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NITINAT RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

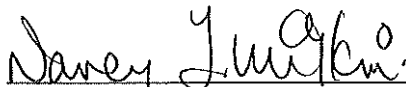
October 2003

Approved by:



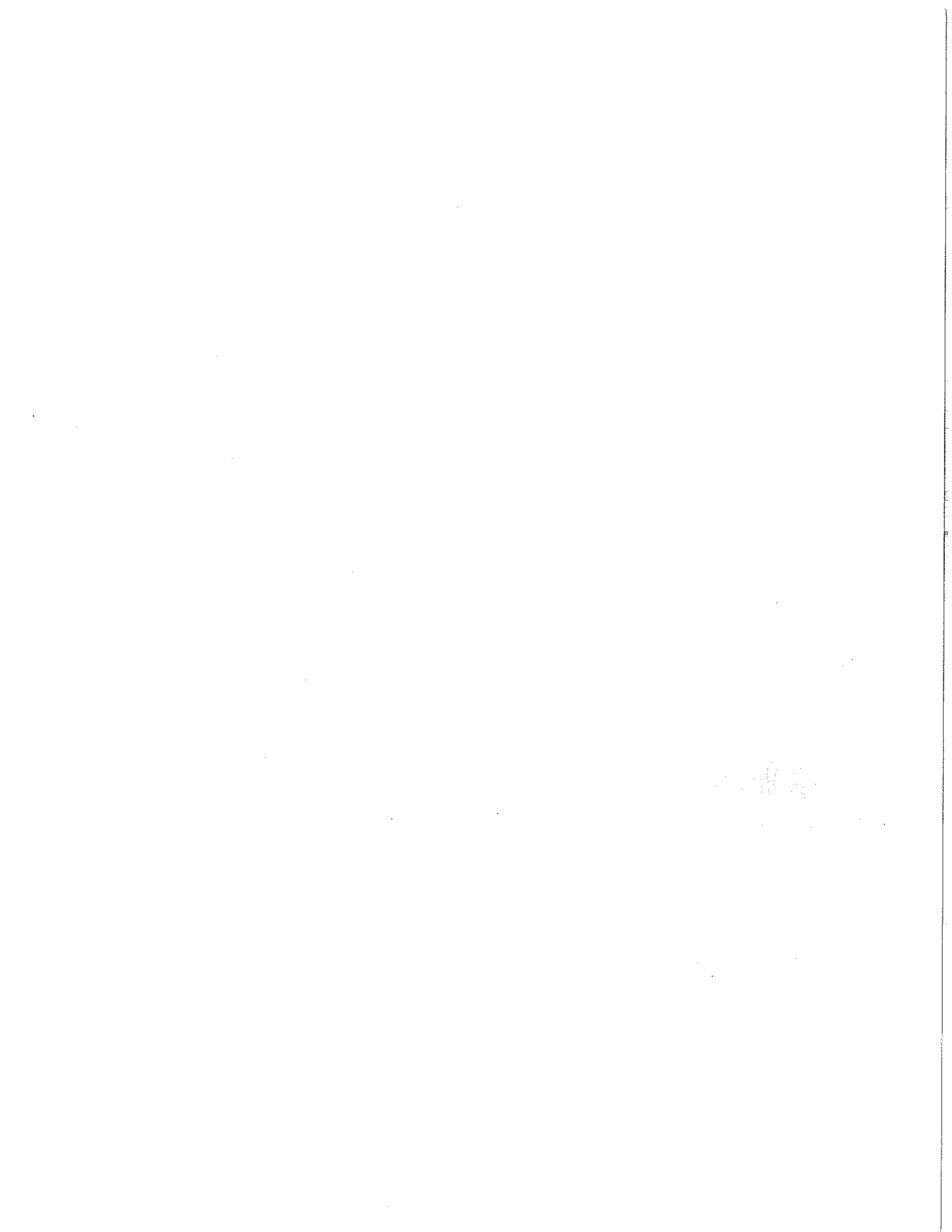
Dick Heath
Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Oct 20/03



Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Jan. 15/04



NITINAT RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Nitinat River Park is to protect the natural values associated with the temperate rainforest on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The park comprises two parcels about seven kilometres apart on the Nitinat River totalling 160 hectares. The Nitinat River Falls site is 90.3 hectares and the Bridge Pool site is 69.5 hectares in size. The park features high old growth values, a river floodplain and its associated riparian habitat, and the river itself. The park protects an important stretch of the Nitinat River system including spawning habitat for summer steelhead (rare on Vancouver Island), winter steelhead, sea-run cutthroat and rainbow trout, chum, coho and Chinook salmon. Roosevelt elk winter range is also protected here.

At the Nitinat River Falls site, the river has carved a series of spectacular chutes, cascades, and steep falls and quiet pools through the lush western hemlock and Douglas-fir forest. The deep pools are important holding areas for summer steelhead from July to September.

The Bridge Pool site protects a more open stretch of the river with a floodplain, extensive gravel bars, riparian vegetation, and mature forests. This section of the river provides excellent fish holding waters. Growing here are threatened plant species such as Scouler's corydalis and the tooth-leaved monkey flower.

Secondary Role

The **secondary** role is to provide recreational day-use opportunities in an undisturbed river setting. The Bridge Pool site provides an opportunity for hiking, picnicking, swimming, sport fishing, particularly winter steelhead.

The pools below Nitinat River Falls support large congregations of steelhead and salmon. As this site and associated values are susceptible to degradation and due to public safety concerns promotion of wildlife viewing in this area is not appropriate.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Fish poaching from pools and implications for fish populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Work with Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation staff to ensure that fishery closure is enforced. ➤ Monitor fish populations and environmental conditions at pools. If impacts are unacceptable, consider deactivating the forestry road to the river. ➤ Consider designating the Nitinat River Falls site as an ecological reserve.

Impacts of uncontrolled camping at Bridge Pool across from Parker Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Direct informal camping to the sand bar on the southwest side of the river. ➤ Monitor the condition and distribution of rare plants. Consider blocking access to the north river bank at the Forest Service road to better protect the endangered plants. ➤ Develop signage to inform users of safety concerns related to flash floods ➤ Develop educational information on park values and appropriate behaviours.
Unknown natural and cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake an inventory on natural and cultural values. Include First Nations in development of cultural inventory.

Zoning

Natural Environment Zone – covers the Bridge Pool site (69.5 ha). The objective is to maintain or regain naturally evolving ecosystems while providing for complementary low impact outdoor recreation opportunities.

Special Features Zone – covers the Nitinat River site (90.3 ha). The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural features, resources, or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Conservation

- Representation
 - ecosection Nitinat River Provincial Park contributes minimally (0.08%) to the representation of the Windward Island Mountains Ecosection which is 17.42% protected
 - biogeoclimatic subzone/variant Nitinat River Provincial Park contributes minimally (0.12%) to the representation of the CWHvm1 variant which has only 7% protected provincially
- Special Features Old growth Douglas-fir and western hemlock, Nitinat River Falls area contains 3 to 4 m drops into carved pools of bedrock, high fish values and spawning habitat, deep pools, summer steelhead holding area, Roosevelt elk winter range
- Rare/Endangered Values *Red-listed* Scouler's corydalis (listed as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), known in Canada only in the Nitinat and Klanawa River basins and an area west of Cowichan Lake) and record of *red-listed* tooth-leaved monkey flower, two species that thrive on streambanks in the lowland zone. *Blue-listed* Roosevelt elk habitat and cutthroat trout.
- Scientific/Research Opportunities Rare plant surveys

Recreation

- Representation
 - backcountry destination Not Applicable
 - travel corridor Only day-use at the Bridge Pool site; not appropriate at the Nitinat River Falls site
 - local recreation On-route to the Nitinat Triangle of Pacific Rim National Park and Carmanah Walbran Park
- Special Opportunities Fishing, swimming, primitive camping
- Special Opportunities
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities

Cultural Heritage

- Representation Values unknown, sites adjacent or very close to two First Nation Reserves and a known archaeological site – areas that have history of traditional use for salmon fishing and possible archaeological evidence

Special Feature

None known at this time

Other Management Considerations

Other Designations

Not Applicable

Relationship to other PAs

Part of a system of protected areas on Vancouver Island. Several forest recreation sites are within the area that offer water-based recreation activities. Proximity to national park and Carmanah Walbran Park.

Co-operative Management Arrangements

Not Applicable

Partnerships

Not Applicable

Vulnerability

Fish poaching from pools below falls, unregulated camping, increased use would result in loss of values

Relationship to other Strategies

Recommended for protection in the Goal 2 process of Vancouver Island Land Use Plan

Area: 160 hectares

Date of establishment: April 30, 1996