

OSPIKA CONES ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

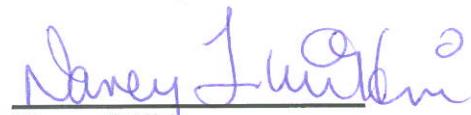
PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN Omineca Region 2005

Approved by:



Don Cadden,
Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division
Omineca Region

Date: Nov. 4th 2005



Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Oct. 31 2005

Ospika Cones Ecological Reserve Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Ospika Cones Ecological Reserve protects one of only a few cold water tufa terrace and pool formations in BC. The 1505 ha reserve includes both the mineral springs, and the adjacent area to protect their hydrology. The reserve is situated along a remote section of the Ospika River corridor.

Several spring areas are scattered over about 2 kilometres along the Ospika River, with the central area of springs, the Ospika Cones, comprising the most outstanding example of limestone mineral formations. The spring complex is comprised of raised limestone cones formed by calcium carbonate deposits from underground springs and filled with various turquoise hues of clear water. The limestone formations and surrounding springs are very fragile and vulnerable to human disturbance. Vegetation around the cones ranges from open wet forest to sedge meadows, and includes dwarf shrub and herb communities and moss turf. Moose and caribou are attracted to wet mineral licks.

Helicopter access is currently the only method of getting to the Ecological Reserve. As the Ospika Cones are a very scenic feature, most of the local helicopter companies have photos of the cones on the walls and it is known that many companies do take clients to see the cones, although it is not known how many actually land in the area. In order to protect fragile resources, no helicopter landing permitted within the reserve except for research or management purposes.

The area was first protected within a recreational reserve (Section 12 Map Reserve). Fear that this provided an insufficient level of protection for this unique and delicate formation led to a recommendation in 1989 for pursuit of Ecological Reserve status. With approval of the Mackenzie LRMP, the area was designated an Ecological Reserve in February 2001.

Primary Role

The primary role of this Ecological Reserve is to protect unique and sensitive mineral springs as a special natural feature.

Known Management Issues	Response
Impact to the fragile mineral formations through visitation	Liase with all helicopter companies to ensure they are aware of landing restrictions in the Ecological Reserve. Determine how many visits and landings are occurring.
Forest road access – yet to be developed	Monitor Forest Stewardship Plan to see when and where the access will be constructed and make forest licensee aware of the sensitivity of the site and explore access management controls. Work to ensure that no roads are planned within 5 km of the cones due to the sensitivity of the site.

CONSERVATION

Representation

- ecosection X Minor representation of:
 - Misinchinka Ranges (MIR) – 1.9% of overall provincial protection (8.6% protected province-wide).

- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant X Very small (less than 0.1% in all cases) contribution to provincial protection of: Alpine Tundra (AT), which is 22.5% protected province-wide; dry cool Boreal White and Black Spruce (BWBS dk1), which is 22% protected in the province and moist cool Spruce Willow Birch (SWB mk), which is 22% protected in the province.

Special Feature

X Unique cold water mineral springs

Rare/Endangered Values

unknown

Scientific/Research Opportunities

X Mineral spring formation and ecology

RECREATION

Representation:

- backcountry N/A
- destination N/A
- travel corridor N/A
- local recreation N/A

Special Opportunities

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

X Spring formation process and ecology

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Representation

unknown

Special Feature

unknown

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Other Designations

Relationship to Other PAs

Co-operative Management Arrangements

Partnerships

Vulnerability

X The fragile mineral springs are vulnerable to disturbance from recreational use

Relationship to Other Strategies

X Ospika Cones Ecological Reserve was identified for Protected Area Status through the Mackenzie Land and Resource Management Plan

Area:

1505 hectares

Date of establishment:

February 2001.