

THUNDER HILL PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

February 2003

Approved by:


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Date: Mar. 31/03

THUNDER HILL PROVINCIAL PARK Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Thunder Hill Provincial Park is to protect remnant open forested and grassland lake ecosystems of the East Kootenay Trench Ecosection.

Most of these ecosystems are on private land and/or used for consumptive land uses such as grazing and forestry. The East Kootenay Trench Ecosection is a major landscape component of the East Kootenays which is under-represented within the protected areas system. There are 15 parks in the ecosection, but they are all under 900 hectares in area. Although Thunder Hill Provincial Park's area contribution (44 ha) to ecosystem representation is minimal, this small contribution is important to local wildlife. The park serves an integral role in providing winter range for ungulates and functions as a corridor for a host of species in an area heavily fragmented by human development.

Originally developed in the 1960's as a fully serviced campground, Thunderhill Provincial Park was under utilized for many years. In the nearby resort community of Fairmount Hot Springs (20 km away), development of over 600 campsites enhanced the redundancy of overnight facilities offered in the park. Furthermore, the rerouting of Highway 93/95 essentially bisected the lower third of the park, detracting from the once appealing day use features of the site. Columbia Lake is located approximately 140 metres from the park's eastern boundary and the shoreline of the lake is, for the most part, inaccessible because of a 30 meter embankment.

In the early 1990's, services to the park were discontinued, including deactivation of all entrance roads, day use amenities and campsites. The site has reverted back to a natural state with no formal signage identifying the park, with the exception of internal roadways and hardened sites.

Discussion as to the practicality of Thunder Hill Provincial Park once again serving as a campground and day use area has been ongoing. The increasing influx of tourists, particularly from Alberta to the Columbia Valley, may necessitate reactivation of the site.

Known Management Issues	Response
Non-native invasive plants (knapweed and hounds-tongue) threatening natural species and landscapes	Inventory required showing extent of species locations and vigor. Active control of some species required.
Forest encroachment (in-growth). The entire Columbia Valley has witnessed reduced native grassland coverage within the last fifty years.	Monitoring and potential future action by maintaining recurrent low intensity fires and thinning of forest stands.

Known Management Issues	Response
Loss of archaeological values.	Test excavations should precede any future development of the site. Monitoring of existing sites and enforcement when appropriate.
Apparent lack of interest of camping at this location.	Continue the status quo unless other options arise for providing and managing camping opportunities on the site.

Zoning

Natural Environment (approximately 43 ha or 98% of the park)

Objective. To protect scenic values and to provide for recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.

Special Feature (approximately 1 ha or 2% of the park)

Objectives: To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Conservation

- Representation
-ecosection East Kootenay Trench (EKT).
This ecosection is very under-
represented (0.68%) in the PA system.
Thunder Hill provides 1.2% of the
province wide PA representation. Parks
with the highest level of representation
in the ecosection are Kikomun (24%)
and Premier Lake (27%).
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant IDFdm2. Only 0.93% of this
subzone/variant is protected province
wide. Thunder Hill contributes negligibly
to the total representation of IDFdm2 in
the PA system (1.4%).
- Special Feature None identified.
- Rare/Endangered Values The park has not been inventoried.
High potential for badger (b).
- Scientific/Research Opportunities None identified.

Recreation

- Representation
-backcountry Not applicable.
- destination Not applicable.
- travel corridor Highway 93/95. Major tourist route
between Fairmont/Radium Hotsprings
and resort communities of Kimberley
and Fernie.
- local recreation Nature appreciation, bird watching.
However, the park is no longer identified
along highway (no formal signage).
- Special Opportunities Not applicable.
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities Not applicable.

Cultural Heritage

- Representation Traditional use by the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket and Shuswap peoples.
- Special Feature Two known archaeological sites located along south-eastern boundary of the park.
- Old mine site (tramway, concentrator, - western boundary of the park) affiliated with Thunderhill Mine (circa 1890's).

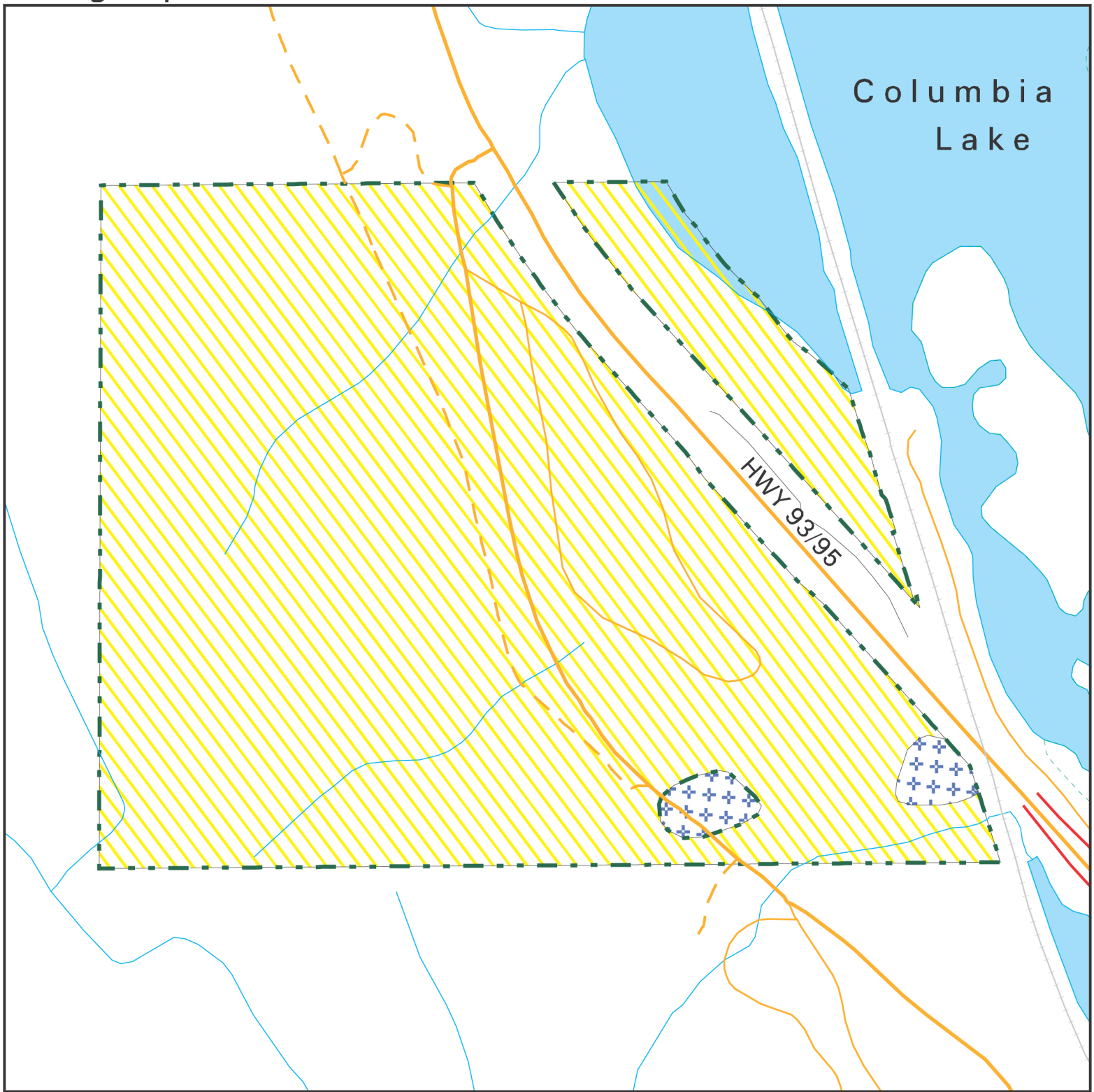
Other Management Considerations

- Other Designations None identified.
- Relationship to other PAs 1 of 3 provincial parks (alternates - Canal Flats and Columbia Lake) along the shores of Columbia Lake and the only park that is situated on the western side of the lake.
- Co-operative Management Arrangements None identified.
- Partnerships None identified.
- Vulnerability Spread of noxious weeds.
- Damage to archaeological sites (known or potential).
- Forest ingrowth reducing native grassland species.
- Relationship to other Strategies None identified.

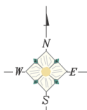
Area: 44 hectares




Date of establishment: February 5, 1960

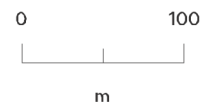
Zoning Map - Thunder Hill Provincial Park



Projection: Albers Equal Areas
Datum: NAD83



-  Natural Environment
-  Special Feature
-  Protected Area Boundary



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