

Mkwal'ts Conservancy Management Plan







Cover photo: Shore of Lillooet Lake at the mouth of Ure Creek.

Photo credit: Liz Scroggins

Mkwal'ts Conservancy Management Plan

BC Parks

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The Lil'wat Nation and BC Parks have jointly prepared this management plan. The management planning process was coordinated by Harriet VanWart, Referral Coordinator, and Lucinda Phillips, Director, Land and Resources Department of the Lil'wat Nation and by Vicki Haberl, Planning Section Head, South Coast Region, BC Parks. Tracy Howlett, GIS Manager for the Lil'wat Nation Land and Resources Department, prepared all of the maps. Liz Scroggins of Scroggins Consulting prepared management plan drafts for review by Lil'wat Nation and BC Parks, under contract to Lil'wat Nation.

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1.0 Introduction

The Mkwal'ts Conservancy (the conservancy) is one of the central focus areas of Lil'wat Nation culture. It contains many significant cultural sites and spiritual places. The Lil'wat Nation has named the area Mkwal'ts, which translates as smooth rocks on the beach, in the Ucwalmicwts language.

1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of the conservancy. The management plan:

- describes the background and legal context of the conservancy;
- sets out a vision and role for the conservancy;
- identifies significant conservancy features;
- identifies management issues, objectives and strategies; and,
- identifies zones in the conservancy where area-specific management direction applies.

1.2 Planning Area

The Mkwal'ts Conservancy is located within the Lil'wat Nation Traditional Territory (Lil'wat Territory) approximately 20 kilometres southeast of Pemberton on the western shore of Lillooet Lake.

The conservancy is approximately 3,874 hectares in size and protects the lower portion of the Ure Creek watershed while the upper part of the watershed is located within Garibaldi Park.

Access to the conservancy is by the Green River Forest Service Road which is accessed off of the Pemberton Airport Road. On the Forest Service Road, the conservancy is 9 kilometres after the Green River crossing (Figure 1).

Garibaldi Park is adjacent to the conservancy. Nairn Falls Park, Joffre Lakes Park, and the K'zuzált/Twin Two and Nlháxten/Cerise Creek conservancies are all within 15 kilometres of the Mkwal'ts Conservancy (Figure 1).

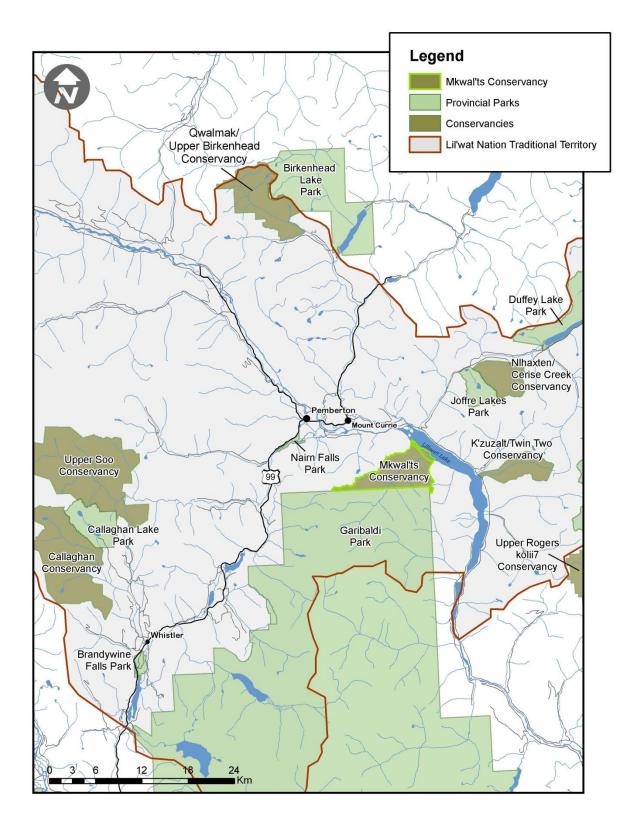


Figure 1: Regional Context Map

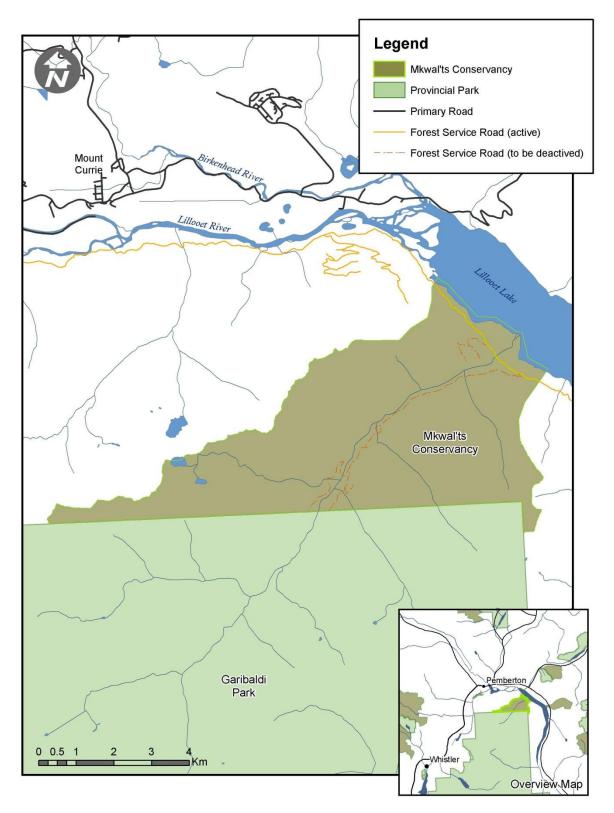


Figure 2: Mkwal'ts Conservancy Map

1.3 Legislative Framework

The Mkwal'ts Conservancy was established on June 3, 2010 and is named and described in Schedule E of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

A conservancy is set aside for four reasons:

- (a) the protection and maintenance of their biological diversity and natural environments;
- (b) the preservation and maintenance of social, ceremonial and cultural uses of first nations;
- (c) the protection and maintenance of their recreation values; and
- (d) to ensure that development or use of their natural resources occurs in a sustainable manner consistent with the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) and(c).

Under the *Park Act*, commercial logging, mining, and hydro electric power generation (other than local run-of-the-river projects) are not permitted in conservancies. "Local run-of-the-river projects" in relation to a conservancy, means hydro power projects supplying power for use (a) in the conservancy, or (b) by communities, including first nation communities, that do not otherwise have access to hydro electric power.

1.4 Management Commitments

In 2006 the Lil'wat Nation developed the Lil'wat Land Use Plan: Phase 1 which presents the vision and plan for the land and resources of the Lil'wat Territory.

In April 2008, the Sea to Sky Land and Resource Management Plan was completed. This plan provides direction for future land use planning and management of natural resources in the Sea to Sky area. That same month, a Land Use Planning Agreement between the Lil'wat Nation and the Province of British Columbia was signed by Lil'wat Nation and the Province. During negotiations of the Land Use Planning Agreement, a satisfactory agreement for the Ure Creek area could not be reached. Ure Creek was identified as an "unresolved" area, but the Province made a commitment to work with the Lil'wat Nation to find a solution, including consideration of designating the area as a conservancy. In April 2010, an Agreement Regarding the Mkwal'ts Nt'akmen (Ure Creek Area) between the Lil'wat Nation and the Province of British Columbia (Mkwal'ts Agreement), was signed. Under the Mkwal'ts Agreement, the Province agreed to establish the Mkwal'ts Conservancy.

The Lil'wat Land Use Plan, Sea-to-Sky Land and Resource Management Plan, Land Use Planning Agreement and Mkwal'ts Nt'akmen Agreement provide high-level direction for land use in the conservancy and on adjacent lands.

The Mkwal'ts Agreement provides for the conservancy to be managed in accordance with the 2008 Land Use Planning Agreement¹, as follows;

to maintain opportunities for Lil'wat Nation social, ceremonial and cultural uses;

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¹ LUPA, 2008 Section C-4: Conservancy Management Direction

- to protect and enhance the integrity of the Lil'wat Nation's cultural and heritage resources, including sacred sites;
- to protect the biological diversity and natural environments within the zone, including wildlife habitat values and low elevation riparian ecosystems;
- to maintain, where appropriate, current levels of low intensity backcountry recreational and tourism uses; and,
- to increase opportunities for Lil'wat Nation participation in commercial recreation and tourism enterprises.

The Mkwal'ts Agreement provides further "Area Specific Implementation Direction" as follows:

- access that adversely affects cultural values and uses by the Lil'wat Nation will not be developed;
- infrastructure that adversely affects cultural values and uses by the Lil'wat Nation will not be developed;
- the conservancy will not be promoted as a recreational destination; and,
- collectively, the Parties will develop management plan zoning for the conservancy that protects natural and cultural values, and prohibits motorized access.

Section 5.5 of the Land Use Planning Agreement states that all tenures in the conservancy will be reviewed to determine if existing tenures should be authorized by park use permits and whether or not any tenure amendments are required to meet the management intent of the conservancy.

This management plan and the Lil'wat Nation's involvement in the development of this management plan are without prejudice to the aboriginal rights, including aboriginal title, of the Lil'wat Nation. Nothing in this management plan is intended to create, define, diminish, alter, abrogate or extinguish Lil'wat Nation aboriginal rights, including aboriginal title.

1.5 Adjacent Land Use

Forestry

The lower portion of the conservancy is bordered on both sides by the Soo Timber Supply Area.

Recreation

There is a licence for commercial recreation that overlaps the northwestern ridge of the conservancy and a portion to the southeast. The licence is for helicopter-based skiing, mountaineering, snowshoeing, hiking, and picnicking in the vicinity of Mount Currie and the Bastion Range.

The Green River Forest Service Road is used by the public for dirt biking, all-terrain vehicle use and mountain biking.

Sea-to-Sky Land and Resource Management Plan Zoning

The Sea-to-Sky Land and Resource Management Plan (S2S LRMP) has designated a Wildland Zone and Frontcountry Zone adjacent to the conservancy.

Wildland Zones are identified under the S2S LRMP to recognize areas with First Nations' cultural values, high wildlife values, backcountry recreation values, and remote wilderness characteristics (S2S LRMP, p. ii). The Mount Currie Recreation Wildland Zone (# 15) is situated along the north-western portion of the conservancy. Backcountry commercial and non-commercial recreation activities are permitted, including hunting, angling and hiking. Area-specific management direction for this Wildland Zone indicates that no permanent public or commercial recreation infrastructure development is allowed (e.g., lodges, huts) (p. 182, S2S LRMP).

The eastern portion of the conservancy is bordered by a Frontcountry Zone. This zoning allows for commercial and industrial activities but visual quality objectives are managed in a way that reduces visual impacts.

Protected Areas

The conservancy is adjacent to the northern boundary of Garibaldi Park. The management plan for Garibaldi Park identifies this portion of the park as a Wilderness Conservation Zone, to protect the pristine and remote undisturbed natural landscape. There are three provincial parks and four conservancies within a 15 kilometre radius of the conservancy (Figure 1).

Other Tenures

A licence of occupation for heli-skiing and hiking, an active guide outfitter licence and a registered trapline occur in the conservancy. The Green River Forest Service Road is excluded from the conservancy.

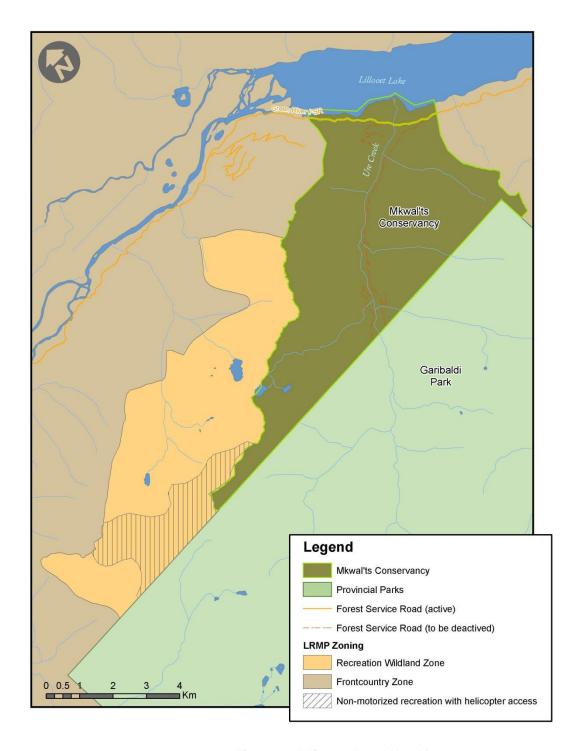


Figure 3: Adjacent Land Use Map

1.6 The Planning Process

BC Parks and Lil'wat Nation worked collaboratively to develop management plans for three conservancies in the Lil'wat Nation's traditional territory: K'zuzált/Twin Two Conservancy, Mkwal'ts Conservancy and Qwalímak/Upper Birkenhead Conservancy. The planning team developed a Terms of Reference which has guided the conservancy management planning process. Liz Scroggins of Scroggins Consulting prepared the draft management plan with input from Lil'wat Nation and BC Parks representatives, and together, all three parties made up the planning team. Data gathering and draft management plan preparations were followed by a collaborative review process from the planning team. Both Lil'wat Nation and BC Parks conducted an initial internal review.

A public review period was initiated with two open house events, one in Mt. Currie and one in Pemberton. The draft plans were posted on the BC Parks website and comments were submitted to Vicki Haberl. All the comments were reviewed and appropriate changes were made in the final drafting stage. A final draft was then presented to both the Lil'wat Nation and BC Parks for approval and signing.

2.0 Values and Roles of the Conservancy

2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

The Mkwal'ts Conservancy is significant to the protected area system because it:

- protects the entire Mkwal'ts Nt'akmen Area² including the cultural and ecological features
 of the land that support the needs of the Lil'wat people; and,
- along with Garibaldi Park, protects an entire watershed with a full range of elevations to accommodate the possible migration of species associated with climate change. Species resilience to climate change is aided by the conservancy's proximity to other protected areas.

2.2 Cultural Heritage

Values

The Mkwal'ts Nt'akmen Area holds unique value for its areas of spiritual and ceremonial reverence. Mkwal'ts has particular value to the Lil'wat Nation due to the many Lil'wat place names, legends and archaeological sites found in the Ure Creek watershed. Nt'akmen Areas are intended to provide long-term security for Lil'wat Nation to harvest traditional resources and practice their culture. The conservancy provides protection for these values, including but not limited to those traditional Lil'wat cultural activities are described in the Land Use Planning Agreement³ as:

- gathering traditional foods;
- gathering plants used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes;
- hunting, trapping and fishing;
- cutting selected trees for cultural or artistic purposes;
- conducting, teaching or demonstrating ceremonies;
- seeking cultural or spiritual inspiration;
- constructing or using shelters, such as camps, longhouse or pithouses, essential to the pursuit of the above activities; and,
- cultural burning.⁴

² The Lil'wat Nt'akmen (Our Way) Areas were identified in the Lil'wat Land Use Plan (2006).

³ Land Use Planning Agreement between the Lil'wat Nation and the Province of British Columbia (2008). Section C-4 Management Direction.

⁴ Intentional landscape burning carried out to maintain certain habitat conditions and enhance the production of important plants and animals.

There are many registered archaeological sites within the conservancy and in the surrounding area. There are culturally modified trees (CMT's), which show evidence of cedar bark stripping that predates 1846. There are also several depressions which are the remains of a traditional village site. The larger depressions in the ground are evidence of isktens (pithouses) which were the traditional homes of the Lil'wat people. Smaller depressions are from cache pits, where Lil'wat people would store food. Pictographs (traditional rock paintings) are on cliffs along the shore and there are several burial sites.

Historically, the area was used by the Lil'wat Nation for the collection of culturally important plants such as huckleberries and mushrooms. Vision questing was practiced in this area. Stories about hunting, trapping and cedar root digging - and other activities in the area - were told by the Elders. The Elders also told of the time when people used to go to the Mkwal'ts area for spiritual training and that special training was required before they were allowed to go in to the area. "It was said that one had to have medicines to protect themselves from good or bad spirits, the spirit A7xa7." ⁵ These beliefs still prevail in the Lil'wat Nation community today.

The area is used by Lil'wat people today for traditional use activities such as hunting, fishing, and plant gathering. Several community members travel to the conservancy to maintain the grave sites located there. The Xit'olacw Community School, owned and operated by the Mount Currie Band, runs cultural education excursions to the Ure Creek fan on the shores of Lillooet Lake.

The Land Use Planning Agreement has identified two Lil'wat A7x7ulmecw (Spirited Ground) Areas within the conservancy, which are places of high cultural value. One is in the upper Ure Creek area and one covers the entire Ure Creek fan area. These cultural areas have been designated as Heritage Sites under the Land Act.

Role

Protects a place of significant cultural value from further industrial development or other activities that may interfere with Lil'wat Nation's traditional use activities.

2.3 Natural Heritage

Values

Protected Watershed

The conservancy is contiguous to Garibaldi Park which is located to the southwest of the conservancy. Garibaldi Park, created in 1920, is 194,676 hectares in size and is considered one of Canada's most accessible and spectacular wilderness parks. The conservancy connects the upland portion of the Ure Creek watershed within Garibaldi Park to the shoreline of Lillooet Lake. A deposition zone occurs at the mouth of Ure Creek, as the terrain flattens. This alluvial fan, called the Ure Creek Fan, extends prominently into Lillooet Lake.

⁵ Dan, Ralph. Lil'wat Elder statement, 1991.

Ecosystem Representation

The conservancy is situated entirely within the Eastern Pacific Ranges Ecosection and contains portions of the Coastal Mountain-heather Alpine, Mountain Hemlock, and Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zones. The conservancy contributes a significant amount (4.1%) of the Coastal Western Hemlock, Southern Dry Submaritime (CWHds1) subzone, of which only 6.5 % is protected in the province.

Vegetation in the conservancy ranges from alpine parkland in the northwestern area to large coastal western hemlock and western redcedar stands in the lower reaches.

There is no detailed vegetation inventory for the conservancy and it is not known if rare plant species are present; further study is required.

Old-Growth Forests

There are five Old Growth Management Areas contained within the conservancy and two that overlap at the boundary. Rare and/or unique plant communities may occur within these old-growth areas.

Important Wildlife Values

Large mammal species found in the conservancy area include Grizzly Bear, Black Bear, Wolverine, Mountain Goat and Black-tailed Deer. The conservancy also provides habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl which is a provincially red-listed species and listed as endangered in Canada. There are known occurrences of Spotted Owl in the conservancy watershed. Several special management zones for this species are situated to the southeast of the conservancy.

Prior to the establishment of the conservancy, certain portions of the working forest were identified for habitat protection under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. Ungulate Winter Range was set aside for Mountain Goat and Black-tailed Deer. Ungulate Winter Range is intended to protect suitable habitat such as foraging areas, escape terrain and steep south facing slopes. These areas are now within a conservancy, and protected under the *Park Act*, and the *Forest and Range Practices Act* no longer applies. However, the spatial extent of these habitat protection areas provides important information and informs the management direction developed for the conservancy (Figure 4). A large Ungulate Winter Range (UWR) for Mountain Goat occurs on the northern slopes of the watershed and two additional UWR polygons span the conservancy into Garibaldi Park to the south. A large UWR polygon for Black-tailed Deer is adjacent to Ure Creek just above the forest service road.

There are no species at risk identified by the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre, however a Northern Goshawk was observed in the area during a site visit. Under BC's Conservation Framework, Northern Goshawk is the priority 3 species for Goal 2 which is "to prevent species and ecosystems from becoming at risk". The primary threat to this species is loss of habitat through deforestation.

Fish Habitat

Dolly Varden Char has been recorded at the mouth of Ure Creek. Juvenile Sockeye Salmon were observed along the shore of Lillooet Lake at the mouth of Ure Creek during a site visit. Further research is needed to determine the full scope of fisheries values in the Ure Ceek watershed.

Role

The conservancy is contiguous to Garibaldi Park and contributes to the complete protection of the Ure Creek watershed. The conservancy provides a protected migration corridor for wide-ranging mammals from Garibaldi Park to Lillooet Lake. It protects important Mountain Goat and Black-tailed Deer winter range. Old-growth forests provide habitat for Spotted Owl and other species dependant on old-growth forests.

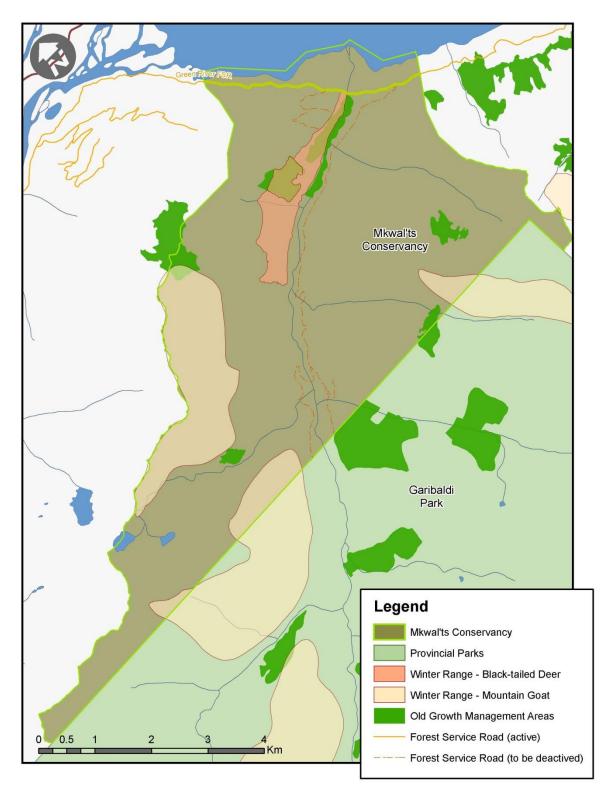


Figure 4: Natural Features Map

2.4 Recreation

Values

There are no developed campsites, cabins or other built infrastructure within the conservancy.

The fan at Ure Creek is a popular stop for boaters and provides opportunities to appreciate the natural environment and the scenery of Lillooet Lake.

Currently there are motorised activities in the conservancy; management strategies have been developed to address this.

There are two existing tourism and recreation tenures:

- a commercial recreation licence for helicopter-based access held by Coast Range Heliskiing Limited (land file # 2407315). The current licence term ends in September 2037. Activities associated with this licence include helicopter-based skiing, mountaineering, snowshoeing, hiking, and picnicking.
- a guide outfitter licence (certificate number 200691).

Role

The conservancy will not be promoted as a recreational destination. Low impact, non-motorised backcountry recreation activities are acceptable.

2.5 Development or Use of Natural Resources

Values

The conservancy is intended for the protection of the natural and cultural values. The use of natural resources is limited to those activities described in the cultural values and recreation values section. Other uses or development of natural resources, including local run-of-river projects, within the conservancy are not appropriate.



Lower Ure Creek Fan



Lillooet Lake, looking south-east from Ure Creek Fan

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Vision

The Mkwal'ts Conservancy is one of the central focus areas of Lil'wat culture. Mkwal'ts holds unique value for its areas of spiritual and ceremonial reverence. The conservancy is a place for Lil'wat people to connect with their traditional territory, spiritual beliefs and rich cultural history. The cultural heritage features and important biological species in Mkwal'ts Conservancy are protected.

3.2 Management Objectives, Issues and Strategies

The following table summarizes the management objectives, issues, and strategies for the conservancy.

Objectives	Issues	Strategies
Sustain and promote Lil'wat Nation traditional uses including social, ceremonial and cultural activities.	Lack of awareness within the Lil'wat Nation regarding access to the conservancy limits the current use of the area for cultural purposes.	 Educate and inform the Lil'wat Nation that continued access to the land and resources for the exercise of aboriginal rights in the conservancy is supported and permitted.
		 Explore opportunities and locations for a shelter to be used by Lil'wat Nation members to enable access to the conservancy.
	Previous logging activity has affected the natural and cultural integrity of the watershed.	 BC Parks may work with Lil'wat Nation to inventory plant and wildlife species that could be utilized by Lil'wat Nation for traditional resources. Lil'wat Nation to develop a harvesting plan for traditional resources such as plants, medicines and animals.

Objectives	Issues	Strategies	
Sustain and promote Lil'wat Nation traditional uses including social, ceremonial and cultural activities (cont.).	Access and use of the area needs to be managed to mitigate any impacts to traditional use activities.	Work with the Provincial agency responsible for forest service roads to decommission the Ure Creek Forest Service Road in the conservancy to a standard suitable for hiking.	
		Monitor road deactivation process.	
		 Work with the existing guide outfitter tenure to ensure their operations avoid impacts to traditional use activities. 	
Maintain the biodiversity and natural ecological processes.	Potential negative impacts to biodiversity and ecological processes can be mitigated	Complete an inventory for the presence of species at risk and support the implementation of recovery plans.	
	through the proper management of activities in the conservancy and adjacent to the conservancy.	management of activities in the conservancy and adjacent	Work with other government agencies to ensure that the conservancy is not impacted from adjacent land use.
		Ensure heli-skiing operations observe the Provincial Mountain Goat Management Plan Guidelines which state that no helicopter use should occur within 2,000 metres of mountain goat habitat.	
		BC Parks and the Lil'wat Nation will work with the heli-ski/heli-hike tenure holder to determine how to phase out this activity.	
		Regulatory changes to prohibit aircraft landings may be recommended.	

Objectives	Issues	Strategies
Protect cultural sites and features.	Potential negative impacts to cultural sites and values can be mitigated through the proper management of activities in the conservancy and adjacent to the conservancy.	 Public facilities will not be developed within this conservancy. Monitor integrity of cultural features and sites to ensure they remain intact and undisturbed. Monitor use of Ure Creek fan to ensure area is not being negatively impacted. If impacts are observed, Lil'wat Nation will be notified and management strategies will be determined, which may include closing areas or restricting public access. Use signage to describe the cultural significance of the area to the public and to discourage activities that may be causing impacts to cultural sites and features.

3.3 Zoning

Zoning assists in the planning and management of conservancies and other protected areas by communicating and focusing management direction in particular areas using a landscape level approach. Management objectives for a spatial area describe the desired natural environment conditions and visitor experience opportunities on a given landscape.

Cultural Zone

The entire Mkwal'ts Conservancy is a Cultural Zone to protect the cultural significance of this area. This zone offers opportunities for the Lil'wat Nation's continued use of cultural heritage sites and traditional use activities. It will ensure protection of the ecological values that support First Nations use. Lil'wat Nation may develop a shelter/cabin for cultural purposes. Public facilities will not be developed within this conservancy.

4.0 Plan Implementation

4.1 Policy Context

In addition to any area-specific policies highlighted in the conservancy management plan, there are numerous other provincial/regional policies and guidelines which will be considered during management plan implementation. This includes items such as: BC Parks' policies on conservation, permitting and impact assessment processes; and broader government commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

4.2 Implementation

BC Parks and Lil'wat Nation will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement high priority strategies and to monitor key performance measures. Specific projects will be evaluated for 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 partners will be a key aspect of management plan implementation.

4.3 Implementation Priorities

The following strategies have been identified as high priorities for implementation:

- educate and inform the Lil'wat Nation that continued access to the land and resources for food, social and ceremonial purposes in the conservancy is supported and permitted.
- monitor integrity of cultural features and sites to ensure they remain intact and undisturbed. If necessary, provide signage.
- work with Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to decommission forest service roads in the conservancy to a standard suitable for hiking.

Appendix 1: Appropriate Uses Table

The following table lists existing and potential future uses in the Mkwal'ts Conservancy. This is not an exhaustive list of uses that may be considered in this protected area and does not restrict the exercise of Lil'wat Nation aboriginal rights.

Activities	Cultural Zone
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	Y
Horse Use/Pack Animals	N
Guide Outfitting	Y
Mechanized Use (e.g. mountain biking)	N
Motorized Use (e.g. quads, 4x4's, dirt bikes, including snowmobiles and snowcats)	N
Heli-skiing	N
Heli-hiking	N
Backcountry Skiing	Y
Hiking/Walking	Y
Backpacking	Y
Rock-climbing	N
Aircraft access	N

Facilities/Infrastructure	Cultural Zone
Huts/Cabins/Shelters	N
Campsites	N
Boat Launches	N
Interpretive Signage	Y
Roads	N
Parking Lots	N
Trails	Y
	(deactivated road)
Communication Sites/Towers	N

Facilities/Infrastructure	Cultural Zone
Water Control Structures	N
Commercial Hydro Electric Projects and Infrastructure	N

Legend		
N	Not an appropriate use in this zone	 It has been confirmed during the management planning process that this use is not appropriate in this zone. This may be an existing use which the management planning process has determined is no longer an appropriate use in this zone. The management plan details strategies for addressing this inappropriate use (e.g., phasing out, closing).
Υ	May be an appropriate use in this zone	 This indicates that some degree or scale of this use may be appropriate. For existing uses, the management plan will provide guidance on the appropriate level or scale of this use (e.g., direction to reduce, restrict or increase the current level of this activity) and may address specific restrictions or enhancements (e.g., capacity, appropriate sites, designated trails, purposes, party size, time of year, etc.).
		 For new or expanded uses, this does not constitute approval. This indicates that the use may be considered for further evaluation and possible approval (e.g., park use permit adjudication, completion of a review as part of the BC Parks' Impact Assessment Process). In some cases the appropriateness may not be confirmed until further assessments are completed.
N/A	Not an applicable use in this zone	This is applied where it is not feasible for the use to take place in this zone (e.g., mooring buoys in a terrestrial zone).

Appendix 2: Biogeoclimatic Zones

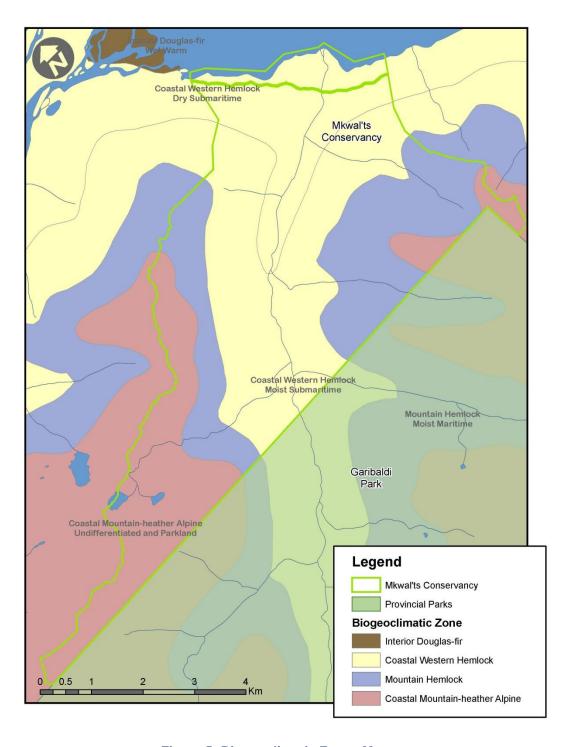


Figure 5: Biogeoclimatic Zones Map