Although use is relatively low at this time, it is expected that the park will see increased visitation. Management directions will ensure that the original guidelines under which the park was established are met and that adjacent water quality is protected from inappropriate

park impacts. This will benefit the protection of park values and provide support for the important adjacent mariculture industry.

Commercial recreation is well established in the adjacent communities and low levels of commercial use presently occur within the park. Although this is appropriate and is supported within this management plan, commercial uses will be carefully monitored and balanced relative to the guidelines under which the park was created.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Management Planning Process

BC Parks prepares management plans to guide provincial park management over ten to twenty years¹. The management plan sets out objectives and strategies for the management of conservation, cultural and recreation values and for the operation of the park. A management plan relies on current information on natural and cultural attributes and recreation opportunities within a park, and on land management activities occurring on surrounding lands.

The process for preparing a management plan involves a careful analysis of the overall goals of the park, use patterns, key values of the park, and appropriate management objectives. In choosing the most appropriate option, the intent is to ensure the management decisions protect the values of the park and that human use within the park does not result in unacceptable impacts.

A management plan not only establishes long-term management direction for a park, but also gives direction for immediate issues. As a result, a management plan contains numerous statements describing management actions to be undertaken. While key items are identified, it should be noted that the completion of all items is subject to funding and funding procedures. As such, items are prioritized and completed as funding permits. As well, all development within provincial parks is subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Policy.

Management plans are prepared with a high degree of public involvement. The general public and stakeholder groups have opportunities to review management planning documents and provide comments to BC Parks through a variety of means including public meetings and review of documents. Similarly, BC Parks consults with First Nations, other levels of government and other provincial government agencies in the development and review of management plans.

The planning process for Malaspina Provincial Park took place in 2003 and 2004 and consisted of the following:

- Field reconnaissance by parks staff.
- Discussions with Sliammon First Nation.
- Discussions with Powell River Regional District.
- Public advisory group meetings.

¹ While management plans are initially developed to guide the management of a park for a 5 to 10 year period, a number of factors will influence how long the management plan will be valid. If this management plan still provides appropriate management direction for the park after 10 years, and is still appropriate with respect to the goals and vision of the park, the management plan may still be deemed valid until such a time that updating or re-writing is required.

- Review of draft management plan by public and stakeholders including an open house in Lund.
- Referral of draft management plan for review and comment to other First Nations, agencies and stakeholders.

1.2 Background Summary

Malaspina Provincial Park is located approximately 30 km to the northwest of Powell River, on the eastern and northern shoreline of Malaspina Peninsula. The closest communities are the communities of Lund and Malaspina Inlet. Nearby provincial parks include Desolation Sound, Okeover Arm, Copeland Islands, Roscoe Bay, Teakerne Arm and Walsh Cove (Figure 1).

Malaspina Provincial Park contains 572 hectares of upland forests located within the Georgia Lowlands Ecoregion. The park is typical of the lower elevation coastal areas found along this portion of Georgia Strait with dense forests, bedrock outcroppings, relatively broken and rugged terrain, and short, low volume watersheds.

Malaspina Provincial Park lies entirely within the Coastal Western Hemlock Very Dry Maritime (CWHxm1) biogeoclimatic subzone. This forest ecosystem unit is defined by the presence of specific biological, geological and climatic characteristics. Common tree species include Douglas-fir, western hemlock and western redcedar. Common understory species include salal, Oregon grape, red huckleberry, twin flower, and sword and bracken ferns. Wildlife in the park is typical of coastal low elevation areas and includes black bear, black-tailed deer, small furbearers, raptors, upland birds, amphibians and reptiles. The climate of the park is mild year round with abundant precipitation during winter months followed by relatively dry summers. The majority of the park is second growth forest from earlier forest harvesting or fire events – there are some small pockets of old growth forest and scattered veteran trees within the second growth areas.

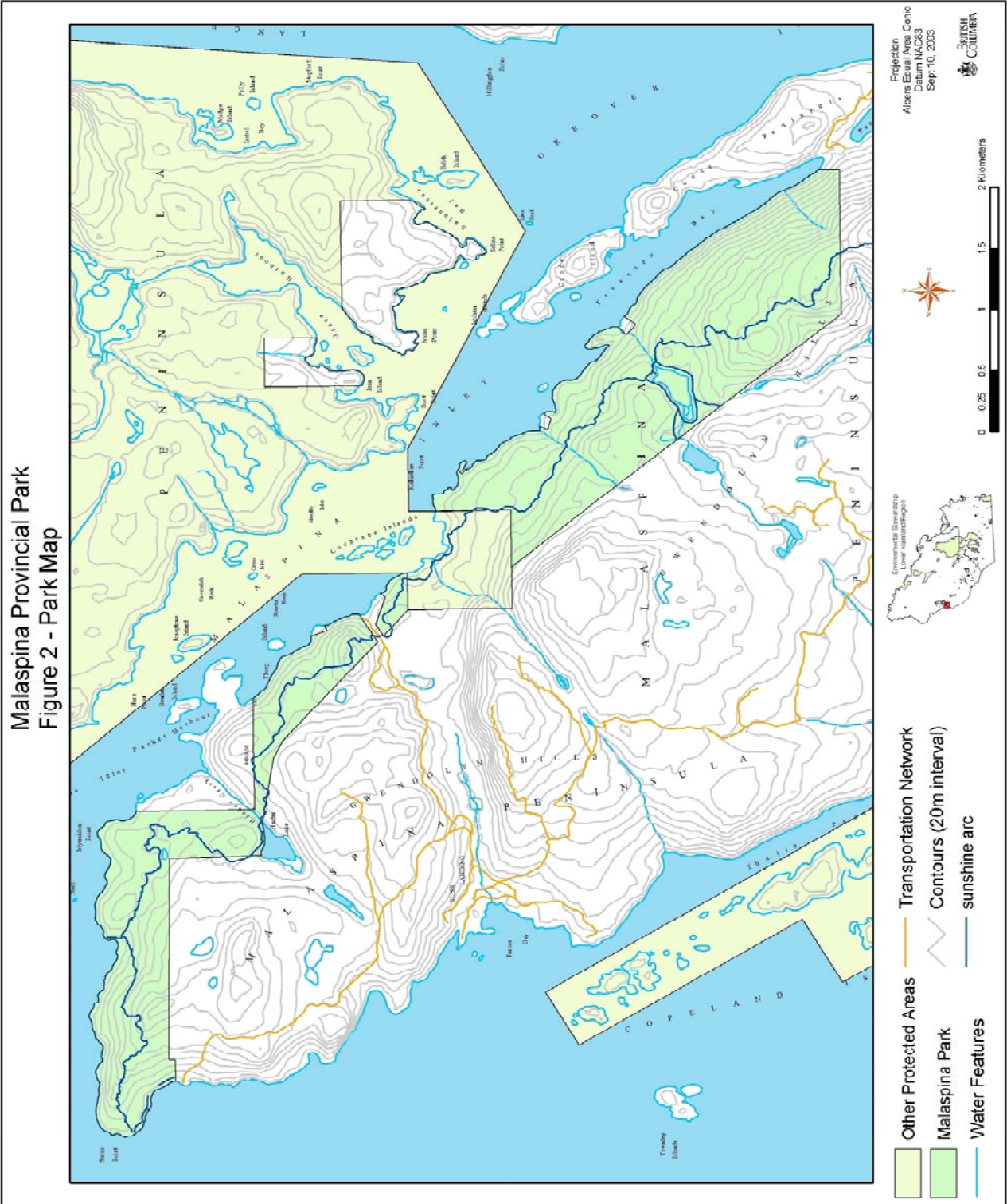
The park lies within the traditional territory of the Sliammon and Klahoose First Nations. The general Desolation Sound area, including Malaspina Park, is known for traditional and historic use by Sliammon First Nation people.

Malaspina Provincial Park can be accessed by hiking trails from adjacent Forest Service or residential roads or by boat from Malaspina Inlet or Desolation Sound. No part of Malaspina Provincial Park is directly road accessible. The northern 15 km of the Sunshine Coast Trail is included within the park between Sarah Point in the north and the northern edge of Manzanita Bluffs in the south. This trail provides a semi-wilderness hiking opportunity for a two-day overnight hike or shorter one-day loops. The trail is generally accessed by boat at Sarah Point or Cochrane Bay, by trail from the Forest Service road at Bliss Landing or Wednesday Lake, or directly from Malaspina Road. Cochrane Bay itself lies within Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park. Overnight camping has historically occurred at Wednesday Lake, Feather Cove and Sarah Point and at the adjacent Cochrane Bay. Other recreation activities within the park include swimming at Wednesday Lake and upland use of the Feather Cove area by kayakers. Recreation facilities within the park are limited and consist of the Sunshine Coast trail system, a small number of undeveloped backcountry campsites, and directional signage. At this time, levels of use are unmeasured but are known to be relatively low.

Figure 1: Regional Context Map



Figure 2: Park Map



1.3 Relationship to Other Land Use Planning

The Malaspina Provincial Park area was considered but not originally recommended under the 1996 Lower Mainland Protected Areas Strategy. However, after the Province was not able to establish the full protected area near Haslam Lake. The area was reconsidered and formally established on April 11, 2001. The park was established as Malaspina Provincial Park under the following key recommendations:

The Inter-Agency Management Committee (IAMC) for the Lower Mainland Region adopted the following recommendation at its meeting on January 27, 2000:

1. That the proposed Malaspina Protected Area be established because it is the best option for addressing conflicts that have prevented the designation of the Confederation Lake Protected Area since 1996;
2. That the future use and management of the Malaspina Protected Area be consistent with the following guidelines;
 - a) The main purpose of the protected area will be to preserve the natural environment and ecosystems of the Georgia Lowlands, and in particular, to help maintain certification for shellfish-growing water in Okeover Inlet by managing potential upland sources of pollution;
 - b) Recreation in the protected area be limited to low impact, terrestrial opportunities, and that marine-based recreation use of the protected area not be encouraged; and,
 - c) Management plans for the protected area be developed in consultation with local shellfish producers, the Sliammon First Nation, and local recreation and conservation interest groups.

Malaspina Provincial Park and Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park areas border the Malaspina Inlet Integrated Coastal Plan area. Although the plan areas are distinct and the park and coastal plans do not provide specific directions for lands outside their jurisdiction, it is essential that the plans recognize and integrate the values of adjacent areas.

1.4 Management Issues

Key issues for Malaspina Provincial Park include:

- **Protection of Natural and Cultural Values:**

Management directions must protect natural and cultural values while allowing appropriate types and levels of recreational uses.

- **Managing for Adjacent Marine Water Quality:**

Malaspina Provincial Park is adjacent to a significant mariculture area. BC Parks recognises the importance of maintaining shellfish growing water certification and managing potential sources of upland pollution. Increasing use of the park trails has led to concerns regarding recreational impacts on water quality. Strategies must be implemented that will manage these impacts while allowing for continued low-impact, terrestrial recreation uses.

- **Integrated Management Outside the Protected Areas:**

BC Parks and outside agencies and stakeholders must work in a co-operative manner to ensure cross-boundary values such as water quality, wildlife habitats, recreational trails and visual quality objectives can be integrated with other land management decisions.

- **Identification of Appropriate Types and Levels of Recreation Use:**

Due to the directions set when the park was established, there is a need to clearly identify the types and levels of recreation use and facilities that are appropriate within Malaspina Provincial Park. This identification would include levels of facilities, access points, types of recreation allowed, presence of campfires, location of overnight camping, and locations of trails.

- **Commercial Recreation Opportunities:**

In consultation with both public and commercial interests, BC Parks must set guidelines for commercial activities that consider all values within the park and which fit within the directions provided when the park was established.

2.0 Protected Areas Attributes

The roles of the park as described below, together with the following Vision Statement for the park, guide the management activities outlined within this management plan. These roles are consistent with the broader Protected Areas Strategy Goals and with the BC Parks System Goals.

2.1 The Role of the Protected Areas

Provincial and Regional Context

Malaspina Provincial Park is located in the north eastern portion of Georgia Strait on the mainland coast of British Columbia. The park is to the north of Powell River and Lund on the eastern and northern shorelines of Malaspina Peninsula. This area is accessible by the BC Ferries system, by air and by boat. The general Powell River area is an easily reached destination for tourism and recreation users from the large regional populations in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island areas. It is likely that as development and changes in recreation opportunities occur outside of the park that the regional importance of the park will increase.

Adjacent parks and the local communities have historically been oriented towards marine recreation and tourism activities. Malaspina Provincial Park offers complementary upland recreation opportunities and will, as part of the larger Sunshine Coast Trail system, contribute to a wider, more diverse tourism base.

Conservation Role

Conservation goals of the Protected Areas Strategy include representation of the natural diversity of the province and protection of special natural, cultural heritage and recreation features of the province. Malaspina Provincial Park complements the conservation values found in the provincial protected areas system by protecting an underrepresented ecosection (Georgia Lowlands), biogeoclimatic zone (Coastal Western Hemlock Very Dry Maritime CHWxm1) and the associated vegetation and wildlife species.

TABLE 1. Malaspina Provincial Park's contribution to representation in the ecosections and biogeoclimatic variant representation.

| Ecosection or subzone | Total of ecosection or subzone (ha) throughout Province | Amount of total ecosection or subzone protected in protected areas system (ha (%)) | Malaspina contribution to protected ecosection or subzone (ha) | Malaspina contribution to protected ecosection or subzone (%) |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Georgia Lowlands | 128,887 | 10,881 (8.4%) | 569 | 5.2 % |
| Coastal Western Hemlock xml | 437,683 | 9,058 (2.1%) | 569 | 6.3 % |

- Many park conservation values lack inventory or site data. Due to the underrepresented status of the Georgia Lowland (GEL) Ecosection and CWH xml (Coastal Western Hemlock) biogeoclimatic subzone and due to the development pressures that occur within this ecosection outside of parks, it is likely that the park's conservation values will continue to increase in importance.
- The park contains a number of wildlife species such as black bear, black-tailed deer, cougar, small furbearers, raptors, upland birds, and a variety of amphibians and reptiles. The park contains some remnants of lower elevation old-growth forest.
- Upland snags and forest areas provide nesting, perching and roosting habitat to a variety of bird species (e.g. raven, bald eagle, turkey vulture) that occupy areas much larger than the park.
- The park protects a significant length of shoreline containing the coastal riparian zone and provides benefits for groundwater flow patterns, seepages and nutrient cycles; wildlife access corridors; and, shoreline habitats.

Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Role

BC Parks has four recreation goals: a) tourism travel routes; b) holiday destinations; c) backcountry; and d) local and regional recreation opportunities.

Malaspina Provincial Park contributes to both backcountry and local and regional recreation goals. The northern portion of the Sunshine Coast Trail and the associated hiking opportunity is the dominant recreation feature that provides both backcountry hiking and camping opportunities. This recreation opportunity offers a low elevation, coastal, and longer season hiking feature which is relatively rare within the park system. To a lesser extent, the Feather Cove area provides backcountry camping and upland access opportunities for sea kayakers.

Malaspina Provincial Park also contributes significantly to the recreation values of the adjacent Desolation Sound Marine Park and Malaspina Inlet by protecting an undeveloped natural upland viewscape for residents, boaters, kayakers, commercial tour parties, and other park visitors.

2.2 Relationship with First Nations

The Sliammon and Klahoose First Nations recognise the Malaspina Provincial Park as part of their traditional territory. Currently, both First Nations are involved in treaty negotiations with senior levels of government. The First Nations' contributions to this management plan are recognised and understood to be without prejudice to future treaty negotiations. First Nations are able to exercise aboriginal rights subject to conservation, public safety and public health values. The final agreement may provide additional directions or changes on aboriginal rights within the park area.

Once formal treaty agreements have been reached with the First Nations, this management plan will be reviewed to determine whether it is in compliance with treaty. If it is not in compliance, then this management plan will be revised accordingly. Changes will be made through an open public review process to build understanding of what these changes mean to the park and its use.

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Vision Statement

The purpose of the vision statement is to identify the role and function of the park beyond the life of the management plan. The vision statement is forward looking and describes the desired future for the park.

VISION STATEMENT

Malaspina Provincial Park will continue to contribute significantly to the natural, cultural and recreation values of the Sunshine Coast and Desolation Sound regions. The provincial park will provide a high quality hiking and backcountry recreation opportunity, will protect terrestrial and shoreline natural values, and will protect and present, as appropriate, the rich cultural values of the area. In combination with other Desolation Sound area protected areas, the parks will be managed collectively with compatible directions. Public recreation and other management activities will be in harmony with natural values and will be sustainable. Over time the rare and unique values of Malaspina Provincial Park's ecosystems will be maintained and will develop many of the original old growth characteristics.

Malaspina Provincial Park will continue to contribute to the protection of adjacent cross-boundary values such as marine water quality and visual landscape objectives while providing low impact, terrestrial recreation opportunities.

3.2 Protected Area Zoning

Zoning is used in park planning to develop general management guidelines for areas of a park on a geographical and ecological basis. Each zone reflects a general level of management with respect to natural, cultural and recreation values. The entire land base of Malaspina Provincial Park is included in a single zone - the Nature Recreation Zone.

Zones

Zone Objective

The objectives of this single zone are to protect the upland forest ecosystem and associated wildlife, vegetation and watershed values, to protect adjacent marine water quality, and to provide a backcountry hiking opportunity within Malaspina Provincial Park.

Zone Description

This zone includes all of the area (572 hectares) found within Malaspina Provincial Park.

Zone Rationale

This zone was chosen for the following reasons:

- The area will be managed with limited facility development and relatively low levels of use.
- The primary management directions will be the protection of the upland forest values, the provision of a hiking recreation opportunity and protection of adjacent water quality objectives.
- The area is relatively small and must be managed as a single unit or zone.

Zone Activity

Table 2 indicates the activities and uses that will apply within the Nature Recreation Zone in this park. Activities within the zone will be managed to protect the conservation values of the park and to maintain seasonal low intensity levels of recreation use.

Table 2: Acceptable Uses, Activities and Facilities in Malaspina Park.

| Activity/Use/Facility | Acceptable Uses | Comments |
|---|-----------------|---|
| First Nation Traditional Use | Y | Subject to conservation and public safety. |
| Hunting | Y | Subject to conservation and public safety. |
| Fishing | Y | Subject to conservation and fishing regulations. |
| Trapping | N | No existing trapping licence. |
| Horse Use/ Pack Animals | N | No appropriate facilities; potential for significant impact. |
| Other domestic animals | M | Restricted to domestic pets (e.g. dogs) on leash. No animals for packing. |
| Mountain Biking | N | No historic use; potential for significant impact. |
| Guide Outfitting (hunting) | Y | No historic use |
| Guide Outfitting (fishing) | Y | No historic use |
| Hiking trails | Y | Restrictions on new trail developments as shown in management plan; ancillary facilities (e.g. pit toilets) as needed for environmental protection or low impact visitor experience enhancement (e.g. viewpoint). |
| Backcountry Overnight Camping | Y | Sarah Point and Feather Cove only. Also at Cochrane Bay in adjacent Desolation Sound Park. |
| Campfires | N | Information will be provided at Feather Cove on fires below the high tide line outside of the park. |
| Commercial Recreation | M | Restricted to hiking, nature study and kayaking guides only. |
| Backcountry Huts | N | No existing hut. |
| Fish Stocking and Enhancement | N | Not presently stocked; stocking would conflict with other management plan objectives including maintaining lower use levels. |
| Road Access | N | No road access development. |
| Off Road Motorised Access | N | No historic use; potential for significant impact. |
| Commercial Motorised Water Access | N/A | Park is above high tide line. Generally water access will only occur near park at Sarah Point or Cochrane Bay. |
| Commercial Filming | M | Subject to provincial policy. |
| Fire Management | Y | Subject to fire management plan. |
| Forest Insect/Disease Control | M | Subject to provincial policy. |
| Noxious Weed Control | N1 | Subject to provincial policy. |
| Exotic Insect/Disease Control | M | Subject to provincial policy. |
| Scientific Research (specimen collection) | M | Subject to provincial policy. |
| Scientific Research (manipulative activities) | M | Subject to provincial policy. |

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

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed

3.3 Natural and Cultural Values Management

The following sections of the management plan provide detail on management of natural and cultural values within the park.

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access Management

Malaspina Provincial Park is currently accessed by trail connections to Malaspina Road (public highway) or the Malaspina Peninsula Forest Service road or by boat drop off at Sarah Point or Cochrane Bay. The locations, types and ease of access are the keys to creating a balance between providing a high quality backcountry recreation activity and managing that recreation to be a low impact, terrestrial opportunity.

Objective:

To provide reasonable access to a high quality backcountry recreation opportunity and to manage access locations and types to direct recreation activities to low-impact terrestrial opportunities.

Strategies:

- Work cooperatively with Ministry of Forests and Range, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and other agencies or land owners to ensure there continues to be no direct road access to Malaspina Provincial Park with the exception of the Sarah Point trailhead.
- Manage Sarah Point and Malaspina Road as the two primary trailheads to the northern portion of the Sunshine Coast Trail.
- Manage for secondary trailheads at Manzanita Bluffs and at Wednesday Lake and Bliss Landing. These latter two trailheads would be managed to start at or near the Malaspina Peninsula Forest Service Road with trails then leading towards and into the park. A trail loop between Manzanita Bluffs or Wednesday Lake and the Doctor's Loop would also be encouraged to divert recreation use from the Wednesday Lake area (see Figure 4).
- Work cooperatively with Ministry of Forests and Range to maintain recreational vehicle closures of secondary forest haul roads from forest harvesting activities near the park boundary.
- Manage for continued marine access to the trail at Sarah Point, Feather Cove and Cochrane Bay only.

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances Management

Prior to the establishment of the park, a number of legal tenures or licenses existed in the final park area. These consisted of water licenses at Wednesday Lake, Iris Springs (near Cochrane Bay), a water line from Hinder Lake to Parker Harbour, and a cell station tower near Sarah Point. These encumbrances continue to be valid after park designation and will be managed to allow the licensed activities to continue while minimizing impacts upon park

values. Any new potential encumbrances or alienations will be managed under the direction of the *Park Act* and provincial policies which do not generally allow for new tenures or alienations within park boundaries.

There are no inholdings within park boundaries.

Objective:

To manage pre-existing tenures and licenses according to provincial policy and in a manner which minimizes impacts upon park values.

Strategies:

- Manage all pre-existing tenures or licenses through park use permits issued under the *Park Act*.
- Work cooperatively with park use permittees to minimize impacts from permit activities on park values. More specifically, in the case of water license holders, work cooperatively to maintain the integrity of water systems and the domestic water supplies while continuing to maintain recreation and conservation values.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

Adjacent land uses primarily consist of forest harvesting activities to the west and south on Malaspina Inlet and marine-based activities, particularly mariculture and tourism, to the east of the park in Malaspina Inlet. The community of Lund draws its drinking water supply from a small lake system to the southwest of the park. Although not heavily developed at present, the western shoreline of Malaspina Peninsula is seeing increasing residential development which will have overall impacts upon the ecology and use patterns on the entire peninsula area including the park.

The adjacent mariculture industry relies upon the high quality of the marine waters found in Malaspina Inlet and are vulnerable to any factors which would reduce marine water quality. One of the founding conditions of the park was “to help maintain shellfish growing water certification in Okeover Inlet by managing potential upland sources of pollution”. Therefore, a key management direction is to manage park activities and facilities to protect the adjacent mariculture marine water quality needs.

In general, the park boundary is adequate. One area that should be monitored over time is the Bliss Portage log dump site which occurs approximately in the middle of the park and serves to bisect the park area into northern and southern portions. If it is determined that at some point forest activities will no longer require the use of this area, then consideration should be given to incorporating it within Malaspina Provincial Park. This would both add to the values of the park and further protect the marine water quality from land development activities.

Objective:

To manage park activities and facilities to protect adjacent mariculture marine water quality needs while allowing low-impact terrestrial recreation opportunities.

Strategies:

- Manage recreation activities and facilities to ensure no upland sources of pollution or other impacts affect marine water quality. Work cooperatively with the mariculture

industry and other government agencies to monitor and manage marine water quality. If marine water quality is found to be negatively impacted by upland recreation activities, then undertake management actions to prevent or control those impacts.

- Review land use plans or activities for adjacent upland and marine areas to ensure values associated with the park have been considered. Encourage agencies, organisations and participants to adopt appropriate management techniques that will not adversely impact park values.
- If the Bliss Portage area is no longer required for forest harvesting activities, consider the addition of the log dump site to the park.

Water

Malaspina Provincial Park is located above the high tide line and contains no marine water areas within its boundaries. It does, however, contain all of Wednesday Lake and portions or all of several small streams or springs. In general, there are reasonable sources of available freshwater for wildlife species and the numerous small watersheds are a significant contributor to the diversity found in the park's ecosystem. It is important to ensure that freshwater quality remains high and that watersheds are not disturbed by recreation activities, facilities or potential outside developments or uses. In addition, protection of freshwater sources from human pollution will assist in protection of adjacent marine water quality. Due to the small size and volume of the watersheds within the park, it is difficult to ensure drinking water for recreation users is uncontaminated by animal sources and it will be necessary for recreation users to treat potential drinking water sources.

Wednesday Lake, Hinder Lake and Iris Springs all are used as domestic freshwater supplies by adjacent residential properties.

Objective:

To maintain the park's freshwater values in a sustainable high quality condition and to protect wildlife and fish habitats dependent upon the park's freshwater systems.

Strategies:

- Work closely with other agencies and adjacent landowners to manage water values that extend across park boundaries. Encourage appropriate management techniques that will not adversely impact water values.
- Design recreation facilities and manage activities to maintain the quality and diversity of freshwater systems within the park. Ensure sanitary facilities (e.g. pit toilets) are properly located, designed and managed. Ensure trail or campsites are constructed and maintained to minimize soil erosion and disturbance to surface water flow.
- Provide the public with information on minimizing impacts to water quality in the backcountry.

Vegetation

Essentially, all of Malaspina Provincial Park consists of an upland forested area located within the Coastal Western Hemlock Very Dry Maritime (CWHxm1) biogeoclimatic subzone. Forested areas are typically dense second growth stands with pockets of old growth and occasional veteran trees scattered within the second growth. The second growth areas were created as a result of earlier forest harvesting or fire events.

Common tree species include Douglas-fir, western hemlock and western redcedar. Common understory species would include salal, Oregon grape, red huckleberry, twin flower, and sword and bracken ferns. The climate of the park is mild year round with abundant precipitation during winter months followed by relatively dry summers. Soil, moisture and growing conditions vary significantly within the park area and create a variety of growing sites. Although at this time the second growth forest is less diverse than historically, it is anticipated that the vegetation within the park will evolve into a more varied spectrum of species, sites and plant associations. As the CWHxm1 subzone is presently underrepresented in the protected areas system and occurs within a rapidly developing region, the vegetation values within the park will continue to increase in importance and in rarity. As more detailed inventory information becomes available, it is likely that additional rare or unique values and plant communities will be confirmed to occur within the park.

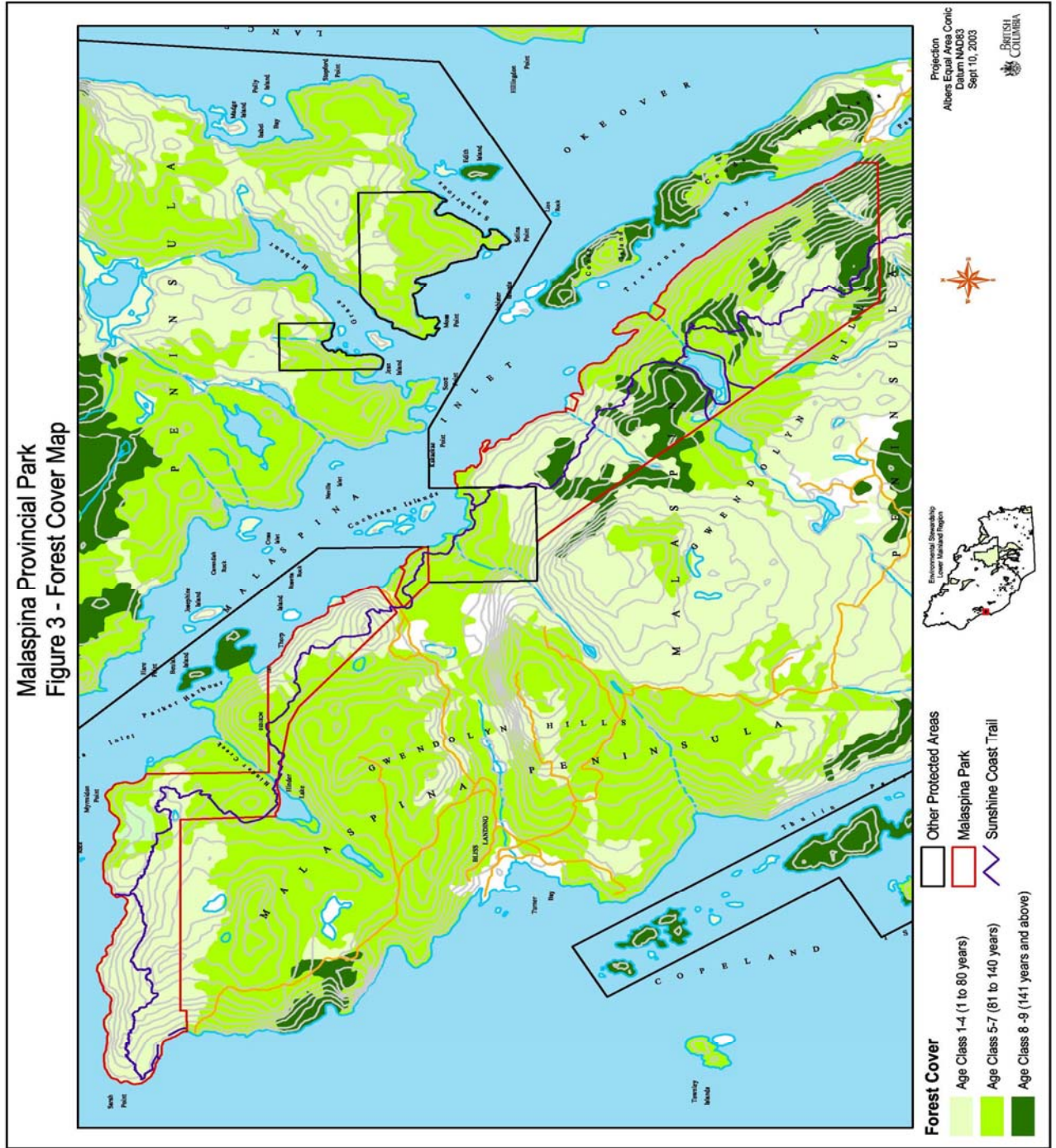
Objective:

To protect and conserve vegetation values and to allow natural processes to increase the diversity and succession of plant species and associations within the park.

Strategies:

- Manage vegetation values to allow the natural succession from the existing second growth conditions to a more diverse spectrum of plant types, sites and associations. In particular, protect existing pockets of old growth forest.
- Implement a fire management plan in cooperation with the Ministry of Forests and Range. Due to the close proximity of adjacent forestry and residential areas, all forest fires will be controlled.
- Work closely with other agencies and adjacent landowners to manage vegetation values that extend across park boundaries. Encourage appropriate management techniques that will not adversely impact park values.
- Work with agencies, organisations and individuals to identify, research and monitor vegetation, particularly any rare or endangered species or plant communities. Develop a more complete understanding and inventory of vegetation values.
- Design recreation facilities and manage activities to maintain the quality and diversity of vegetation values within the park. Ensure facilities (e.g. trails) are properly located, designed and managed to minimize impacts.

Figure 3: Forest Cover Map



Wildlife

Wildlife values in Malaspina Provincial Park are typical of the coastal low elevation CWHxm1 biogeoclimatic zone and include black bear, black-tailed deer, small furbearers, raptors, upland birds, amphibians and reptiles. Although the park does not contain areas below the high tide line, park upland areas contribute shelter, food and other habitat needs to shoreline and some marine bird species. Larger or more transitory species are dependent on areas outside of the park to the west or south. Other wildlife values (e.g., insects, amphibians) may have smaller habitat needs which can be met within the park area.

Due to a lack of inventory information, specific rare and unique wildlife values that the park may protect for smaller or less known species are poorly understood. Similar to vegetation values, wildlife within the second growth forest is likely less diverse than was historically present. It is anticipated that as the vegetation and wildlife habitat within the park develops into a more varied spectrum of sites that the opportunity for wildlife diversity will also increase. As the CWHxm1 subzone is underrepresented in the protected areas system and occurs within a rapidly developing region, wildlife values within the park will continue to increase in importance and in rarity. As more detailed inventory knowledge becomes available, it is likely that additional rare or unique values will be confirmed to occur within the park.

Objective:

To maintain the existing wildlife species, populations and habitats in the park and to allow natural processes to increase the diversity of the species and habitats.

Strategies:

- Manage wildlife values to allow natural processes to occur as is feasible and to potentially increase the diversity of species and habitats.
- Work closely with other agencies and adjacent landowners to manage wildlife values that extend across park boundaries. Encourage appropriate management techniques that will not adversely impact park values.
- Work with agencies, organisations and individuals to identify, research and monitor wildlife values, particularly any rare or endangered species or habitats. Develop a more complete understanding and inventory of wildlife values.
- Design recreation facilities and manage activities to maintain the quality and diversity of wildlife values within the park. Ensure facilities (e.g. trails) are properly located, designed and managed to minimize impacts.

Cultural Heritage

The Desolation Sound and Malaspina Inlet areas contain numerous pre-contact and post-contact culturally significant First Nations sites. The general area continues to be important for cultural and traditional use purposes to First Nations. Malaspina Provincial Park itself appears to have less cultural or archaeological sites than the adjacent park areas but further information on First Nations use of Malaspina Provincial Park is required.

The general Desolation Sound and Malaspina Inlet areas have numerous homesteading or early coastal industry historical sites related to European settlement. However, Malaspina Provincial Park itself has no known significant historic European activity sites that require management direction.

Objective:

In cooperation with Sliammon First Nation, identify, protect and present as appropriate significant cultural features and values including traditional use patterns by the Sliammon First Nation in Malaspina Provincial Park.

Strategies:

- In cooperation with Sliammon First Nation, identify traditional use areas and culturally significant sites.
- In cooperation with Sliammon First Nation, develop strategies that will protect areas of interest and will manage for the continued practice of traditional activities by present and future generations of the First Nation.

Landscape Setting and Feature Values

The natural forest viewscape provided by the upland areas of Malaspina Provincial Park are an important value for recreational boaters and commercial tour operators in the adjacent Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park and the overall Malaspina Inlet and Desolation Sound area. Malaspina Provincial Park will be managed to protect forest values and therefore this viewscape opportunity.

Within the park, the key values for hikers on the Sunshine Coast Trail are the forest landscape and the outstanding views of Georgia Strait, Desolation Sound and the surrounding coastlines and islands.

Some of the lands and marine waters adjacent to the park in Malaspina Inlet have been developed for residential or mariculture activities. However, the forest cover generally provides screening from shoreline mariculture operations and the adjacent Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park provides a forested viewscape along the eastern shoreline of Malaspina Strait.

Objective:

To protect the viewing opportunities towards and from the park.

Strategies:

- Work in a co-operative manner with agencies involved in adjacent development to ensure consideration is given to appropriate visual management for protection of visual values.
- Ensure any proposed development or facilities in the park are aesthetically pleasing and blend with the natural environment. In particular, ensure no park facilities are readily visible from marine areas outside of the park.

3.4 Recreation Values Management

Recreation opportunities within Malaspina Provincial Park are centred primarily on the Sunshine Coast Trail and associated hiking and camping activities. The northern 15 km of the Sunshine Coast Trail that is included within the park between Sarah Point in the north and the northern edge of Manzanita Bluffs in the south provides a semi-wilderness hiking opportunity for a two-day overnight hike or shorter one-day loops. The trail is generally accessed by boat at Sarah Point or Cochrane Bay, by trail from the Malaspina Peninsula Forest Service Road to Bliss Portage or Wednesday Lake, or directly from Malaspina Road. Cochrane Bay itself lies within Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park. A short loop, the Ann Gustafson Way Trail, circles Wednesday Lake and can be included as part of a day or overnight hike. Camping has historically occurred at Wednesday Lake, Feather Cove and Sarah Point and at the adjacent Cochrane Bay. Other recreation activities within the park include swimming at Wednesday Lake and upland use of the Feather Cove area by kayakers. Recreation facilities within the park are limited and consist of the Sunshine Coast Trail system, a small number of undeveloped backcountry campsites, limited signage, and one pit toilet. At this time, levels of use are unmeasured but are known to be relatively low.

Historically, the trails and campsites within the park area were established by a dedicated volunteer effort under the guidance of the Ministry of Forests and the Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society (PRPAWS). It is important that volunteers continue to be involved in facility maintenance and management to provide both resources and links to the local communities.

Public Recreation Opportunities and Facilities

The following sections outline how recreation will be managed within Malaspina Provincial Park. To meet the original guidelines established during the designation of the park, limited recreation facilities will be developed. Recreation activities will be managed to maintain relatively low use numbers, low intensities of use and low impacts, and generally terrestrial opportunities.

Hiking

Hiking trail development will be restricted to the existing trail systems. Relocation of smaller portions of the trails for improved environmental or water quality protection, for improved access to views or recreation features, or for public safety will be allowed. Trails within the park will be developed at a BC Parks Type 3 standard (grubbed or cleared tread, 0.75 meter maximum width, backcountry trail).

At present, trails see low levels of use. However, due to the close proximity to the Lower Mainland and the communities on the Sunshine Coast, it is expected these trails may see moderate increases in use as they become better known.

Objective:

To maintain and, if appropriate, improve the opportunities for hiking within the park.

Strategies:

- Maintain and manage the trails within the park to minimize environmental or water quality impacts, increase public safety, and improve the quality of the visitor experience. The Ministry of Environment's water quality objectives for Desolation Sound (2005)² and Okeover Inlet (2005)³ are recommended for monitoring impacts from recreational use.
- Involve community volunteers in the maintenance and management of park trails.
- Determine appropriate relocations of smaller portions of trails for environmental or water quality protection, for increased public safety, and for improved access to views or recreation features.
- As appropriate, develop facilities (e.g. pit toilets) in higher use areas to address water quality concerns.

Backcountry Camping

Camping will be managed to encourage appropriate levels and locations of use, to protect freshwater systems, and to provide a quality recreation experience. There is a need to provide a camping location near the Sarah Point trailhead, in the northern portion of the trail at Feather Cove, and near a midpoint between Sarah Point and Malaspina Road. This latter requirement will be met by locating campsites at Cochrane Bay in adjacent Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park. The existing campsite location at Wednesday Lake will be closed to assist in protection of freshwater quality.

Objective:

To provide backcountry camping opportunities for hikers while minimising environmental impacts.

Strategies:

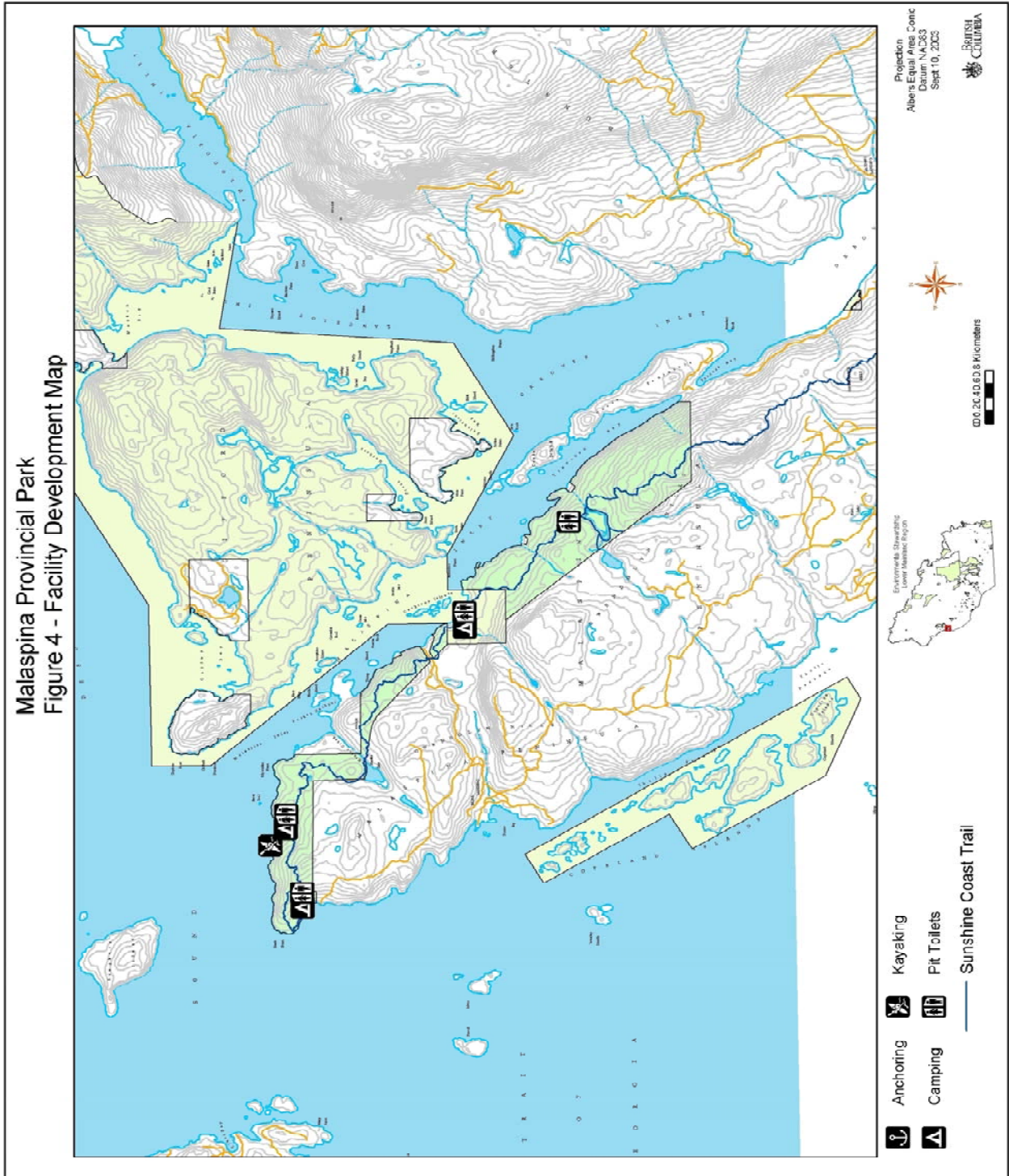
- Allow backcountry camping only at Sarah Point, Feather Cove and the adjacent Cochrane Bay area. The number of sites at Sarah Point and Cochrane Bay would be between 4 and 6 sites. The number at Feather Cove would be likely similar but could be expanded up to 10 sites based on long-term kayak use in the area.
- As directed by the Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park Management Plan, the Cochrane Bay sites will be located on the northern edge of the bay and existing undeveloped sites and side trails at the southern edge of the Bay will be closed.

² Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. 2005. *Water Quality Assessment and Objectives: Desolation Sound*. Environmental Quality Division, Environmental Protection, Lower Mainland Region.

³ Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. 2005. *Water Quality Assessment and Objectives: Okeover Inlet*. Environmental Quality Division, Environmental Protection, Lower Mainland Region.

- Facility levels at each camping area would be basic and minimal. Appropriate standards would be a cleared relatively level campsite, pit toilets, simple benches, and food storage areas for protection for and from wildlife. Campsites might include tent platforms if local conditions (e.g. uneven or wet areas) warranted.
- Pit toilets will be provided at Sarah Point, Feather Cove, and Wednesday Lake within Malaspina Provincial Park and at the adjacent Cochrane Bay site.
- All of Malaspina Provincial Park will be closed to campfires. However, the beach area below high tide line at Feather Cove is located outside of the park and would generally be open to fires. Therefore, as necessary, information will be provided in this area on appropriate control and methods for campfires which must be located below high tide line.

Figure 4: Facility Development Map



Upland Activities for Sea Kayakers at Feather Cove

In general, recreation activities within Malaspina Provincial Park will be managed for terrestrial opportunities. The exception to this guideline will occur at Feather Cove where campsites will be managed for use by sea kayakers. This direction is intended to encourage sea kayakers to move out of Malaspina Inlet away from mariculture areas, to encourage kayak activity away from sensitive marine water quality areas, and to provide a safe midway camping destination for kayakers between the outer areas of Desolation Sound and Malaspina Inlet. This is the only area within Malaspina Provincial Park where non-terrestrial recreation will be managed for.

Objective:

To manage for upland use by sea kayakers of the Feather Cove area.

Strategies:

- Provide information on Feather Cove to sea kayakers as part of broader sea kayak information sources. Messages should focus on encouraging sea kayakers to explore the outer areas of Desolation Sound.
- Monitor sea kayak use at Feather Cove and, as appropriate, provide information or facility adjustments appropriate for sea kayak use.

Fishing

The only location suitable for fishing within Malaspina Provincial Park is Wednesday Lake. Presently the lake is not being artificially stocked and fishing use is relatively low. Provincial policy directs that parks be managed for natural processes and generally fish stocking is discouraged. In addition, fish stocking would encourage higher levels of use and therefore would not be compatible with the original directions under which the park was created.

Objective:

To maintain a non-stocked recreational fishing opportunity at Wednesday Lake.

Strategies:

- In partnership with provincial fisheries staff, maintain sustainable non-stocked recreational fishing opportunity at Wednesday Lake.

Hunting

Malaspina Provincial Park is included as part of Management Unit 2-12. Species currently open to harvest (dependant on regulations) include black-tailed deer, black bear, wolf, coyote, racoon, skunk, snowshoe hare, bobcat, cougar, upland game birds and waterfowl. Current hunting pressure within the park is not measured but, due to both limited access and low species populations, is known to be light in comparison to other areas of MU 2-12.

Objective:

To maintain hunting as an accepted activity within the park subject to sustainability of wildlife populations, protection of conservation values, and public safety.

Strategies:

- In partnership with provincial wildlife staff, manage and maintain sustainable and safe hunting within the park. This will include consideration of wildlife populations and hunting activity to determine effects of hunting opportunities. Implement management actions as appropriate.

Other Activities

BC Parks' policy provides for a variety of recreation activities to take place across British Columbia's parks system. However, not all of these activities are suitable for each individual park such as Malaspina. This may be due to their impacts on the environment, impacts on other users, the availability of other opportunities within close proximity to the park, or to the lack of appropriate facilities. Mountain biking, off road motorized activities, and the use of horses or other pack or riding animals are not acceptable activities for Malaspina Provincial Park. Table 2 provides additional information on activities within the park.

Commercial Recreation Opportunities

Commercial operations can provide a diversity of opportunities and enhanced experiences for park visitors. This is particularly relevant for inexperienced visitors. Commercial recreation opportunities exist within Malaspina Park related to guided hiking, nature appreciation activities and sea kayak guiding at Feather Cove. However, any commercial activities must be carefully reviewed in the context of the guidelines established during the designation of the park. Guided activities can occur but must be managed for low-impact terrestrial opportunities and, with the exception of Feather Cove, for no marine-based commercial recreation use of the park.

More extensive, broader based and complementary commercial recreation opportunities exist in both adjacent park and non-park areas. This includes significant lodge and resort opportunities.

Objectives:

Support appropriate commercial recreation while protecting the conservation and water quality values of Malaspina Provincial Park.

Strategies:

- Manage commercial activities for low impact, low levels of use, terrestrial opportunities over most of the park area. Manage for sea kayak guiding at Feather Cove as appropriate. Review any commercial activity in the context of the original guidelines for the establishment of the park.
- Lodge and other roof accommodations will not be considered due to the sensitivity of fresh and marine water quality within the provincial park and the potential for impacts to shellfish/finfish operations in the foreshore.

3.5 Visitor Information

Management Messages

The key management messages will be the protection and management of the park's conservation and recreation values, protection of the adjacent marine water quality, and the safe and appropriate use of the park. These messages should be delivered in a manner that builds support and understanding within the general public and with stakeholders.

Awareness

The park will be included in standard brochures, maps and on the BC Parks website. The park will be shown as a semi-wilderness backcountry destination suitable for hiking and backcountry camping. Information will also be provided on the sea kayak camping opportunity at Feather Cove.

Malaspina Provincial Park was established as a low-intensity use park: therefore, BC Parks will not actively promote increased use levels for the park. The park is located away from any direct road connections, and formal highway or road signage directing the public to the park will not be established by BC Parks.

Natural and Cultural Heritage Education

Education themes will focus on the unique values found in the CWHxm1 biogeoclimatic subzone, on the interactions between upland areas and the marine environment, and on the values and activities found in adjacent areas. In cooperation with the Sliammon First Nation, themes focused on First Nations use of the area may also be explored.

Education signs will not be widespread within the park but may be placed at major trailheads, at campsite areas, or at significant viewpoints. Interpretive messages may be included within brochures or other information sources.

Visitor Information Objectives:

To provide to recreational users and the wider community key management messages on the protection and management of the park's conservation and recreation values, protection of the adjacent marine water quality, and the safe and appropriate use of the park.

Strategies:

- Provide on the BC Parks website information on the park's conservation and recreation values, on the need to minimize impacts and to protect the adjacent marine water quality, on the need to respect adjacent activities, on the types of recreation activity appropriate for the park, and on ethics and methods for appropriate use of backcountry areas. Include similar messages on any brochures or maps produced for the park.
- Provide signage at Sarah Point, Wednesday Lake, and Cochrane Bay with information on the park, the need to protect adjacent water quality, and the need to respect adjacent activities.
- Signage within the park should generally be minimal.

4.0 Plan Implementation

This section provides direction on the priorities as identified through discussions with First Nations, stakeholder, public, and staff discussions. Implementation of specific actions will ultimately depend upon the availability of resources, the viability of projects, and the changing circumstances or pressures within the park. The strategies below are not listed in a priority ranking. Overall, implementation of strategies will focus on the five key considerations – protection of First Nations values, protection of natural values, protection of marine and freshwater quality, provision of backcountry recreation, and support of the park’s establishment guidelines.

The strategies shown below may be in a condensed form and will be implemented as they are shown elsewhere in this management plan.

Priority Strategies

- In cooperation with Sliammon First Nation, identify traditional use areas and culturally significant sites and develop strategies to protect these sites.
- Work cooperatively with Ministry of Forests and Range, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and other agencies or land owners to ensure there continues to be no direct road access to Malaspina Provincial Park with the exception of the Sarah Point trailhead.
- Manage Sarah Point and Malaspina Road as the two primary trailheads to the northern portion of the Sunshine Coast Trail.
- Work cooperatively with Ministry of Forests and Range to maintain recreation vehicle closures of secondary forest haul roads near the park boundary.
- Manage recreation activities and facilities to ensure no upland sources of pollution or other impacts affect marine water quality.
- Design recreation facilities and manage activities to maintain the quality and diversity of freshwater systems within the park. Provide park users with information on minimizing impacts to water quality in the backcountry.
- Manage vegetation values to allow the natural succession from the existing second growth conditions to a more diverse spectrum of plant types, sites and associations. In particular, protect existing pockets of old growth forest.
- Implement a fire management plan in cooperation with the Ministry of Forests and Range. The park will be closed to campfires.
- Work with agencies, organisations and individuals to identify, research and monitor vegetation, particularly any rare or endangered species or plant communities. Develop a more complete understanding and inventory of vegetation values.
- Work with agencies, organisations and individuals to identify, research and monitor wildlife values, particularly any rare or endangered species or habitats. Develop a more complete understanding and inventory of wildlife values.
- Work with adjacent land management activities to ensure consideration is given to appropriate management for protection of visual values.

- Manage the trails within the park to minimize environmental or water quality impacts, increase public safety, and improve the quality of the visitor experience.
- Manage and restrict backcountry camping to locations at Sarah Point, Feather Cove and the adjacent Cochrane Bay area.
- Manage commercial activities for low impact, low levels of use, terrestrial opportunities.
- Provide information on the park's conservation and recreation values, on the need to minimize impacts and protect the adjacent marine water quality, on the need to respect adjacent activities, on the types of recreation activity appropriate for the park, and on ethics and methods for appropriate use of backcountry areas.

