

BC Parks Zoning Framework

A Management Planning Tool

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BC Parks Zoning Framework

Management planning in BC Parks uses zoning to assist in the planning and management of British Columbia's protected areas¹. In general terms, zoning divides an area into logical units to apply consistent management objectives for protection of protected area values. The zones reflect the intended land use, existing patterns of use, the degree of human use desired, and the level of management and development required. Zoning provides visitors and managers with a quick visual representation and appreciation on how a particular protected area is managed. Zoning is a mandatory requirement for all protected areas except ecological reserves.



The BC Parks Zoning Framework includes six possible zones that can be used in protected area planning:

- Special Natural Feature Zone
- Cultural Zone
- Intensive Recreation Zone
- Nature Recreation Zone
- Wilderness Recreation Zone
- Wilderness Conservation Zone

The following table describes the attributes of each zone and the criteria that are used to determine zones within a protected area.

¹ For the purposes of the BC Parks Zoning Framework, protected area includes: provincial parks, conservancies, recreation areas and protected areas established under the *Environment and Land Use Act*.

	Special Natural Feature Zone	Cultural Zone	Intensive Recreation Zone
Objective	To protect and present significant natural values, features or processes because of their special character, fragility or natural value.	To protect significant cultural places and activities, including First Nations and non-indigenous traditional uses, cultural, spiritual and historic sites, features and areas.	To provide for a variety of readily-accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.
Use Level	Generally low.	Cultural use may vary temporally or spatially (e.g., eulachon harvest in the spring or plant gathering sites). Recreation use is dependent on site-specific objectives and human presence or use. Use may be controlled if required to protect the cultural value.	Relatively high density and long duration types of use.
Means of Access	Various; may require special access permit.	Various means of access consistent with the objective of the zone.	All-weather public roads or other types of access where use levels are high (see "Impacts" below).
Location	Determined by location of special natural value(s); may be surrounded by or next to any of the other zones.	Wherever the cultural value is located or use is to be specifically managed.	Contiguous with all-weather roads and covering immediate areas, modified landscapes or other high-use areas.
Zone Size	Small, usually less than 2,000 hectares.	The size of this zone is variable (feature to landscape).	Small, usually less than 2,000 hectares.
Boundary Definition	Area defined by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of the special natural values (adequate to afford protection).	Area may be defined by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of the cultural value.	Includes areas of high facility development in concentrated areas.
Recreation Opportunities	Sightseeing and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	Compatible recreational opportunities that do not conflict with, or detract from, the cultural value. Examples generally allowed include nature and cultural appreciation and use, hiking, backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	Vehicle camping, picnicking, beach activities, powerboating, canoeing, kayaking, strolling, bicycling, nature and cultural appreciation, fishing, snow play, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and specialized activities.
Facilities	Interpretative facilities only; natural values are to be protected.	Facility development related to the cultural value. Appropriate facility development for user benefit that is compatible with the cultural value.	May be intensely developed for user convenience. Campgrounds, landscaped picnic or play areas, trail accommodation or interpretative buildings, boat launches, administrative buildings, service compounds, disposal sites, parking lots, etc.
Impacts on Natural Environment	None; natural values to be maintained unimpaired.	Impacts will be dependent on site-specific objectives and associated human presence or use. Human presence will be minimal in some areas. In others, human presence may be visible through the use of the cultural values. Impacts to the natural	Includes natural value features and phenomena in a primarily natural state, but where human presence may occur with the presence of recreation facilities and people using the zone. Includes areas of high facility development with significant

	Special Natural Feature Zone	Cultural Zone	Intensive Recreation Zone
Management Guidelines	High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining natural values and, where appropriate, a high quality recreational and interpretative experience. Active or passive management, depending on size, location and nature of the natural value. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.	environment may be visible through aboriginal sustainable use of resources. Oriented to protect cultural values and to enable cultural activities. Visitor access may be restricted during specific times of the year or specific areas.	impact on concentrated areas. Oriented to maintaining a high-quality recreation experience. Intensive management of resource and for control of visitor activities. Operational facilities designed for efficient operation while being unobtrusive to visitors.
Zoning Examples	Botanical Beach tidepools in Juan de Fuca Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park. 	Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy	Campground in Rath Trevor Beach Park; Gibson Pass ski area in E. C. Manning Park. 

	Nature Recreation Zone	Wilderness Recreation Zone	Wilderness Conservation Zone
Objective	To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designated sites.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized activities will be allowed.
Use Level	Relatively low use but higher levels associated with nodes of activity or access.	Very low use to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.	Very low use to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.
Means of Access	Motorized (powerboat, snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle), non-motorized (bicycle) and non-mechanized (canoe, horse, foot). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pick-up points will be permitted.	Non-mechanized (canoe) and non-motorized (foot). May permit low-frequency air access to designated sites; horse access may be permitted.	Non-mechanized (canoe) and non-motorized access (foot). Horse access may be permitted; no air access.
Location	Removed from all-weather roads but easily accessible on a day-use basis. Accessible by motorized means such as boat or airplane.	Remote, not easily visited on a day-use basis.	Remote, not easily visited on a day-use basis.

	Nature Recreation Zone	Wilderness Recreation Zone	Wilderness Conservation Zone
Zone Size	Can range from small to large.	Large, greater than 5,000 hectares.	Large, greater than 5,000 hectares.
Boundary Definition	Boundaries should consider limits of activity and facility areas relative to ecosystem characteristics and features.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features.
Recreation Opportunities	Walk-in and boat-in camping, power boating, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, bicycling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, river rafting, horseback riding, heli-skiing, heli-hiking and specialized activities.	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (e.g., caving, climbing).	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (e.g., caving, climbing); no hunting.
Facilities	Moderately developed for user convenience. Trails, walk-in and boat-in campsites, shelters, accommodation buildings, facilities for motorized access (e.g., docks, landing strips, fuel storage, etc.)	Minimal facility development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment (e.g., trails, primitive campsites). Some basic facilities at access points (e.g., dock, primitive shelter).	None.
Impacts on Natural Environment	Area where human presence on the land is not normally visible. Facility development limited to relatively small areas. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.	Natural area generally free of evidence of human beings. Evidence of human presence is confined to specific facility sites. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.	Natural area generally free of evidence of human beings.
Management Guidelines	Oriented to maintaining a natural environment and high quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be restricted to protect or maintain the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation modes. Designation of transportation routes may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g., horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
Zoning Examples	Core area in Cathedral Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; most of Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park.	Upper Murray River watershed within Monkman Park; Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy Area.
	