

Skeena District

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

July 2000

for Ross Lake
Provincial Park



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Environment
Lands and Parks
BC Parks Division



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MEMORANDUM

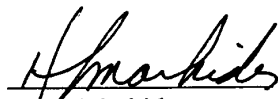
HIGHWAY 16 PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENTS - BINDER APPROVALS PAGE

Forward

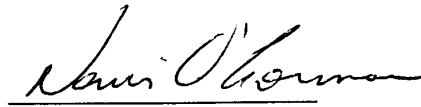
This binder contains 11 management direction statements developed by BC Parks. These protected areas are all long established, some parks existing since the early 1950s. The 11 management direction statements provide strategic direction for these protected areas. Protected areas' roles, strategies and objectives will not change extensively over time. Management actions, implemented through operations plans, however, will change as priorities, funding and support resources come available.

- Diana Lake Park
- Driftwood Canyon Park
- Ethel F. Wilson Park
- Kleanza Creek Park
- Lakelse Lake Park
- Pendleton Bay Park
- Prudhomme Lake Park
- Red Bluff Park
- Ross Lake Park
- Seeley Lake Park
- Tyhee Lake Park

Approved by:


Hugh Markides
District Manager
Skeena District

Date: 6 July 2000


Denis O'Gorman
Assistant Deputy Minister
Parks Division

Date: 2000.07.17



Table of Contents

Ross Lake Park

Approvals Page	i
Forward	i
Introduction.....	1
Setting and Context.....	1
Protected Area Attributes	1
Conservation	1
Recreation and Tourism.....	1
Cultural Heritage.....	1
Significance in the Protected Areas System	1
Land Uses, Tenures and Interests	4
Access	4
Existing Tenures	4
Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities.....	4
Adjacent Patterns of Land Use	4
First Nations Interests	4
Other Agency Interests	4
Private and Public Stakeholder Interests.....	4
Role of Ross Lake Park	5
Management Commitments and Issues	5
Direction from Previous Planning	5
Management Issues.....	5
Management Strategy.....	6
Consultation and Future Planning.....	7
Preliminary Zoning.....	7
Appendix - Activity/Use Matrix.....	9
Figures:	
Figure 1 - Context Map.....	2
Figure 2 - Park Map	3
Figure 3 - Zoning	8

Introduction

Purpose of Management Direction Statements

Management Direction Statements provide strategic management direction for all protected areas that do not have a full management plan. MDS do not negate the need for future, more detailed management plans. Management Direction Statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, directional statements from other planning processes.

Setting and Context

Ross Lake Park covers 307 ha surrounding Ross Lake, 10 km east of the Hazelton communities (area population ~7,000; Figure 1), and 4 km north of Highway 16. The park lies within the asserted traditional territory of the Gitx̓san people.

The park, established in 1974, protects a valley-bottom lake, lakeshore aspen forest and marsh habitat, and provides recreation opportunities for local residents and Highway 16 travellers. The large day-use area is the major swimming, non-motorised boating and picnic spot for local residents. A restriction on motorised watercraft encourages families. Visitors also enjoy fishing and hiking around the lake. Nearby Seeley Lake Park (20-km west on Highway 16) provides camping opportunities.

Protected Area Attributes

Conservation

- remnant Nass Ranges Ecosection; ICHmc2 (moist, cold interior cedar-hemlock subzone, Hazelton variant)
- valley-bottom lake
- marsh habitat, provides waterfowl nesting sites
- habitat for wildlife, including moose and black bears

Recreation and Tourism

- regionally significant lake and lakeshore recreation opportunities (picnicking, non-motorised boating, swimming, walking, fishing, ice-fishing, waterfowl viewing)

Cultural Heritage

- unknown cultural features

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- protects valley-bottom lake in a relatively undisturbed state within the Nass Ranges Ecosection (high priority, underrepresented ecosection)
- provides non-motorised lake recreation opportunities for regional residents and travelling visitors

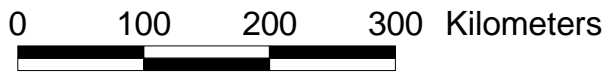
Figure 1 – Context Map

Ross Lake Provincial Park Locator Map



Legend

- Highways
- Rivers/Lakes
- Coastline
- Ross Lake Provincial Park
- Skeena Parks District



Scale 1:6,000,000

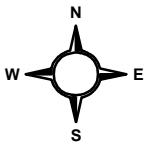
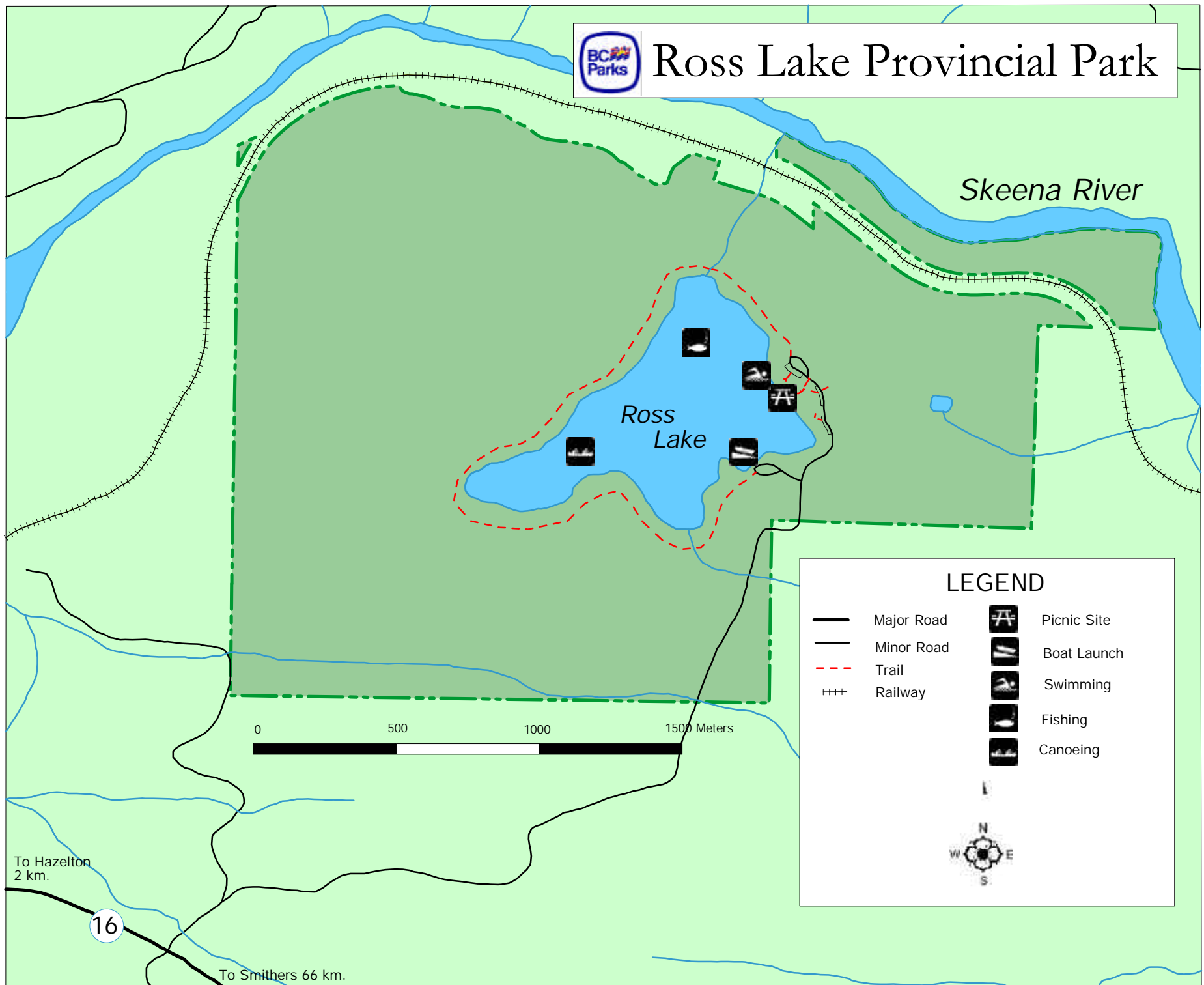


Figure 1 – Context Map



Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

A gravel road winds 4-km northeast to Ross Lake Park from Highway 16. The road terminates at a parking lot near the picnic area.

Existing Tenures

- Canadian National Railway (not included in park boundary) cuts off the northeast tip of the park

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- 14 picnic tables, 88 parking stalls
- pit toilets, change room
- 250-m of developed beach, grassy area
- 3-km trail around Ross Lake
- gravel boat launch
- old 4-wheel drive road in northern portion of park

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- three sand/gravel quarries lie west of the park (DL 884, File 6403086, File 6401037; DL 885, File 6405679); quarries may expand in the future (DL 884, File 6404745)
- private land lies to the south (DL 1573)
- residential development is planned southeast of, but not adjacent to, the park (DL 885)
- vacant crown land lies to the east (DL 2121, Blk B; DL 1583, DL 2114)
- Canadian National Railway passes between the park's northern edge and the Bulkley River

First Nations Interests

- asserted traditional territory of the Gitksan First Nation - Gitksan Chiefs include Nikateen and Spookw
- the Nikateen House has taken the position that co-management and adequate funding to support co-management is required prior to discussing particular issues within the park.

Other Agency Interests

- BC Environment stocks Ross Lake with rainbow trout and Eastern brook trout
- Regional District of Kitimat Stikine has an interest in regional tourism

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- recreational users: picnickers, non-motorised boaters, anglers, swimmers
- local residents: Hazelton communities
- Skeena Trails Society (planning to upgrade or build trails in the Hazelton area, including one from Ross Lake to the Bulkley "Gate")

- naturalists
- K'San campground (full-facility private campground in K'San Village)

Role of Ross Lake Park

Ross Lake Park serves both conservation and recreation roles within the British Columbia protected areas system. The park's key conservation feature is protection of a relatively undisturbed, valley-bottom lake within the Nass Ranges Ecoregion, an ecoregion under-represented in the protected areas system. It also protects 300 ha of surrounding valley-bottom young seral forest and marsh ecosystems of the moist cold interior cedar-hemlock subzone (ICHmc2), complementing the ecosystems of the much larger Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park and Seven Sisters Protected Area.

Ross Lake Park provides regionally significant day-use recreation opportunities. The park is the primary picnicking and swimming location for Hazelton residents, attracting families for non-motorised lake activities, walking, and waterfowl viewing.

Management Commitments and Issues

Direction from Previous Planning

Ross Lake Park has been managed as a Class A Park since 1974. Annual Management Plans provide year-to-year direction.

Management Issues

The following management issues require attention:

Theme	Issue
Public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habituated bears may be attracted to adjacent garbage dump
Protecting ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inventory of flora and fauna is incomplete • fish stocking may impact lake ecology (no confirmed native fish populations in lake) • water level fluctuation (due to beavers) may impact marsh habitat • off-trail use impacts vegetation • development adjacent to park may disturb wildlife
Protecting recreational values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact of angling on stocked fish populations is unknown • ice-fishing derbies (February and March) leave debris on and around lake • guided angling detracts from recreational values (no permits have been issued for several years)
Protecting cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significance of cultural features is unknown
First Nations Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitksan desire for co-management and involvement in park operations

Theme	Issue
Park operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilities deteriorating • no disabled facilities in high-use park • possibility of adding campsites to park
Unauthorised activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vandalism destroys facilities • snowmobiling occurs in park

Management Strategy

The following table describes management strategies to deal with outstanding issues raised. In addition, figure 1 contains a list of acceptable land and resource uses for this park.

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure Ross Lake Park is safe for public use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow Bear-People Conflict Prevention Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect the park's natural values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the significance of the park's flora and fauna; prepare Ecological Information Summary • Maintain clearly-posted, well-defined trail • Review development plan for land adjacent to the park; assess potential impacts; discuss potential mitigation with developer • Consider developing Conservation Stewardship program; consider developing Park Watch program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect the park's recreational values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain stocked fish populations • Continue to communicate with BC Environment about stocking • Quantify angling activity by one year of volunteer creel reporting • Contact organisers of ice-fishing derbies (Skeena Cellulose and Kispiox Forest Products) to discuss post-event clean-up; note requirement for clean-up in letters of permission • Formalise no angling guiding policy • Investigate allowing snowmobile use in park; investigate impacts on wildlife and other user; investigate potential safety issues • Monitor fishing derbies • Maintain electric-motor-only designation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect the park's cultural heritage values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and collate existing information on cultural heritage values; prepare Cultural Features Information Summary (based on Gitxsan interest and desire)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with the Gitxsan under the Gitxsan —British Columbia reconciliation agreement • Finalize BC Parks consultation appendix as part of the reconciliation agreement

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain appropriate day-use facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow ministry guidelines on consultation • Consider improving disabled access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information to the public about the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish information shelter • Investigate funding for upgrading existing trail to self-guided interpretative trail; add map at start of trail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce Ross/Seeley deficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider strategies for Ross and Seeley Lake Parks together; review recommendations given in Highway 16 Overview Analysis • Maintain good relationship with community about needs for campsites

Consultation and Future Planning

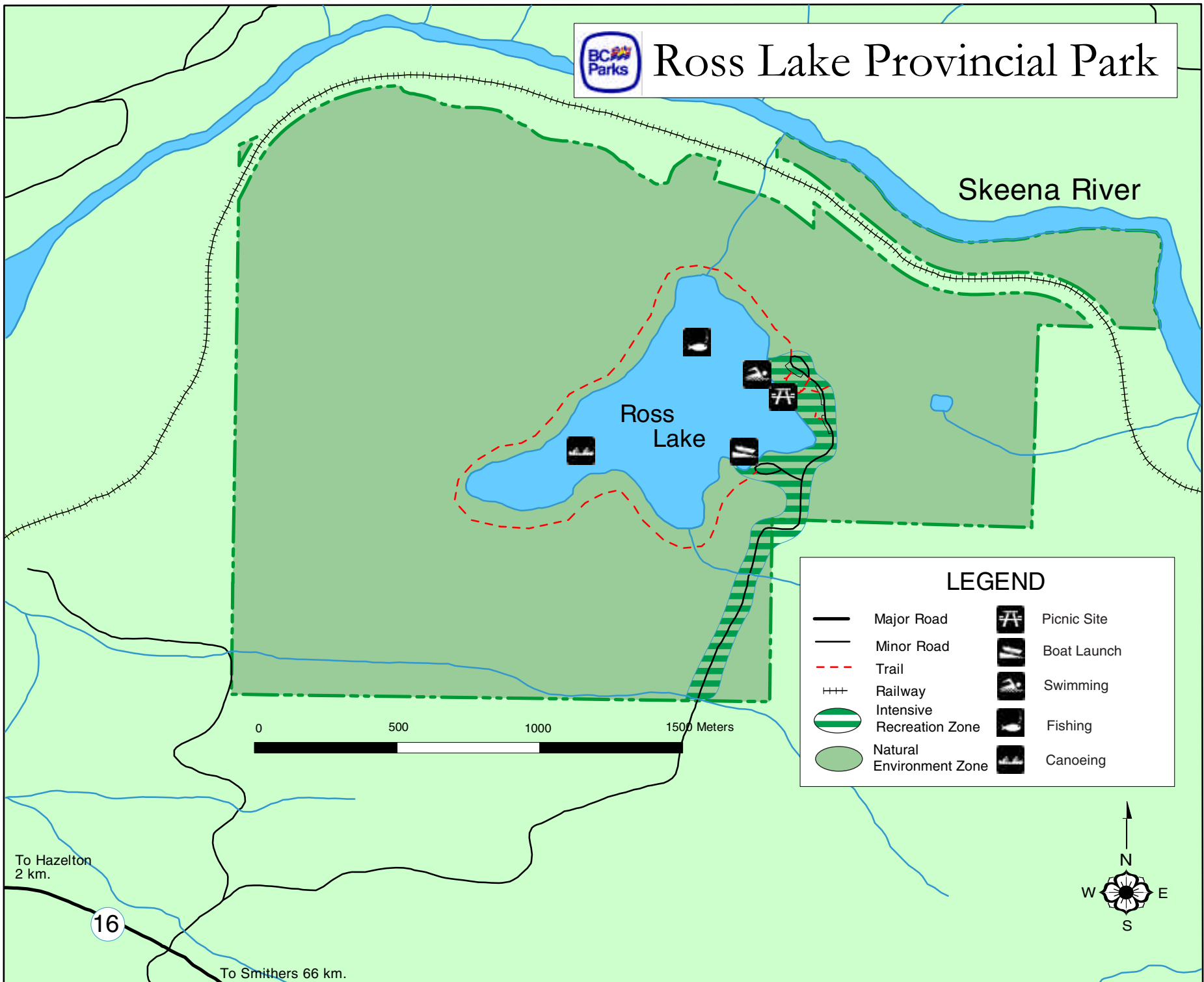
Good relationships with local communities are crucial in maintaining the park’s good reputation. In particular, BC Parks will discuss any plans to add campsites with the Hazelton communities and Gitx̱san people

The priority for preparing a management plan for Ross Lake Park is ranked as low.

Preliminary Zoning

The picnic area, parking areas and road corridor are zoned Intensive Recreation. The remainder of the park is zoned as Natural Environment (Park Map).

Figure 3 – Zoning



Appendix - Activity/Use Matrix for Ross Lake Park

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses
Aboriginal Rights	Y
Hunting	N
Fishing	Y
Trapping	N
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational gold panning/rock hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication sites	N
Horse use/pack animals	N
Guide outfitting (hunting)	N
Guide outfitting (fishing)	M
Guide outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide outfitting (river rafting)	N
Cat-assisted skiing	N
Ski hills	N
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility-based)	M
Backcountry huts	N
Water control structures	N1
Fish stocking and enhancement	Y
Road access	Y
Off-road access (snowmobiling)	N2
Off-road access (motorised)	N
Off-road access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorised water access (<i>electric only</i>)	Y
Aircraft access	N
Fire management (suppression)	Y
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	N
Fire management (prevention)	Y
Forest insect/disease control	M
Noxious weed control	M
Exotic insect/disease control	M
Scientific research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific research (manipulative activities)	M

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