

MT BLANCHET PROVINCIAL PARK AND TAKLA LAKE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN Omineca Region 2005

Approved by:



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Mount Blanchet Provincial Park and Takla Lake Ecological Reserve Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Mount Blanchet Provincial Park is located in a remote, sparsely populated area of north central British Columbia, on Takla Lake, the province's fifth largest lake. Isolated, pristine and scenic, this 24,744 ha park encompasses the mountainous area between the northwest arm and the main part of the lake, and includes close to 60 km of shoreline. The park currently is accessible by boat during the summer months or by snowmobile in winter.

The closest settlement is Takla Landing, and the largest settlement is Fort St. James (population 2,209), 125 km to the southeast, on Stuart Lake.

Mount Blanchet Provincial Park helps to fill large gaps in representation of ecosystems of the Manson Plateau and Babine Upland ecoregions. Key conservation values include significant northern caribou wintering and calving areas, suitable mountain goat and grizzly habitat, and excellent representation of alpine flora. Both Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) occur at the northern limit of their range in North America in this park. Creeks provide important fish habitat, including spawning habitat for sockeye and chinook salmon.

The Takla caribou herd which uses this area has been listed as threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), the province is responsible for providing effective management for northern caribou. Currently, a Recovery Action Group is assessing management needs of northern caribou in this area and will be developing a provincial recovery plan.

Part of a provincially significant chain of large lakes and connecting rivers, Takla Lake attracts recreation users and tourists for boating, hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The lake offers an excellent sport fishery for lake trout (char), rainbow trout, and kokanee. Mount Blanchet Provincial Park enhances values for recreation and tourism on Takla Lake by protecting the northern viewshed of the lower portion of the lake.

Mount Blanchet Provincial Park surrounds Takla Lake Ecological Reserve, located on the west shore of Takla Lake. The ecological reserve is 240 ha in size and protects the most northerly known stand of Douglas-fir as a genetic bank. Douglas-fir occurs as the dominant species on about 60 ha, and as a minor species on another 40 ha. Most of the Douglas-fir stands are young (90 - 100 years) and of medium growth quality.

Whitebark pine occurs at high elevations. This large-seeded pine has a unique co-dependency with Clark's nutcrackers. Whitebark pine seeds cached by nutcrackers provide an important food source for grizzly bears throughout some parts of their range. While currently not listed as a species at risk provincially, Whitebark pine has been red-

listed globally by the IUCN. It is threatened by mountain pine beetle and white pine blister rust. Both pathogens occur in the park.

Mount Blanchet Provincial Park was established on January 25, 2001 on the recommendation of the Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

Mount Blanchet Provincial Park

Primary Role

The primary role is to protect conservation values and to contribute towards representation of the Manson Plateau (91% of park) and Babine Upland (9% of park) ecosections. The extensive alpine provides valuable habitat for northern caribou, mountain goat, and grizzly bear. The park also contains the northernmost Douglas-fir and whitebark pine stands in North America. Takla Lake and its tributaries also provide important fish habitat.

Secondary Role

The secondary role, as the largest provincial park on Takla Lake, is to provide opportunities for boat-accessed lakeside recreation. The park offers backcountry recreation opportunities for wildlife viewing and rustic lakeside camping, hunting, fishing and some hiking. The only current recreation development is a steep, rustic, 10 km trail from Takla Narrows to the summit of Mt. Blanchet.

Takla Lake Ecological Reserve

Primary Role

The primary role of Takla Lake Ecological Reserve is to protect the most northerly known stand of Douglas-fir as a genetic bank and for research purposes.

Known Management Issues	Response
Forest Health:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant mountain pine beetle infestation – with threat of blowdown. No action will be taken in the park unless required for northern caribou management. No action to occur in the Ecological Reserve. • Whitebark pine threatened by mountain pine beetle infestation, white pine blister rust, and ungulate winter range that may not encourage regeneration of whitebark pine. Assess whitebark pine status and consider specific management plan to integrate maintenance of the whitebark pine with northern caribou objectives.

Recreational Impacts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disallow snowmobiling in the Park so as to minimize impact on caribou. The Ecological Reserve is closed to snowmobiling. • Determine if there is any ATV access and if so take action to discontinue activity to minimize impact on alpine habitat. • Do not allow heli-skiing or heli-hiking in the Park due to negative impacts on caribou
Park Use Permits	Complete permit process for trapping and guide outfitting use in the Park
Adjacent Land Use	Monitor and assess impacts from adjacent timber harvesting to the north and west.
Inholdings	Liaise with the owners of, and monitor the 7 excluded lakeshore properties.
Northern Caribou	The majority of Mt Blanchet Provincial Park includes high value ungulate winter range for the Takla northern caribou herd. Objectives for management in this area include: no removal of trees for facilities or infrastructure; no motorized winter use; no suppression of natural fires (except for public safety and adjacency concerns) and limited insect control activities. Any further direction that comes out of the provincial recovery plan for northern caribou would be considered and incorporated into future revisions of this Purpose Statement or future Park Management Plans.

Zoning

Mount Blanchet will be zoned for:

- Nature Recreation (approximately 545 ha or 2% of the park) along the shoreline to protect scenic values and to provide for recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment
- Wilderness Recreation (approximately 24,229 ha or 98% of the park) in upland to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment.

Takla Lake Ecological Reserve is excluded from zoning.

CONSERVATION

Representation

- ecosection

X **Mount Blanchet Provincial Park:**
 Significant contributor to the representation of the Manson Plateau Ecosection. This ecosection is poorly represented in the protected areas system (2.69%). Mount Blanchet is the largest contributor to the representation of this ecosection in the protected area system (75% of overall protected area system representation of ecosection).
 Minor contributor to the representation of the Babine Upland Ecosection. This ecosection is poorly represented in the protected area system (3.65% protected province wide). Mount Blanchet contributes 3% of the overall protected areas system representation of this ecosection.
Takla Lake Ecological Reserve:
 Contributes 1% of overall system representation of the Manson Plateau Ecosection.

- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant

X **Mount Blanchet Provincial Park:**
 Significant contributor to the under represented SBS wk3 (2.22% protected province wide); Mount Blanchet provides the greatest representation of this unit (83.7%); Also contributes to the representation of the ESSFmv3, of which 7% is protected province-wide (13.79% of the overall protected area representation of this unit) and a minor contributor to the AT, which is 22.5% protected in the province.
Takla Lake Ecological Reserve:
 Contributes 3% of the overall representation of the ESSFmv3.

Special Feature

Rare/Endangered Values

X Northern caribou

Scientific/Research Opportunities

X Douglas-fir and whitebark pine at the northern limits of their range; genetic diversity.

RECREATION

Representation:

- backcountry
- destination

X Primitive non-motorized trail leading to park's upland

- travel corridor
 - local recreation
- X Destination for local recreation use, including clients of Takla Rainbow Lodge.
Not applicable within ER boundaries

Special Opportunities

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Representation

Unknown at this time

Special Feature

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Other Designations

- Relationship to Other PAs** X Mount Blanchet is the largest provincial park on Takla Lake and complements Rubyrock Lake Provincial Park on Trembleur and Stuart Lakes for protection of visual and wilderness recreation values on the Stuart/ Trembleur/ Takla Lake system. Takla Marine Park on the east shore south of Takla Lake Narrows will be the primary focus for boat launching and public recreation development on the lake, while Mount Blanchet will be primarily focused towards wilderness and backcountry recreation.

Co-operative Management Arrangements

Partnerships

No ecological reserve warden

Vulnerability

- X The Conservation Risk Assessment (CRA) Process identified 4 risk factors (the shape, the size of the park, watershed integrity and terrestrial ecosystem replication) for the park and rated them as moderately significant. Three stressors/threats were identified for the park: fire suppression was rated as moderately significant; while forest harvesting activity and beetle management were rated as low significance. Since the completion of the CRA the threats to whitebark pine from mountain pine beetle and white pine blister rust have also become known.

Relationship to Other Strategies

- X The Fort St. James LRMP, approved in 1999, recommended establishment of Mount Blanchet

Provincial Park.

Area:

Mount Blanchet Provincial Park: 24,744 ha
Takla Lake Ecological Reserve: 240 ha

Date of establishment:

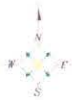
Takla Lake Ecological Reserve




Mount Blanchet Provincial Park: January 25, 2001.

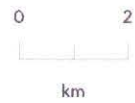
Zoning Map - Mount Blanchet Provincial Park and Takla Lake Ecological Reserve



Projection: Albers Equal Areas
Datum: NAD83



-  Natural Environment
-  Wilderness Recreation
-  Protected Area Boundary



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