



Yalakom Park

Management Plan

April 2017

Yalakom Park Management Plan



BC Parks

Yalakom Park Management Plan

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Vision Statement

This vision statement describes the future state and management that is desired for Yalakom Park. The park vision provides long-term direction for park managers while aiding them in making decisions regarding current issues.

Yalakom Park continues to be an undisturbed wilderness with healthy herds of California Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goats and Mule Deer. Visitors find an undisturbed landscape with few signs of human intrusion.

Table of Contents

Management Vision..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Management Plan Purpose	1
1.2	Planning Area	1
1.3	Legislative Framework	1
1.4	Management Commitments/Agreements	4
1.5	Land Uses, Tenures and Interests	4
1.6	Management Planning Process	5
1.7	Relationship with First Nations	5
2.0	Values and Roles of the Protected Area	5
3.0	Management Direction	7
3.1	Management Objectives and Strategies	7
3.2	Zoning Plan	8
4.0	Plan Implementation	9
4.1	Implementation Plan	9
4.2	High Priority Strategies	9
4.3	Plan Assessment	9
	Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table	10

Table of Figures:

Figure 1:	Context Map for Yalakom Park	2
Figure 2:	Map of Yalakom Park	3

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of Yalakom Park. This management plan:

- articulates the key features and values of Yalakom Park;
- identifies appropriate types and levels of management activities;
- determines appropriate levels of use and development;
- establishes a long-term vision and management objectives for the park; and
- responds to current and predicted threats and opportunities by defining a set of management strategies to achieve the management vision and objectives.

1.2 Planning Area

Yalakom Park is 8,941 hectares in size and situated at the headwaters of the Yalakom River, approximately 60 kilometres northwest of the Town of Lillooet. Access is by the Bridge River Road (Highway 40) and then approximately 30 kilometres up the Yalakom Forest Service Road that forms the western boundary of the park (Figure 1). The main features of the park include the prominent Nine Mile Ridge (cover photo), Yalakom Mountain, the entire watershed of Yalakom Creek, and a tributary of Yalakom River (see Figure 2).

The name Yalakom is an anglicized version of the St'at'imc language word, *yegálcken*, for a Bighorn Sheep ewe. Its counterpart, *sweláops*, the word for the ram, is given to the adjacent Shulaps Mountain Range found west of the Yalakom River.

1.3 Legislative Framework

This park was recommended through the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) in 2004 and formally established as a Class A park by the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2010* on June 3, 2010. The park is presently named and described in Schedule D of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

Class A parks are Crown lands dedicated to the preservation of their natural environments for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public. Development in Class A parks is limited to that which is necessary to maintain the park's recreational values. Some activities that existed at the time a park was established (e.g., grazing, hay

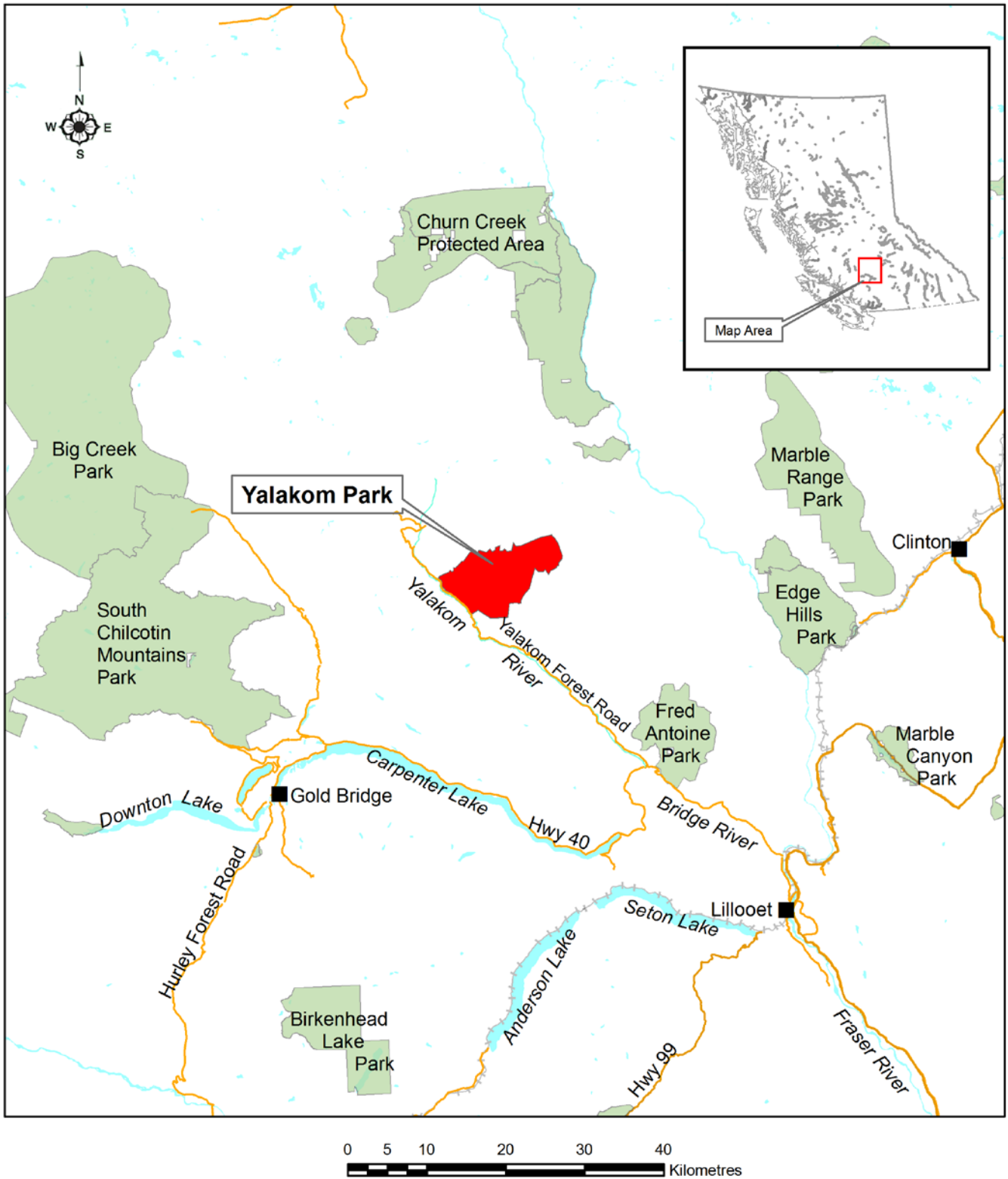


Figure 1: Context Map for Yalakom Park

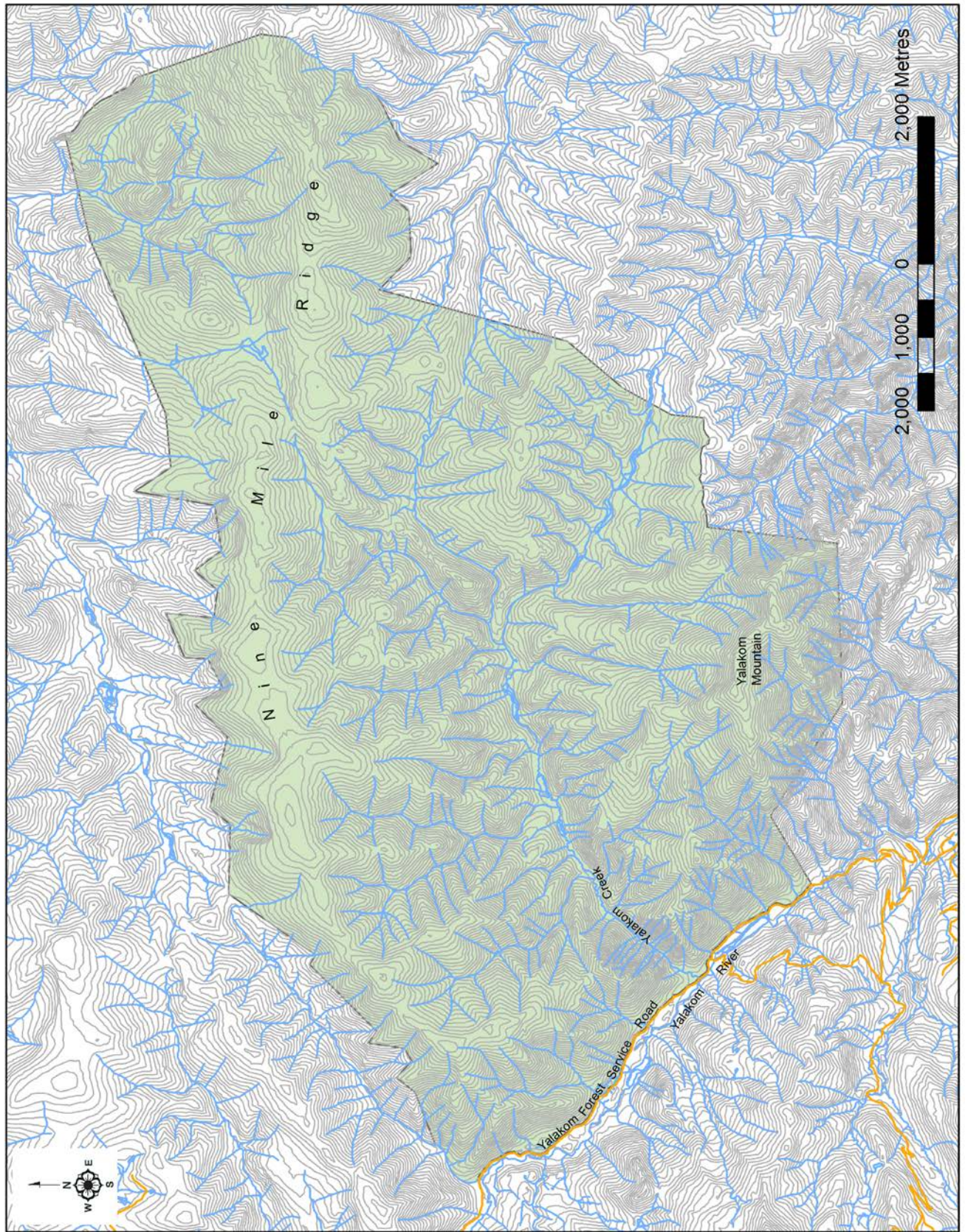


Figure 2: Map of Yalakom Park

cutting) may be allowed to continue in certain Class A parks¹ but commercial resource extraction or development activities are not permitted (e.g., logging, mining or hydroelectric development).

1.4 Management Commitments/Agreements

The Lillooet LRMP stated that Yalakom Park would have an emphasis on maintaining the wilderness character of the area and ensuring use of the area was consistent with the conservation of California Bighorn Sheep habitat and migration routes. The following guidance was provided for park management during development of the Lillooet LRMP:

- The primary management intent is to preserve the area in a natural, undisturbed condition and to allow for non-roaded cultural and recreation opportunities.
- Retain the roadless, undisturbed condition of the area.
- Develop specific plans for fire and forest pest management.
- Coordinate with provincial management plans and actions for California Bighorn Sheep and Mule Deer management in this unit and surrounding area.
- Maintain California Bighorn Sheep habitats in an undisturbed condition, including seasonal movement patterns and connections to outside areas.
- Provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment.
- Manage to ensure low levels of recreation use. Acceptable activities include hiking, backpacking, hunting and horse use.
- Provide only minimal facility development. Evidence of human presence confined to trails and backcountry camps.
- Recognize appropriate commercial tourism opportunities; acceptable activities include guiding and outfitting and low-impact ecotourism uses.

1.5 Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Some tenures predate park establishment and include portions of three traplines and one guide outfitter territory. One cabin and a remote camp in the park are associated with the guide outfitter. These tenures are authorized under the *Wildlife Act*, and also must be authorized by a park use permit under the *Park Act*.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations administers three range tenures for grazing that predate park establishment. These tenures are authorized under the *Range Act*. Two cattle tenures only slightly overlap the park and likely do not utilize the park

¹ Applies only to Class A parks listed in Schedule D of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

due to steep terrain and access constraints; the remaining horse grazing tenure is associated with the guide outfitter.

1.6 Management Planning Process

BC Parks consulted with the Yalakom River community, government agencies, public interest groups, stakeholders and the general public in the development of this management plan. Summaries of input from various groups were posted to the BC Parks website as they became available. BC Parks obtained information on values, uses, present and future desired activities, the desired experiences, public and commercial recreational uses, issues and items needing management attention.

1.7 Relationship with First Nations

Yalakom Park is situated within the traditional territory of the St’at’imc Nation, Secwepemc Nation and Tsilhqot’in National Government. BC Parks seeks an ongoing relationship with First Nations to find common interests and direction for the future management of Yalakom Park.

2.0 Values and Roles of the Protected Area

Yalakom Park serves as a central, secluded area for wildlife in the surrounding landscape, especially for California Bighorn Sheep and Grizzly Bear. It is a relatively remote area where wildlife can find a refuge and avoid high human presence and disturbance. The park is a migration hub between adjacent habitats and nearby protected areas, with wildlife moving to and from the Fraser River to the east, Churn Creek Protected Area to the north, and South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek parks to the west. Yalakom Park is in a key habitat link between protected areas to help species adapt during a time of climate change.

Yalakom Park protects the undisturbed watershed of Yalakom Creek and an extensive elevational sequence of biogeoclimatic variants as listed in the following table:

Biogeoclimatic Variant Code	Total in BC (ha)	Total Protected (ha)	% Protected	Area in Yalakom Park (ha)	% Protected in Yalakom Park
Boreal Altai Fescue Alpine - Undifferentiated (BAFAun)	6,118,250	1,698,463	27.8	180	0.01
Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir - Very Dry Cold (ESSFxc 3)	48,013	11,696	24.4	144	1.2
Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir - Very Dry Very Cold (ESSFvx 2)	94,393	22,430	23.8	3,914	17.5
Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir - Very Dry Very Cold Parkland (ESSFvxp)	178,566	54,395	30.5	1,453	2.7
Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir - Very Dry Very Cold Woodland (ESSFvxw)	7,611	2,769	36.4	2,769	100
Interior Mountain-heather Alpine – Undifferentiated (IMA un)	1,145,595	345,299	30.1	421	0.1
Montane Spruce - Very Dry Cool (MS xk)	104,482	17,993	17.2	59	0.3

All the variants found in the park are well represented in the provincial protected areas system. Representation of the Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir - very dry very cold woodland (ESSFxvw) is entirely within Yalakom Park, with no replication in any other protected area. This is due to the limited amount and distribution of this variant within the province, with all examples found within ten kilometres of Yalakom Park.

The park is located within two ecosections: the Central Chilcotin Ranges, of which 328,742 hectares or 31% is protected and 2.4% of this is within Yalakom Park; and the Southern Chilcotin Ranges, of which 88,785 hectares or 15% is protected and 1.2% of this is within Yalakom Park. The park is a minor component to these two well represented ecosections.

Forests found in the park consist of a diverse mix of old-growth, areas of high elevation aspen stands, a mosaic of dry and riparian forests, and krumholz (dense, stunted sub-alpine vegetation). There are also extensive alpine grasslands, riparian systems and wet sites. Whitebark pine, listed as endangered in the federal *Species at Risk Act* and blue-listed provincially, is found within the park, with some of the lowest elevation stands found in British Columbia.

The park provides important migration corridors for wildlife, including California Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goat and Mule Deer, that range widely through various habitats in the region during different seasons. California Bighorn Sheep are a provincially blue-listed (special concern) species. They can be found in the park in summer, but migrate to adjacent areas outside the park for the winter. Yalakom Mountain and Nine Mile Ridge are important habitat locations for California Bighorn Sheep.

Grizzly Bears utilize Yalakom Park, which is located within the provincial South Chilcotin Ranges Grizzly Bear Population Unit, where Grizzly Bears are classified as threatened.

Access to Yalakom Park is difficult, requiring some endurance to hike to higher elevations from access points outside the park. There are opportunities for backcountry recreation and hunting for those willing to put in the effort. The park is used for guide outfitting and trapping.

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Management Objectives and Strategies

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
<p>Wide-ranging wildlife species are seasonally dependent upon management within and outside the park.</p> <p>California Bighorn Sheep appear to be under stress, having dramatically decreased in numbers over the last 20 years.</p> <p>Grizzly Bear population recovery is a provincial objective, with Yalakom Park potentially contributing to this initiative.</p> <p>Alpine areas and sheep habitat are susceptible to forest encroachment (see cover photo), likely influenced by climate change and lack of recent natural disturbance (fire).</p> <p>Whitebark pine requires active management.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Maintain healthy wildlife populations for all species presently utilizing park habitats.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with adjacent land managers to ensure adequate habitat suitability and connectivity for all wide-ranging species within the park. • Ensure that recreational activities do not interfere with resident animals or seasonal movement patterns and connectivity for wildlife, specifically California Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goats and Mule Deer. Restrict increased or new recreational activity in key areas such as Yalakom Mountain and Nine Mile Ridge to limit displacement and disturbance. • Work with fish and wildlife managers to manage Grizzly Bear and maintain the park as a secure area where bears remain wary of humans. • Work with fish and wildlife managers to improve the status of the California Bighorn Sheep population that utilizes the park. • Participate in recovery planning for whitebark pine and implement appropriate recovery actions. Implement appropriate restoration actions, such as prescribed fire or opportunities to re-establish whitebark pine where it has been impacted. • Work with adjacent land managers to minimize impacts of adjacent developments on wildlife and habitat (e.g., by keeping road access away from park boundaries to prevent motorized access into the park). • Work with adjacent land managers to consider habitat restoration to increase forage for wildlife, including the use of prescribed fire to address the retention of ecological integrity in the area. This will be dependent upon an evaluation of habitat requirements and distribution of habitat types and features within and adjacent to the park.

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
<p>There is a desire to provide for recreational activities while maintaining a wilderness experience.</p>	<p>Management Objective: Provide recreational opportunities compatible with a pristine environment and wilderness experience.</p> <p>Management Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow low-impact backcountry recreation opportunities, including low levels of hiking, mountain biking, backpacking, backcountry camping, hunting and horse use on existing trails. Designate campsites if wildlife impacts become evident. Acceptable commercial tourism opportunities include guide outfitting and low-impact ecotourism. The existing commercial cabin and remote camp will continue. Additional commercial facilities will not be entertained. • Encourage and work with fish and wildlife managers to monitor wildlife for potential impacts from recreational activities. If adverse effects on wildlife are suspected, then recreational uses will be relocated, seasonally restricted or curtailed. • Prohibit motorized vehicle use in the park. Sign trailheads appropriately. Recommend prohibition of aircraft landings and takeoffs.

3.2 Zoning Plan

In general terms, a zoning plan divides a park into logical management units within which certain activities/uses are permitted and a particular set of management objectives apply. Zoning is often used to physically separate incompatible activities or uses within the park and provides visitors and managers with a quick visual representation and appreciation of how a particular park is managed. Zones are designed to reflect the physical environment, existing patterns of use and the desired level of management and development in a given management unit.

Yalakom Park is zoned entirely as Wilderness Recreation. The objective of this zone is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment.

4.0 Plan Implementation

4.1 Implementation Plan

Specific projects will be evaluated for priority in relation to the overall protected areas system. BC Parks will continue to approach First Nations in an effort to collaborate on park management. Where needed, BC Parks will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement management strategies.

4.2 High Priority Strategies

The following strategies have been identified as high priorities for implementation:

1. Work with adjacent land managers to ensure habitat connectivity for all wide-ranging species and minimizing impacts within the park.
2. Work with adjacent land managers to keep road access away from park boundaries.

4.3 Plan Assessment

In order to ensure that the management direction for Yalakom Park remains relevant and effective, BC Parks staff will ensure that the management plan is assessed by BC Parks staff on a regular basis (i.e., at least every 5 years). Minor administrative updates may be identified and completed at any time (e.g., correct spelling errors, update protected area details where needed), and will be documented according to BC Parks guidelines.

If an internal assessment reveals that the management plan requires updating or substantial new management direction is needed, a formal review by BC Parks may be initiated to determine whether the management plan requires an amendment or if a new management plan is required.

The management plan amendment process or development of a new management plan includes an opportunity for public input.

Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table

The following table summarizes existing and potential future uses in Yalakom Park that are and are not appropriate in each zone. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all uses that may be considered in this park in the future.

Please note that many appropriate uses are geographically restricted (i.e., only allowed in certain areas of Yalakom Park) or are only appropriate at certain times of the year. Please ensure that you are well informed of any use restrictions as indicated in the table. It is a good idea to review relevant sections of the management plan where indicated in the table.

Appropriate Use Table Legend		
N	Not an appropriate use	The use is not appropriate in the indicated zone. If the use currently exists but the management planning process has determined that the use is no longer appropriate in all or part of the park, the management plan will include strategies for ending the activity (e.g., phasing out, closing).
Y	May be an appropriate use	Some level or extent of this use may be appropriate in the zone(s) indicated. If the activity/use already exists, the management plan provides guidance on the appropriate level of use and may address specific restrictions or planned enhancements (e.g., capacity, designated areas for a particular activity, party size, time of year, etc.). For new or expanded uses, this symbol indicates that the use <u>may be considered</u> for further evaluation and approval. The appropriateness of some activities may not be confirmed until a further assessment (e.g., BC Parks Impacts Assessment Process) or evaluation process (e.g., park use permit adjudication) is completed.
Y1	Appropriate use as per section 30 of the <i>Park Act</i>	Indicates that the use is not normally appropriate in a park but was occurring pursuant to an encumbrance or Crown authorization at the time the park was established

Activity/Facility	Wilderness Recreation Zone	Comments
Recreational Activities/Uses		
Aircraft Landing/Takeoff	N	Recommend placing on Schedule A of the <i>Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation</i> .
Camping (designated sites)	Y	
Camping (wilderness style-undesignated sites)	Y	Sites may be designated to decrease impacts.
Fishing	Y	
Hang Gliding and Para Gliding Launching	N	
Hiking	Y	
Hunting	Y	
Land-based Mechanized Activity (e.g., mountain biking)	Y	
Land-based Motorized Activity (e.g., 4x4, motorcycles, ATV-not including snowmobiles, snowcats or aircraft landings)	N	
Horse and Pack Animal Use	Y	Horses only
Skiing (downhill and cross-country track based)	N	
Skiing (backcountry)	Y	
Snowmobiling	N	
Snowcat Use	N	
Recreation Facilities/Infrastructure		
Cabins, Huts and Shelters (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy)	Y	Existing commercial cabin and camp only.
Lodges (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy)	N	
Campgrounds (vehicle accessed)	N	
Picnic Areas (vehicle accessed)	N	
Designated Camping Sites (not vehicle accessed)	Y	
Parking Lots	N	
Roads	N	
Ski Facilities (vehicle accessed and serviced)	N	
Trails	Y	
Visitor Information Buildings	N	
Other Activities/Infrastructure		
Grazing	Y1	
Trapping	Y	