

MANAGEMENT

PLAN

for Mount Assiniboine
Provincial Park

Draft

September 2006

Disclaimer: This draft management plan contains preliminary proposals that are subject to change and therefore may not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of Environment. At the conclusion of the planning process a revised management plan will be approved by the Ministry.

**Ministry of Environment
Environmental Stewardship Division**

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Executive Summary

This plan establishes objectives and strategies for the long-term management of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. It is intended to provide strategic direction and guidance for park managers and anyone interested in the management and stewardship of this park.

The plan draws from the 1989 Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Master Plan and the 1987 and 2005 Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park background documents. It recognizes changes in the environment, land use and protected areas planning and the evolution of BC Parks' management since 1989. These changes include the condition of facilities and access, improved information on ecological values, new initiatives in the management of land and resources in adjacent jurisdictions, a revised provincial park zoning system and an increased emphasis on working with First Nations. In addition, the plan incorporates a management vision based on the goals, ideals and aspirations of a variety of users and stewards of the park that participated in the planning process (appendix 2)

In summary, the plan revisits the 1989 vision, direction and expectations for the park and, in the light of experience and current thinking, sets a course for the park into the following decades.

Plan Highlights

The management vision for the future of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is to see that it continues to stand as an international symbol of the pristine scenic grandeur of the British Columbia wilderness and the heritage of recreational enjoyment it offers. Key elements of the management plan include:

- A zoning plan that enhances the emphasis on Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park's value both as a component of a UNESCO World Heritage Site which protects significant examples of Canadian Rocky Mountain ecosystems, and as the location of an internationally recognized wilderness recreation feature associated with functioning heritage structures from the earliest days of facility-based backcountry tourism in the Canadian Rockies.
- Approximately 86% of the park will be zoned as Wilderness Recreation, while 13% will be zoned as Nature Recreation, and all of the north core (Sunshine Meadows and adjacent alpine ridges) will be zoned as Special Feature (1%).
- Development of an Ecosystem Management Strategy that coordinates management of vegetation and wildlife in the park with that of adjacent protected area jurisdictions and with activities on adjacent Provincial Forest lands.
- As part of the Ecosystem Management Strategy, preparing a Vegetation Management Strategy to maintain or restore natural disturbance regimes (insects, disease and fire) wherever possible.
- Developing a coordinated long-term approach to wildlife management with other government agencies, emphasizing species of concern.
- Working with the Ministry of Forests and Range, other appropriate agencies and industry to protect the visual integrity of the park from impacts of adjacent uses along its southern boundary.
 - Ensuring that public access to the park is maintained by coordinating the management of roads, trails, trailheads and helipads on lands that provide access to the park with Parks

Canada, Alberta Parks, the B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts.

- Prohibiting all forms of motorized access into the park except for management purposes and as provided for in this management plan (i.e., helicopter access and Sunshine Village access to water supply and downhill ski facilities as currently approved).
- Refining the current number and configuration of backcountry trails and campsites as necessary to ensure optimum utility and minimum environmental impact.
- Providing roofed public accommodations based on existing heritage structures that have evolved in their traditional roles, and ensuring that, as much as practical, any necessary updating or repairs to structures retain their original ambience, capacity and appearance and preserve the rustic heritage character of the south core.
- Providing new or replacement park facilities or services to improve the quality and efficient delivery of recreational opportunities and without changing the general scale, character, or distribution of use in the park.
- Maintaining commercial operation of the historic Mount Assiniboine Lodge under permit and supporting such modifications as will improve efficiency and services without departing from the traditional character of the structures or their accessibility for public interpretation.
- Continuing the park's traditional guide-outfitting operations, which broaden the scope of park activities by offering a horse-based, wilderness recreation experience now very rare in the southern Canadian Rocky Mountains.
- Supporting low impact commercial recreation services in the park under permit where facilities and general public uses are compatible.
- Creating an information strategy that will focus on maintaining use levels in each area of the park that is appropriate in terms of acceptable ecological impacts and quality of recreational experiences.

Introduction

The Management Planning Process

A management plan is a document prepared to guide a park's management for the future. It sets objectives and strategies for conservation, development, interpretation, and operation of the park. This management plan defines the role of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park in the British Columbia protected areas system and establishes objectives and desired actions to guide management and development. The management plan also addresses issues that require immediate attention within the park. These issues include the level of development of facilities for the park, management of recreation values and use, and management of natural and cultural values.

A management plan is a document prepared by the Environmental Stewardship Division - Ministry of Environment with public involvement. The spirit and intent outlined in a management plan is a reflection of a society's values, interests and priorities. As part of the management planning process, the general public and public interest groups have opportunities to provide input through a variety of means, including public meetings and mail-outs. Periodically, management plans are reviewed and updated to reflect changes in park infrastructure and context. The current plan draws from the Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Master Plan (1989), and the Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park background reports (1987 and 2005). Additional information was gathered from relevant planning processes since 1989, including the Protected Areas Strategy, the East Kootenay Land-Use Plan (1995) and the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (1997).

The management planning process for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park required a number of steps. The first step involved the updating and production of a background report for the park. The background report was drafted in November 2005 and formed the information resource base for the production of the Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Management Plan.

The second step involved a series of consultations with holders of park use permits and individuals and organizations that have expressed an interest in Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. A series of telephone and personal interviews were conducted with a wide array of stakeholders and a planning workshop was held in January 2006.

Several factors formed the basis upon which this draft plan was developed. Some of these factors include: the results of the workshop; discussions with knowledgeable persons (both inside and outside of government); and consideration of broad land use policies, BC Parks' policies, zoning criteria and existing facility developments within the park.

There are five main sections in this document:

1. Introduction - highlights planning issues and provides a background summary of the park.

2. Role of the Park and Vision Statement - describes the importance of the park and the overall guiding principles for management.
3. Protected Area Zoning - establishes management zones.
4. Management Objectives and Strategies – establishes objectives and actions for managing the natural and cultural values and the outdoor recreation opportunities.
5. Plan Implementation – sets priorities for implementing the management strategies.

The draft plan was distributed for public review in February 2006.

Background Summary

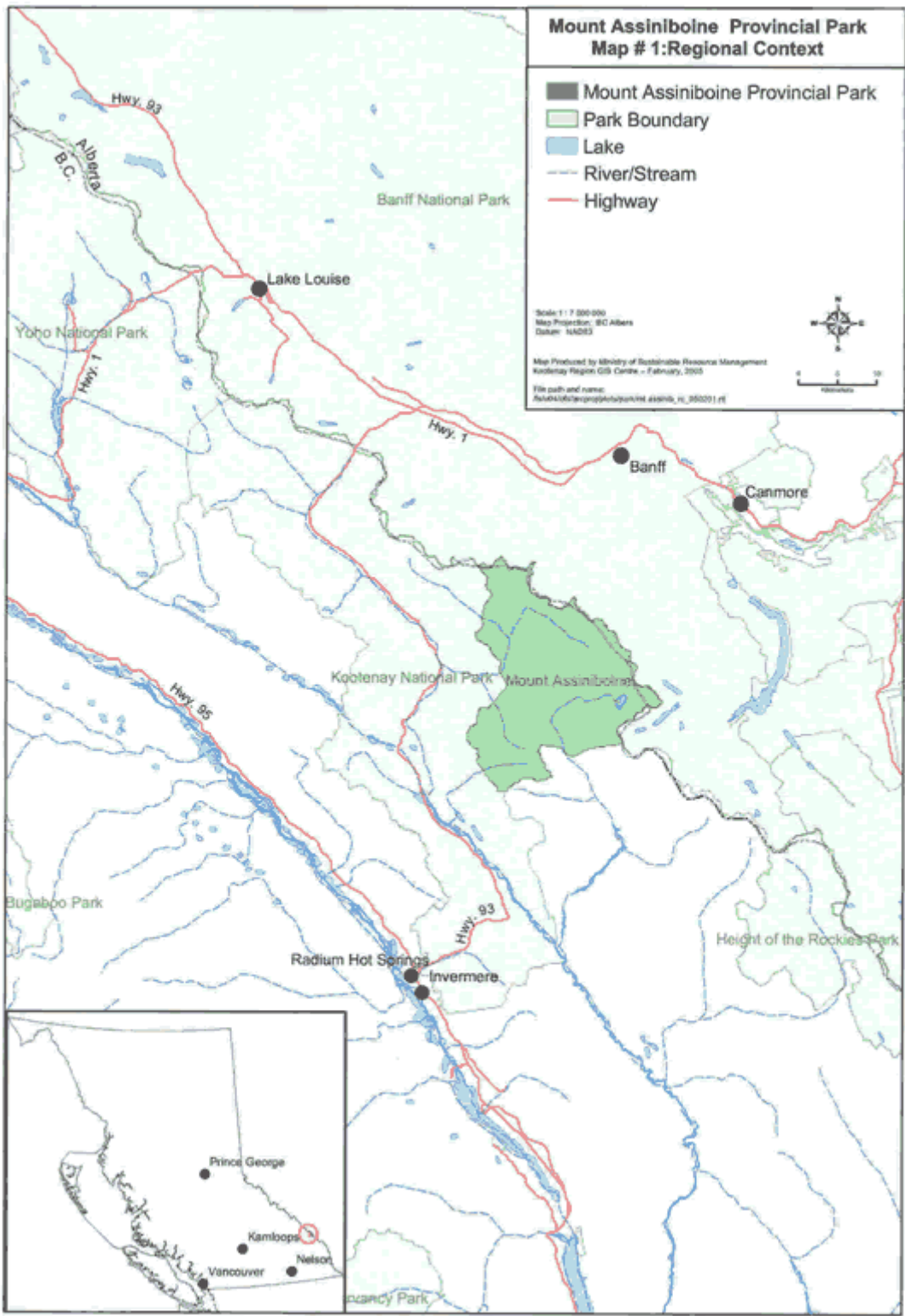
Originally comprising only 5,200 ha in the vicinity of the mountain and Lake Magog, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park was established in 1922 as British Columbia's fifth provincial park. Flanked by Yoho and Banff National Parks on the west and east respectively, the park was enlarged in 1973 to 39,013 ha¹ to protect the integrity of the surrounding alpine areas and watersheds, and in so doing to provide a more complete provincial complement to the four national parks already representing the Canadian Rockies (Map 1).

Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is both a wilderness area and a tourist destination, protecting a landscape and natural feature of provincial, national and international significance. In 1991, UNESCO added this park (along with Mount Robson and Hamber Provincial Parks) to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, which includes the group of four contiguous national parks in the Canadian Rockies, thereby internationally recognizing the exceptional natural and cultural values associated with this region of British Columbia. Through the Central Rockies Ecosystem Interagency Liaison Group (http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/enjoying_alberta/parks/featured/kananaskis/creilg/), current park management cooperates closely with adjacent British Columbia and Alberta government agencies and Parks Canada to ensure that biodiversity is maximised in the Central Rockies Ecosystem and that the area is managed as a sustainable regional landscape.

The setting of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park (map 2) includes a core south eastern valley (the "south core") surrounded by a group of alpine lakes and striking high peaks along the Continental Divide, including Mount Assiniboine, the 6th highest peak in the Rockies (3618 m). In the northeast, perched above the Simpson River valley, lie the extensive, high elevation Sunshine Meadows and a group of three subalpine lakes (the "north core").

The park's western portion is characterized by forested creek and river valleys rising to gentler mountains. The climate is Humid Continental, with cool summers and mountain influences. Temperature means range from -11° C in January to 8-12° C in July, with peak snowfalls from December-January and rainfall maximums in June-July. The park is underlain by upper Precambrian and lower Paleozoic sedimentary rocks which host two known fossil beds in the south core area. Karst topography is extensive, notably around Og Lake, Valley of the Rocks and Cave Mountain.

¹ Area cited in 2004 legal description provided by Parks HQ, Victoria.



Map #1: Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Regional Context



The Park’s two main watersheds both flow from the Continental Divide; the Mitchell draining the south half and the Simpson the north half of the park. Highest runoffs are in June, and ice

conditions prevail from November to March. Og and Magog lakes have underground drainage and experience considerable fluctuation in water levels.

The park contains two biogeoclimatic zones², the Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir zone from 1200-2450 m and the Alpine Tundra zone above 2450 m. Vegetation in the former includes Engelmann Spruce, Subalpine Fir, Alpine Larch, Whitebark Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir and Mountain Hemlock, while species in the latter are typically Mountain Avens, alpine Bluegrass, Moss Campion, willows, heather and forget-me-not. A limited lake fishery is concentrated in the two core areas, with Yellowstone cutthroat trout found in all south core lakes, Wedgewood Lake and Rock Lake, Rainbow trout in Cerulean and Sunburst lakes, and Dolly Varden char and Eastern brook trout in the lakes of the north core. Based on recorded sightings, more than 84 bird species inhabit the park. Park wildlife includes ten species of carnivore - wolves, black bear, grizzly bear, weasel, cougar and lynx, as well as six species of ungulates - elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, mountain goat and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

No pre-contact archaeological sites have been found in the park, although several locations were probably used as campsites along established routes through the park, including the North Simpson River route followed by Hudson's Bay Company Governor George Simpson in 1841. The park's south core area was one of the cradles of Canadian Rocky Mountain facility-based backcountry tourism and contains a unique group of original heritage structures that have continued in their traditional uses with few changes since the mid-1920s.

Primary visual and recreational highlights of the park are the Mount Assiniboine massif and its surrounding meadows and lakes - Gog, Magog, Sunburst and Cerulean; as well as the Sunshine Meadows, with their alpine lakes - Rock Isle, Grizzly and Larix. These features are complemented by others such as alpine and subalpine meadows in the Magog to Rock Isle corridor, Wonder Pass, the forested creek drainages providing access to the alpine, and the wildlife populations, particularly grizzly bear, bighorn sheep, elk and mountain goat

Park recreation opportunities include backcountry experiences based on a variety of accommodations - lodge, cabin, campsite; and a wide range of access types - helicopter, hiking/backpacking, and horseback. Day hiking and natural and cultural history appreciation opportunities are available from south core accommodations and the Sunshine Village Resort adjacent to the north core, and other park activities include fishing, hunting, mountaineering, cross-country skiing and ski touring.

The Sunshine Village Resort adjacent to the north core area holds a water license on Rock Isle Lake and has downhill ski facilities (a lift and runs) and a water supply system, all of which pre-date park designation in 1973. The facilities continue under s.

Existing park facilities include 10 camping areas totalling approximately 75 campsites (including 28 defined sites at the Magog Rim campground), the 5 public Naiset Cabins with a combined capacity of 28, the R C Hind Hut with 12-15 spaces, the lodge complex accommodating a maximum of 30 guests (lodge, six cabins, 3 staff buildings and a shower/sauna building), and three guide-outfitter cabins. Day use facilities and an interpretive trail system are provided in the

² Areas of similar topographic, soils, climatic and biological characteristics.

north core, and about 160 km of horse and hiking trails exist at various levels of maintenance over Wonder, Assiniboine and Citadel passes and up the Simpson and Mitchell Rivers and Surprise Creek.

The park contains no private inholdings or traplines, but supports a number of commercial operations under park use permits. In addition to a helicopter access permit, two guide-outfitting permits and the Mount Assiniboine Lodge permit, which provides for commercial guiding and operation of all south core accommodation facilities, there are nine commercial guiding permits for operations within the park. Most commercial guiding operators visit the park fewer than half a dozen times a year.

Over half of park visitors are from Alberta, with the balance originating from British Columbia, the rest of Canada, the United States or elsewhere. Winter use in the south core tends to be more locally based. Visitors fall into two market groups – young/physically fit, and older aged/physically limited. The largest proportion of visits involves 2-3 people staying for 3-5 days. Satisfaction with park environment and facilities is generally high, and the park's level of resource protection and uncrowded backcountry character are highly valued. The Lodge attracts the broadest range of clientele and accounts for over half of the annual south core use level of around 8,000 visitor days². As many as 80% of all south core visitors may now be taking advantage of helicopter flights to support some aspect of their activities. Some users of south core summer or winter accommodations fly both in and out but, depending on weather and season, many more fly only one way or have packs transported by air for a fee. Fewer than 5% of visitors now use horses. Summer use extends from mid-June to early October and peaks in August, while winter use (largely dependent upon Lodge operation) runs from February to April, peaking in March. In summer, the north core receives about 11,000 day visitors annually via Sunshine Village.

In the future, most markets will continue to lie east of the park, especially as the centres of Calgary and Canmore continue to grow. Reflecting the aging national population, the demand for helicopter access, roofed accommodations and support services in the south core is expected to remain strong or to increase, while use by those seeking “wilderness” will continue to decline. Mount Assiniboine's profile as a B.C. Provincial Park will continue to be overshadowed by the adjacent National Parks, though a higher profile for the Province in the Sunshine Meadows area could affect significant numbers of visitors, particularly if summer access and use of the adjacent Sunshine Village Resort were improved.

Climate change may noticeably affect natural systems within the park. Changes projected over the next fifty years include:

- warmer winters, higher precipitation and general warming trends;
- increased frequency and/or severity of natural processes as wildfires, forest pest infestations and droughts;
- changes in hydrology, including the reduction of glaciers and snowfields and the timing of peak flows and low-water events;
- forest encroachment on alpine meadows;

² The actual number of individuals visiting the park is lower, as this annual total counts each day an individual is in the park.

- extirpation of some plant and animal species, for example, those in ecological pockets such as microclimates, or at the limits of their range; and
- changes in ecosystem composition and structure.

Timber and mineral extraction activities below the Park's southern boundary have already increased accessibility to Mount Assiniboine itself, but any effects may diminish over time if existing roads are not maintained for extractive purposes.

Relationship with Other Planning

Parks and Wilderness for the 90s, a joint BC Parks and Ministry of Forests initiative in 1988, included a 1985 BC Parks proposal to expand Mount Assiniboine Park further southward to include 5,100 hectares in the Assiniboine and Aurora Creek drainages. Endorsed by the 1989 Master Plan, the proposed addition was intended to rationalize the original south park boundary, increase the natural diversity of the park, and encourage access and use from British Columbia.

The Province's Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE) initiated a strategic **East Kootenay Land Use Plan** (EKLUP) in 1993. A framework Plan was approved in 1995 and a **Kootenay/Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy** (KBLUP/IS) was completed in 1997. As a result of this planning, the Assiniboine Creek addition was dropped as a candidate area under the **Protected Areas Strategy**, but seven new protected areas were approved. The designation of these areas brought the total amount of area protected within the Southern Park Ranges Ecosection to 32.6%. As a result, Mount Assiniboine Park gained greater flexibility in meeting protected area objectives for conservation and recreation representation within the ecosection, as management decisions about issues such as recreation opportunities, general biodiversity maintenance and protection of key habitat areas could henceforth be taken in the context of a larger landbase. At the same time, the KBLUP/IS directed that the Cross River drainage south the park boundary should be managed for high biodiversity emphasis for reasons of connectivity, grizzly bear and old growth.

In August 1997, the provincial government appointed a **BC Parks Legacy Panel** to canvass the public and recommend appropriate strategies to care for and sustain the rapidly expanding protected areas system. A key recommendation of this panel in 1999 was that the protection and preservation of natural and cultural values and ecological integrity should be the dominant features of management decisions within protected areas. A Conservation Risk Assessment completed for Mount Assiniboine Park in 2002 concluded that the greatest conservation risks to Mount Assiniboine Park are probably posed by the impacts of human use in the relatively fragile alpine areas, notably the north and south cores of the park (Rock Isle Lake and Magog Lake areas).

Management Issues

Introduction

This management plan addresses a number of issues identified by the Environmental Stewardship Division through previous land use planning processes and through consultation with other government agencies, First Nations, user groups, and the public.

The overall challenge for the management of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park will be to balance the conservation and protection of important natural and cultural heritage resources with the continuation of high quality backcountry recreational experiences. The expansion of commercial recreation activities and backcountry lodge facilities in Western Canada over the last decade has only tended to underscore the uniqueness of the Mount Assiniboine south core area experience. This uniqueness results from the combination of the peak's outstanding feature significance, the remoteness of the area from day use accessibility, the range of accommodation types available, and the continuing use of the heritage structures from the very early days of facility-based recreation in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. The Park's location adjacent to Alberta and to two National Parks also adds a level of complexity to management of both ecological and human activity issues that cross jurisdictional lines.

Protected area management objectives typically aim at sustaining traditional or current representative ecosystems and species, but may be thwarted by climatic changes that continue to alter the ecology of the area. Such alterations may be subtle, but more dramatic natural progressions such as wildfire, insects and disease are also likely to increase in frequency or severity. With the ongoing effects of human land use activities outside protected areas already applying some pressures on both rare and representative species and ecosystems, park managers may have to decide to what extent these climate change effects can or should be tempered within parks to help natural systems adjust or to support species that might otherwise be naturally extirpated.

With increasing scientific and political concern about climate change and its implications, ecological inventory and monitoring work at the park level should interrelate with studies of climate change. Mount Robson Provincial Park and the National Parks have done some analysis in this area. In Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park, such linkages could help to project risks to hydrological patterns, vegetation and wildlife based on warming and drying trends, as well as providing models of what "natural ecological progressions" might mean for this specific park.

The following have been identified as the main issues.

Natural Values

Water

The protection of water quantity and quality is important for both ecological and public health reasons. Climate change effects such as warmer, drier winters and cooler, wetter summers will continue to reduce the summer mass of glaciers and snowfields, tending to reduce summer flows and raise stream temperature regimes. Ultimately, such changes will affect human water supplies dependent on already low flows, particularly in karst areas where much drainage is already subsurface. They will also affect the viability of some fisheries and temperature sensitive species. Turbidity may also affect water quality if extensive areas lose vegetation to more frequent and severe natural disturbances.

Climate Change – Climate change will directly affect park vegetation in a number of specific ways. Overall increased precipitation with possible decreases in summer months, decreased snow packs and overall variability from year to year, may affect moisture-sensitive species and wildfire predictability. Changes in timing of bud emergence, leaf emergence, flowering and other aspects of plant physiology will ultimately affect survival, and some plant species will

likely decrease or disappear altogether. Increasing mean temperatures will allow the tree and vegetation line to move higher in elevation, effectively increasing vegetation on alpine slopes and ridges, as well as allowing subalpine plants to move higher into alpine areas. Over time, these changes have the potential of noticeably altering plant diversity and habitat, both in the subalpine and alpine areas of the Park.³ As noted previously and detailed below, overall higher annual temperatures and increased precipitation will probably also alter previous patterns of natural disturbance regimes including pests, disease, fire, and drought.

Natural Disturbance Regimes – Mountain Pine Beetle. The mountain pine beetle infestation currently affecting all parts of the British Columbia Interior has not significantly impacted Mount Assiniboine Park to date, but it has appeared in the Mitchell River and can be expected to take hold in coming years. The massive scale of this natural disturbance could have very far-reaching effects. Affected areas will have increased susceptibility to wildfire from the red-top phase until the needles finally drop. From that point until some new surface cover develops, there will be a high risk of heavy soil erosion, as precipitation will not be absorbed by root systems, runoff will occur rapidly, and soil will not be held in place by vegetation. Increased turbidity will affect water quality and fish habitat far down the drainage systems. At the same time, however, such major natural disturbances may restore habitat for species that have been shifted out of the park by forest succession due to decades of fire suppression. Assessment of forest pest and disease risks and management options for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park must be undertaken in the broader context of Parks Canada and Provincial responses to the mountain pine beetle in the area.

Wildfire – Other than a burn up the Simpson River from the Kootenay to the vicinity of Indian Creek, major wildfires have not affected the park to any great extent owing to the longstanding policies of fire suppression. Heavy forest growth has occurred over the past 40 years as a result of fire suppression policies, and this has shifted wildlife populations owing to changing habitats (e.g., reduced elk habitat in the Simpson River valley). The park's approach to wildfire must take into consideration the long term influences of climate change as well as more immediate threats to structures inside and outside the park.

Human Impacts – Horse use had major impacts on south core vegetation and soils before it ceased in 1984. Although trail hardening and restoration of vegetation has been undertaken since the mid 1970s has helped restore heavily used areas of the Park, these actions must be continued as necessary to sustain the natural vegetation. Observers report intrusion of non-native species and noxious weeds in some areas³. Management policy based on good science should be a priority, but recent studies (Nicholson, 2004) have clearly indicated the need for continuing species data collection throughout the park.

Plant Species at Risk – Studies focusing primarily on the south core area in 1975, 2002 and 2004 indicate that at least three red-listed and ten blue-listed plant species are present in the park. Particularly considering the sensitivity of alpine species to climate change effects and human activity, the detailed inventories and studies needed to support informed management are lacking.

³ John Niddrie & Albert Cooper, pers. comm., 2006 (Simpson River valley).

Wildlife

Rare, Endangered and Sensitive Species - More baseline studies and more knowledge of the species' tolerances is needed to identify and respond to potential human and environmental impacts. Although some wildlife species such as bighorn sheep have been studied fairly consistently, information on most other species is inconsistent and heavily dependent upon studies undertaken by the adjacent National Parks. Concern that highway fencing may have impeded elk migrations illustrates the need to update inventories for species other than sheep, such as grizzly bears, mountain goats, and elk, and to relate such studies to human activity both outside and inside the park. Suppression of wildfire in the park has affected original and natural wildlife habitats (former large elk herds are no longer present, sheep are being forced higher). As noted, natural disturbances may restore some of these habitats, but climate change may also change the timing of migrations and affect predator-prey relationships.

Fisheries - As virtually all of the upland lakes were originally barren of fish but have been stocked haphazardly for recreation, fisheries management in the Park must consider what emphasis to place on maintaining recreational opportunities as compared with supporting or restoring natural conditions. Blue-listed Yellowstone cutthroat trout and bull trout are native to the main rivers, but have also been stocked in a number of lakes. Current and accurate information on which to base management of fish resources appears to be lacking. As with other park resources, a number of climate change influences may also affect the survival of particular fish species or the productivity of particular lakes and streams. These influences may include reduced flows and higher water temperatures resulting from reduced summer snowfields and glaciers, as well as increased turbidity from erosion triggered by loss of vegetation through natural disturbances.

Cultural Heritage

Archaeological Resources

Although pre-contact travel routes are known to have passed through the park and several sites of archaeological potential have been identified, no specific archaeological studies of the park have been undertaken. Particularly with increased First Nations interest in their traditional territories, more information is needed.

Post-Contact Heritage

The character of all structures representative of early tourist use within the south core area of the park should be preserved. More emphasis should be placed on presenting this history to the public, particularly in and around the Naiset Cabins.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Access

Air access – Air access and overflights have visual and audible effects on the experiences of park visitors and can affect park management objectives for conservation. Inconsistent use of airspace and landing sites may be hazardous, while vegetation in landing zones can be negatively impacted. All lakes other than Lake Magog are too small for floatplane access and even Magog poses serious hazards in terms of size, winds and surrounding topography. Helicopter access is not permitted for day use, is closely regulated and has reduced somewhat since 1986, but it has evolved to become the predominant mode of access and supply to the south core area of the park

for overnight uses. This trend suggests a demographic shift toward park visitors who place higher value on the south core area experience than on the hiking or backpacking experience involved in getting there, and who are willing to pay for services which support their enjoyment of the south core. However, as dependence on air access is likely to increase, the plan should consider whether the current air access policies appropriately balance public access, management needs, and preservation of backcountry experiences with minimal noise disturbance.

Trail access – Four issues need to be considered in the updated management plan: 1) whether reliability of access via Bryant Creek and communication about closures can be improved in light of the intermittent closures of that route by Parks Canada; 2) whether to continue the current policy under which the upper Simpson River trail is essentially unmaintained in order to offer a more primitive access experience for park visitors who may prefer it; 3) whether any coordinated management actions between BC Parks and the Ministry of Forests are needed regarding direct access to Mount Assiniboine via Assiniboine and Aurora creeks; 4) whether or not the Mitchell River trail and helicopter transportation from the Mitchell/Invermere staging area should be improved and promoted as a major British Columbia access route into the south core area.

Accommodation Facilities

The park presently offers four fairly distinct levels of accommodation: camping at designated sites (including horse and group camping at O'Brien Meadows), public cabin accommodation (Naiset Cabins and RC Hind Hut), guide-outfitter cabin/camp accommodation, and full-service lodge accommodation. The updated management plan should consider ways of maintaining and supporting the four distinctive accommodation types and their associated recreational opportunities, whether the levels of facilities and services provided are satisfactory and appropriate, and whether any additional roofed or camping accommodations are needed and appropriate anywhere in the park.

Commercial Recreation

The Mount Assiniboine Lodge is currently the principal commercial operation in the park outside the north core. By virtue of operation of the Naiset Cabins and Magog Campground and the helicopter flight booking service, lodge staff play a major role in defining the public image of the park. Because of the iconic character of Mount Assiniboine, the park attracts a significant number of commercial recreation guiding services based outside the park. The largest such operation is White Mountain Tours, which buses summer visitors to Sunshine Village for hikes into the north core area, but most operate in the park less regularly with very much smaller parties. In addition, two guide outfitters provide horse accessed hunting and some other guided recreational opportunities outside the core areas. The updated management plan will have to consider the appropriate level of commercial activity in the park and what effect commercial operations may have on the character of the park. In particular, it should consider the appropriateness of fixed-roof accommodation in the north core area of the park.

Development Levels/Zoning

Mount Assiniboine Park experience since the 1970s suggests that the development levels and zoning established in the 1989 Master Plan have created a highly sustainable balance between use and environmental conservation in the focal north and south core areas, while preserving most of the park area as wilderness with little human impact. Key elements in this balance are the levels, types and locations of accommodation, the types of access and the standards and

conditions of the trails. Expanded development could result in deterioration of the backcountry experience through overcrowding, unacceptable impacts on vegetation and wildlife or loss of the heritage atmosphere of the roofed accommodations. Reducing development and services could benefit vegetation and wildlife, but the associated drop in visitors could also lead to neglect and loss of historic structures, loss of widespread public appreciation and support for the park, and reduced tourism benefits associated with a reduced international profile. The updated management plan must consider whether current development levels and zoning are appropriate and ensure that any recommended changes include strategies to maintain the essential balance between conservation and public use and appreciation.

Use Levels

As noted, south core area use levels appear to have remained fairly stable over the past thirty years. Existing accommodation capacity would permit greater use in shoulder seasons. Sunshine Meadows summer use has dropped considerably since its initiation in the mid-1980s and also has additional capacity as a result. The updated management plan should consider whether it is desirable to try to fill these capacity gaps and whether any upward or downward adjustment of current peak use levels may be appropriate.

Land Tenure and Adjacent Land Use

Boundaries

Additions – As noted previously, the 1985 proposal to add the Assiniboine and Aurora creek drainages to the park was not accepted in the East Kootenay Land Use Plan Protected Area Strategy. Given that forest development has since occurred in much of the proposal area, the original values of the addition are now compromised. There appear to be no other boundary issues to address in the updated plan.

Adjacent Land Management

Because of the park's role as a significant component of the large protected area bloc that includes two other B.C. Provincial Parks, two National Parks and two Alberta Provincial Parks close overall coordination of ecological and visitor use management with these adjacent jurisdictions is of paramount importance. Inter-jurisdictional connections such as the Central Rockies Ecosystem Interagency Liaison Group (CREILG) play a critical role in preserving the broad biodiversity of the ecosystem by supporting integration of the resource management practices of the agencies involved. Also important is coordination of planning for commercial and non-commercial uses surrounding the park. While there is currently no new logging activity on the Provincial Forest lands to the south, access management issues have arisen because the good quality Forest Service trail up Assiniboine Creek to the park boundary appears to be receiving increasing use.

Management Services

Community Appreciation/Support

As noted, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park visitors include a larger segment of international visitors than many other British Columbia parks, and the base of support for the park is correspondingly broad. Unlike many other provincial parks, however, Mount Assiniboine Park lacks an adjacent base of community support, owing in part to its remoteness from population centres and in part to the fact that it tends to blur into the higher profile of the surrounding National Parks, both of which are closer to communities. The updated plan should explore the

potential for strengthening community support in the nearest British Columbia population centres, primarily Invermere and Radium.



Figure #1: Mount Assiniboine is the main feature of the park.

Role of the Protected Area

Provincial and Regional Context

Within a provincial system of more than 800 protected areas, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park fulfills important conservation, recreation and cultural roles. Along with Mount Robson and Hamber Provincial Parks and, Jasper, Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks, it is part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks UNESCO World Heritage Site. Other large protected areas in relatively close proximity include Height of the Rockies and Top of the World Provincial Parks to the south, Bugaboo Glacier and Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Provincial Parks to the west, and Spray Valley and Peter Lougheed Provincial Parks to the east in Alberta. Together, all of these areas contribute to the protection of biodiversity in the region, and are integral to conservation of wildlife populations, plant communities and biodiversity.

Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park lies close to Banff and to the rapidly growing population centres of Calgary and Canmore on the Alberta side, and it is relatively near the East Kootenay communities of Golden, Radium, Invermere, Cranbrook and Kimberly on the British Columbia side.

Ground based access to the park is easiest and most direct from the Alberta side, via Banff and Sunshine Village to the north core, and via Spray Lakes and Banff parks up Bryant Creek to the south core. A longer trail access reaches the south core via the Simpson River through Kootenay National Park on the west. The Mitchell River trail access on the south is one of the shorter hiking routes to the south core, but involves a longer drive from paved highways along relatively busy industrial roads. Scheduled helicopter access is available from Spray Lakes Park to the south core to support visitors using both roofed and camping accommodations.

Mount Assiniboine Park is unique among protected areas in the Kootenay Region in offering visitors a range of backcountry accommodations and services in cultural surroundings that have changed little over 80 years of consistent use. Restorative measures in the 1970s have resulted in relatively few lasting recreational impacts on the natural environment of the area. As a result, the park offers a wide range of very high quality backcountry experiences, from advanced mountaineering to facility supported trail hiking and viewing.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

The Province of British Columbia is more physically and biologically diverse than any comparable region in Canada. Its protected areas system conserves representative examples of most of the province's diverse natural ecosystems and special natural, cultural, and recreational features. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park contributes to representation goals within the system, both as a component of the internationally significant Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site and as the fourth largest of twelve protected areas representing the Southern Park Ranges (SPK) Ecosection. Particularly because of its location between other protected areas to the east and west, the park's ecosystem representation is both significant and viable.

In addition to its representation role, the park is distinguished as the setting of “the Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies”, an internationally renowned recreation feature and the highest peak in the Southern Rockies.

Protected Areas Strategy Goal 1

The natural values in Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park exemplify the qualities of representativeness, biodiversity, and opportunities for use and appreciation required for a Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) Goal 1 area.

Representativeness

- Mount Assiniboine Park is the fourth largest of twelve protected areas representing the Southern Park Ranges (SPK) Ecoregion. Fully 31% or 344,684 ha of this 1,107,272 ha ecoregion falls within national parks or provincial parks and ecological reserves, and Mount Assiniboine Park contains 3.5% of the total ecoregion area and 11.3% of the total area protected.
- Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park contains an elevational sequence of three Englemann Spruce-Subalpine Fir subzone variants (dk, dku, dkp) and the Alpine Tundra subzone (unp - currently undifferentiated throughout the province) within the Biogeoclimatic Ecological Classification (BEC) zoning system. The representational qualities of Mount Assiniboine Park relative to other protected areas in region are summarized in the following table.

BEC	Total Amount (Ha) within the region	Amount (Ha) of BEC within regional PAS	Total area of PA (ha)	Amount (Ha) of BEC within this PA	% PA that is this BEC	Amount of BEC within regional PAS that is within this PA %	Total amount of BEC in region rep in this park %
<i>ESSFdk, dku & dkp</i>	1,034,524.00	222,703	38,993.454	15,950.139	40.9%	7.2%	1.5%
<i>AT unp</i>	690,213.32	209,977	38,993.453	23,043.314	59.1%	11.0%	3.3%

- Although Mount Assiniboine Park contributes relatively little to overall representation in such an extensively protected ecological unit, it has considerable value as a complementary unit located as a link between two larger protected areas. This connectivity is particularly important in the current period of rapid climate change.

Biodiversity

- The park protects a diversity of wildlife and habitat for wide-ranging species at risk, such as bighorn sheep and grizzly bears as well as other species, including mountain goats and wolves.
- Although thorough information is lacking, observations to date in the south core area indicate that Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park also contains a number of relatively rare insect and alpine plant species⁴.

⁴ These include three blue-listed butterfly species, four species of rare moths and four red-listed and five blue-listed plant species (Nicholson, 2004). See **Background Document, Appendix 5** for details.

Use and Appreciation

- Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is significant for its high quality, accessible backcountry recreational opportunities, most of which focus around the sub-alpine and alpine features of the north and south core areas. These opportunities include day and overnight hiking, fishing, nature appreciation, horseback riding, hunting, camping, mountaineering, cross-country skiing and ski touring
- Because the park's provincially significant heritage structures, notably the original lodge and cabins of the south core area, essentially continue in their traditional uses, the character of the south core area as a cradle of backcountry tourism in the Canadian Rockies remains intact and contributes to the park's unique appeal.

Mount Assiniboine is an internationally recognized visual symbol of the Canadian Rockies.

Protected Areas Strategy Goal 2

Several significant special features included in the park fulfill PAS Goal 2 (Special Feature) criteria well:

- Mount Assiniboine is the 6th highest peak in the Canadian Rockies (highest in the southern part of the range) and is internationally recognized as “the Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies”.
- The Sunshine Meadows are among the largest alpine meadows in the Canadian Rockies and their feature significance is enhanced by the presence of several adjacent water features.
- A number of peaks, alpine lakes and other recreational features, while not unique, are of high recreational feature significance.
- The original Mount Assiniboine Lodge (1928) and Naiset Cabins (1925) are heritage structures of provincial or even national significance.

Protected Area Roles

The role of a park or protected area is defined by the values it contains, the goals of the Protected Areas System, the BC Parks conservation and recreation goals it serves, and the management vision that has been developed. Together, these components help to define an overall strategic management direction which guides the development of specific objectives and management strategies. The role of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park within the context of the conservation, recreation, and cultural value components is as follows:

Conservation Role

The conservation role of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is to contribute to ecosystem representation for the Southern Park Ranges Ecosection in British Columbia and to function as a component of the larger protected unit including adjacent and nearby national and provincial parks (Banff and Kootenay National Parks and Spray Lakes and Peter Lougheed Provincial Parks in Alberta). In particular, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park helps to provide a completely protected east-west transect of the Rockies, contributes to north-south wildlife movement corridors and protects wilderness areas.

The park also contains a wide variety of special natural features. Geological elements include Mount Assiniboine itself, the 6th highest peak in the Canadian Rockies; the Valley of the Rocks, a relic of what may be the 4th largest landslide in Canada; the distinctive karst of Og Lake, with

its underground drainage and nearby caves; and the Magog Lake fossil beds; vegetation such as the extensive Sunshine Meadows, and the rare Mount Cautley alpine poppy community; aquatic resources and important wildlife habitats for species of concern, such as badger, bighorn sheep and grizzly bears, as well as for other species including mountain goat and wolves.

Tourism and Recreation Role

Mount Assiniboine's feature significance, its sense of remoteness, the park's range of service and accommodation options and the heritage character of its roofed accommodations combine to create one of the great icons of backcountry recreation and tourism in North America. It plays a major role as one of the key scenic attractions which draws tourists to the region, even though very few of them may actually set foot in the park. Visiting Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park plays a relatively minor role in the regional tourism economy, owing to access limitations and the relatively low capacity associated with its high quality backcountry opportunities.

The park offers an exceptional diversity of non-mechanized backcountry activities, many of which are supported by commercial operations. These activities include day hiking, nature appreciation and fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, mountaineering and caving, as well as ungroomed cross country skiing and ski touring. Sunshine Village's permit area at the rim of the north core area also has downhill skiing and groomed cross country trail facilities. Thanks to its variety of accommodation types and access options ranging from helicopters through horses to hiking, the park appeals to a wide spectrum of users. Though recreational use is concentrated in the feature areas of Mount Assiniboine itself and the Sunshine Meadows, the park is large enough to provide extensive and more primitive backcountry and wilderness recreation opportunities as well.

Cultural Heritage Role

The Environmental Stewardship Division plays an important role in protecting cultural heritage features in the province. The primary cultural heritage role of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is to conserve in the south core the cultural landscape of the early period of Rocky Mountain backcountry tourism, represented by the 1925 Naiset Cabins and the 1928 Mount Assiniboine Lodge continuing in their original functions. Secondly, the park has a role in preserving any evidence of pre-contact First Nations sites and interpreting the history of First Nations, the fur trade period, early backcountry tourism based heavily on horse access, and mountaineering activities within the park.

Relationship with First Nations

With the emergence of treaty negotiations in British Columbia and the growing awareness of aboriginal rights and title, the Province of British Columbia has begun to forge a new relationship with First Nations across the province. The new relationship is based on respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights.

The provincial park system contains cultural and natural values that are highly significant to First Nations. Some parks are important as sources of natural medicines, foods or as sacred sites. The Environmental Stewardship Division needs to consider the traditional knowledge and concerns of First Nations.

The land now designated Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is part of the asserted traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council. The management plan proposes to develop working relationships between the Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations in a number of areas to ensure that management of the park considers their traditional uses. The management plan will not limit subsequent treaty negotiations.

The traditional territory of the Ktunaxa People covers the Kootenay Region and extends into the United States. In British Columbia the Ktunaxa Nation includes four Indian Bands: -a''am (St Mary's Band), -akin-um0/00asnuq0/00i-it (Tobacco Plains Band, -akis''nuk (Columbia Lake Band) and Yaqañ nu-kiy (Lower Kootenay Band).

The Ktunaxa Nation Council is currently negotiating a treaty with the Province of British Columbia and has signed a government to government memorandum of understanding with the Province for the management of provincial parks in the Kootenay Region. (Appendix 4) The MOU makes provisions for the two parties to cooperate in carrying out a variety of management activities for the provincial parks in the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation.

The Shuswap Nation Tribal Council asserted traditional territory extends from Kamloops to an area roughly encompasses the Columbia River drainage including the Upper and Lower Arrow lakes. The Tribal Council is composed of ten Indian Band members including; Adams Lake, Kamloops, Little Shuswap, Neskonlith, Shuswap, Skeetchestn, Spallumcheen, Stuctwesemic Bonaparte, Whispering Pines and North Thompson. The Shuswap Nation Tribal Council is not in the treaty process.

Vision Statement

A shared vision helps to focus and guide the long-term planning, management, operation and development of a park. The vision statement is not meant to describe the current condition of the park, but describes the condition of the park up to fifty years from now if the intent of the current management plan is followed. A clear vision provides context and guidance for park managers to make decisions about stewardship, recreation and other activities in the park. It also provides a statement of intent against which to assess the appropriateness of any new activities that may not have been contemplated when the original plan was written.

Vision for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park

Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is seen as an international symbol of the pristine scenic grandeur of the British Columbia Rocky Mountain wilderness, which combines ecological and heritage conservation with recreational access.

The priority assigned to ecosystem-based management of Mount Assiniboine Park as part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site continues to support coordinated and well-researched intervention to preserve and restore biodiversity, natural habitats and ecological communities within the limitations imposed by global climate change.

The park is famous for providing an exceptionally wide variety of backcountry activities, commercial services, accommodations and access opportunities, which attract a broad spectrum of international and domestic visitors of all ages and abilities. Careful management of the park's overnight accommodation capacity has successfully balanced recreational use with the protection of the park ecosystem and biodiversity. As a result, the south core area is widely appreciated for retaining much of the natural setting and rustic heritage character of an original cradle of Canadian Rocky Mountain backcountry tourism – a tangible link with another era. The north core also continues to be highly valued for offering the rare opportunity for large numbers of day visitors to appreciate the sensitive ecology of outstanding alpine meadows without increased human impacts upon the area. The remainder of the park still provides opportunities for remote wilderness experiences in areas showing only minimal evidence of human presence.

Visitors enjoy safe and environmentally sensitive trails and campsites and prize the heritage lodge and cabins for continuing in their traditional functions and appearance. As needed, new or replacement park facilities and services have improved the quality and efficient delivery of recreational opportunities without changing the general scale, character, or distribution of use in the park. All park users and commercial operators appreciate, respect and protect the park's natural and cultural resources as a trust to be enjoyed and as a legacy for future generations.

Protected Area Zoning

Introduction

Zoning is a tool to assist in the planning and management of a provincial park. It forms the transition between general management concepts such as roles and vision to specific objectives and strategies. Zoning applies consistent management objectives based on provincial policy standards, on natural, cultural and recreational values, and existing and projected patterns of access and recreational use in relation to specific conservation goals. The individual zones reflect the intended land use, the degree of human use, level of management and development permitted. The current BC Parks Zoning Policy⁵ (**Appendix 1**) includes five zones: Intensive Recreation, Nature Recreation, Special Feature, Wilderness Recreation, and Wilderness Conservation. Three of these zones are applied in Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park (Map 2). Each zone is explained in detail as follows and at the end of this section is an Activity/Facility Matrix where allowable activities and facilities in each zone are defined through coded notations.

Wilderness Recreation Zone

Zone Objective

To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment.

Zone Description

Wilderness Recreation zoning within the park totals approximately 33,732 ha and applies to all parts of the park outside of the north and south core areas (generally the westerly three-quarters of the park, including the Mitchell River drainage below Cerulean Lake, the central corridor between Citadel Pass and the south core boundary, and most of the rest of the Simpson River drainage).

Zone Rationale

The Wilderness Recreation Zone is intended to delineate for wilderness-based backcountry recreation a large part of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park which has minimal facilities and very low visitation. This zone will remain open to hunting and guide outfitting. The traditional basic backcountry cabins associated with guide outfitting operations are recognized by policy as appropriate exceptions to general constraints on facility-based commercial recreation, but no expansion of commercial facilities is intended in this zone of the park.

⁵ The zoning policy has changed significantly from the 1989 Mount Assiniboine Management Plan. The main change is the Activities/Facilities Matrix which enables activities that existed before the park was establishment to be continued under park use permit and to be identified as acceptable exceptions to provincial zoning standards. .



Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park
Map #3: Park Features and Zone Boundaries

Nature Recreation Zone

Zone Objective

To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities and appropriate facility nodes in a largely undisturbed natural environment.

Zone Description

The Nature Recreation Zone covers approximately 4,614 ha of the park and applies to the entire south core area and a small portion of the north core. The south core area is described as follows: generally, that portion of the park lying within a boundary commencing at the summit of Mount Assiniboine, following the height of land westerly to the summit of Mount Sturdee, thence northerly through the summits of Wedgewood Peak and Sunburst Peak, thence north-easterly and westerly down the ridges to the outlet of Cerulean Lake, thence north-westerly along the Cerulean Lake to Ferro Pass Trail to the crest of Chuck's Ridge (being the height of land between Elizabeth Creek and Nestor Creek), thence north-easterly to the summit of Nub Peak, thence north-westerly along the height of land to a point approximately 4 km due west of the summit of Og Mountain, thence east to the summit of Og Mountain, thence south along the Continental Divide to point of commencement on the summit of Mount Assiniboine.

Zone Rationale

The intent of this zone is to provide for backcountry-type facilities which are compatible with appreciation and conservation of the park's natural environment while accommodating use levels higher than what is normally associated with a backcountry experience. The zone is closed to hunting, and other than aircraft access under permit and flights for management purposes, no mechanized access or uses are permitted.

In the south core area there are a number of small but potentially sensitive feature areas within the Nature Recreation Zone that will be managed for their particular values through the objectives of this plan. These areas are:

- 1) **Mount Cautley Alpine** – Sensitive alpine meadows lying on the lower slopes of Mount Cautley north of Wonder Pass.
- 2) **Terrapin Bowl** – Sensitive alpine meadows below Terrapin Peak and above Magog Lake.
- 3) **Magog Fossil Beds** – Fossil beds south of Magog Lake.
- 4) **Og Lake/Cave Mountain Karst Features** – Area from Og Lake to Cave Mountain containing examples typical of karst landscapes.
- 5) **Mount Assiniboine Massif** – The alpine portions of Mount Assiniboine and the adjacent peaks.
- 6) **South Core Heritage Buildings** – The Mount Assiniboine Lodge and original outbuildings, the Naiset Cabins and the Sunburst Cabin. The intent is to preserve the heritage character and appearance of these buildings while continuing their traditional use as public accommodations.

Special Feature Zone

Zone Objective

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

Zone Description

Special Feature zoning within the park totals approximately 649 ha and applies to all of the north core area (generally described as the plateau east of the North Simpson River which contains the watersheds of Rock Isle, Larix and Grizzly Lakes). Within the Special Feature Zone, the Sunshine Village Continental Divide Express chairlift associated downhill ski runs and water supply pump house and water line, all of which pre-existed park designation.

Zone Rationale

Special Feature zoning of the north core area emphasizes the priority of protecting the significant natural scenery and fragile alpine ecology of the Sunshine Meadows and alpine ridges while closely managing visitor access and providing interpretive opportunities in ways that limit impacts. Overnight accommodations are generally not appropriate in Special Feature zones. Opportunities for public education or appreciation compatible with resource protection are provided through a purpose-built summer trail system, interpretive guiding and special visitor constraints to protect sensitive natural features and ecosystems.

The small portion of the Sunshine Village Ski Resort that lies in the park and pre-dated park establishment is a key component of the resort operation. While this use is not normally associated with Special Features Zones, at their level of development the ski lift and runs in the park have had minimal impact on the sensitive alpine area owing to small facility footprints and the protection afforded by snow during the season of high use. The Continental Divide Chairlift and associated downhill runs, and the Sunshine Village water supply from Rock Isle Lake (pump house and water line) will continue to be recognized under and are noted as allowable exceptions within the Activities/Facilities Matrix.

Zone Activity/Facility Matrix for Mount Assiniboine Park

Activities and facilities specifically allowed in the three zones within Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park are identified in the table below, Deviation from provincial standards (Appendix 1) are identified by asterisk except for the Special Feature Zone where there is no provincial standard and activities and facilities are site specifically determined.

The following symbols apply:

Y = appropriate

M = may be appropriate if compatible with protected area objectives;

N = not appropriate;

N1 = not appropriate except for expressed management purposes as identified in the management plan;

N2 = not appropriate, but if specific activity or facility existed at the time of establishment of the protected area it is normally appropriate for it to continue.

N/A = Not applicable

Activity/Facility	Allowable in Zone			Comments
	NR	SF	WR	
Activity				
Aircraft Access	Y	N1	Y	
Angling Guiding	Y	N	Y	
Beach activities (e.g. swimming)	Y	N	N/A	
Boating (power)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Boating (non-power)	Y	N	Y	
Camping – backcountry	Y	N	Y	
Camping – auto or boat accessible	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	Y	N2*	Y	*Pre-existing Continental Divide Chairlift
Commercial recreation (no facilities)	Y	Y	Y	
Exotic insect/disease control	N1	M	N	
Exotic Pack Animal Use	N	N	N	
Filming (commercial)	M	M	M	
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	N	N1	M	
Fire management (prevention)	N1	N1	N1	
Fire management (suppression)	Y	N1	N1	
Fishing	Y	N	Y	
Fish stocking and enhancement	M	N	N	
Forest insect/disease control	M	M	N	
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N1,2	N	N1,2	
Guide outfitting	Y	N	Y	
Heli – hiking	N*	N	N	
Hiking/Backpacking/Walking	Y	Y	Y	
Horse / Non-Exotic pack animals	Y	N	Y	
Hunting	N*	N	Y	*
Mechanized Off-road Access (non-motorized – i.e. mountain biking)	N/A	N	N	
Mountaineering	Y	Y	Y	
Motorized Off-road Access (not snowmobiles – i.e. 4x4, motorcycles)	N**	N2*	N	*For management purposes under Sunshine Village Permit only
Noxious weed control	Y	N1	N1	
Off-road Access (non-mechanical - dog sleds, horse sleds)	Y	N	M	

Activity/Facility	Allowable in Zone			Comments
	NR	SF	WR	
Recreational gold panning/rock hounding	N	N	N	
Rock-climbing	Y	Y	Y	
Scientific research (manipulative activities)	N ₁	N	M	
Scientific research (specimen collection)	M	N	M	
Skiing (downhill & cross –country – groomed runs or trails)	N	N ₂ *	N	*Pre-existing - under Sunshine Village Permit only
Skiing (helicopter or cat-assisted)	N/A	N	N	
Skiing (self propelled. not groomed)	Y	Y	Y	
Snowmobiling	N/A	N ₂ *	N	*For management purposes under Sunshine Village Permit only
Trapping	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Facility				
Administrative buildings and compounds	N	N	N	
Backcountry huts and shelters	Y	N	M	
Boat launches	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Campgrounds and Picnic Areas (vehicle access and services)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Camp Sites (other)	Y	N	M	
Communication sites	N ₂	N	N ₂	
Fixed Roof Accommodation	Y	N	M	
Interpretation and information buildings	N	M	N	
Roads and parking lots	N	N	N	
Ski Hills and Snowplay Areas	N	N ₂ *	N	*Pre-existing - under Sunshine Village Permit only
Trails (hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horse)	Y	M	Y	
Utility corridors (power/transmission lines and other rights-of-way)	N ₂	N ₂ *	N ₂	*Under Sunshine Village Permit only
Water control structures	N ₂	N ₂ *	N ₂	*Pre-existing - under Sunshine Village Permit only

Natural and Cultural Values Management

Introduction

Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park management objectives and strategies will be implemented within the provisions of the *Park Act* and associated regulations and derivative Ministry and Division policies. Background discussion and analysis of the issues addressed in the following statements of intent are provided in the Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Background Document.

As a basic principle, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park will be managed to protect, within the Southern Park Ranges Ecosection, a representative land base and its significant natural and cultural features. Individual resources will be managed to maintain the naturally evolving characteristics of the park ecosystem in coordination with adjacent park and provincial forest jurisdictions. Management will also ensure that the park's range of recreational opportunities and special features are accessible for public appreciation and enjoyment in a manner consistent with preservation of the park's ecological integrity, cultural heritage and backcountry character.

Without limiting the scope of the foregoing principles, the specific management objectives described in each section will be applied. Detailed strategies pursuant to the various objectives reflect presently identified priorities and are not necessarily comprehensive.

This section of the management plan addresses management of the principal natural and cultural values of the park such as water, vegetation, wildlife and fish, which constitute the park's representative ecosystems and special features. Each section begins with a brief description of the values including the associated concerns and management needs. This is followed by the objectives and management strategies that are needed to implement the management vision for the park.

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Boundaries

As noted previously, the 1985 proposal to add the Assiniboine and Aurora creek drainages to the park was not accepted in the East Kootenay Land Use Plan Protected Area Strategy. Given that forest development has since occurred in much of the proposal area, the original values of the addition are now compromised. Any emergent issues of conservation or recreation in these areas can at least initially be addressed through interagency cooperation. There appear to be no other boundary issues to address in the updated plan.

Inholdings and Tenures

While there are no private inholdings, facilities or traplines within the park, a variety of tenures provide important opportunities and services to the public and several tenures pre-dated the 1973 park expansion.

Before the 1973 Mount Assiniboine Park expansion, Sunshine Village had obtained a water licence enabling it to use Rock Isle Lake as its secondary water supply, and this tenure and

associated works, including a pump house at Rock Isle Lake and a buried water line from the lake to the resort, continue under park use permit. The water supply works have had relatively little impact on the meadows, and the water line route parallels the main trail accessing the interpretive trail system in the meadows. The Sunshine Village ski area boundary also extended into what is now the park, and this area, including a chair lift partially within the park, continues under permit as well. Beyond the actual footprint of the lift towers, the ski resort's winter operations have had few obvious effects on the meadows, which are protected by snow during the use season. A separate permit covers summer use on the interpretive trail system, which was designed for high use in the sensitive environment.

In the south core area, the historic Mount Assiniboine Lodge is operated by permittees who also manage the Naiset Cabins, the Magog Rim and Og Lake campgrounds and helicopter bookings for core area flights. This tenure carries major responsibilities, as it involves hosting virtually all visitors to the south core at three distinct levels of service, and therefore plays a key role in conveying the vision for the park and shaping its public image.

Guide-outfitting tenures cover the park except in the north and south core areas. Operators offer horse-based, wilderness hunting opportunities which are now rare in Southern Rocky Mountain parks. In addition, there are nine permits for commercial recreational guiding activities in the park (see also **Commercial Recreation Opportunities**, p.65). These service providers enhance safe and informed public access to the range of opportunities available in the park and tend to observe high standards because of their accountability to clients, other park users and park managers.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To continue opportunities and services provided by permit holders while retaining all park lands and facilities in Crown ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to authorize the Sunshine Village Continental Divide Express ski lift and runs, water supply and summer and winter use in the north core under s. • Continue operation of the Mount Assiniboine Lodge and any other appropriate public recreation facilities under s. • Continue to authorize the established guide outfitting operations under permit.
To manage all park use permit tenures to ensure protection of the environment and delivery of high quality backcountry recreational experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage the north core area ski operations under permit and in accordance with provincial ski area policy. • Continue to manage summer use in the north core under permit, consistent with the intent of the 1983 Sunshine Summer Use Plan. • Monitor use levels and environmental performance associated with commercial guiding companies. <p>Monitor impacts to natural, experiential and/or visual values from helicopter access or over-flights, and modify park use permits if required.</p>

Ecosystem Management Approach

Both Parks Canada and the B.C. Environmental Stewardship Division are moving toward a more science dependent ecosystem-based management approach for protected areas to maintain ecosystem values and processes. This requires:

- integration of available science-based information with management.
- understanding of the interrelationships of the ecosystem’s biological and non-biological components;
- a focus on long-term and large-scale issues;
- a holistic view of the environmental system and environmental problems; and
- interagency co-operation given ecosystems extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries.

Mount Assiniboine Park’s location as a link between Kootenay and Banff National Parks and as part of the even larger Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site strengthens its ecological integrity and sustainability and significantly reduces the problems of insularity which face many of the more isolated protected areas. However, close planning and management cooperation and coordination with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and British Columbia resource agencies are essential to realize the benefits inherent in such a large multi-jurisdictional protected area.

It is apparent that global climate change will continue to alter weather patterns, hydrology and vegetation, with resulting effects on fish and wildlife habitats and on all human activity. At the protected area level, ongoing monitoring of key environmental elements and the rate at which they may be changing can help managers to identify and assess management options to maximize opportunities and minimize negative climate change impacts on the parks (to the extent possible). For example, projections of changing habitats can allow options to be identified within the larger protected area bloc for species which may become stressed by combinations of climate change and human activity factors. Projections of changing hydrological conditions can help to ensure that safe and reliable drinking water supplies will be provided over the long term.

Particular priorities within Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park include more thorough, long-term biological inventories and monitoring that can serve as benchmarks for tracking the effects of both human activity and climate change. Without this information, park managers will be unaware of such effects and may well forgo options to avoid irreversible impacts such as the loss of species.

A particularly useful reference for applying an ecosystem management approach in the park is a May 31, 2002 report prepared for the Kootenay Region, Environmental Stewardship Division, by Wolfgang Haider, Ph.D. and Candace Piccin, B.Sc. entitled *Visitor Use and Ecological Values Assessment of the Core Area of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park*. A number of its recommendations have been incorporated into the objectives and strategies of this plan.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To develop some of the foundational components needed for the management of natural resources systems and processes and to adopt practises throughout the park that can contribute to managing in a broader ecosystem context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve spatial connectivity to allow genetic flow and to minimise the possibility of island extinctions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When considering facilities or uses in the park, avoid habitat fragmentation to reduce cumulative impacts.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain viable populations of all native species in natural patterns of abundance and distribution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify climate sensitive species and other ecosystem elements. ▪ Identify potential refugia (cooler micro-climates) for sensitive species. • Maintain ecological and evolutionary processes such as natural disturbance regimes, fluvial processes, nutrient cycles, and biotic interactions including predation. • Design and manage the system to be responsive to short-term and long-term environmental change and to maintain its evolutionary potential. Formally recognize that climate change is likely to result in long-term shifts in ecosystem components (e.g., specific species changes) and ecosystem processes (e.g., natural disturbance frequencies). • Maintain sustainable recreational, tourism and natural resource uses of the park within the framework of ecosystem management practices.
<p>To cooperate with adjacent land managers to ensure biodiversity is maximised in the Central Rockies Ecosystem and the area is managed as a sustainable regional landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and understand the ecological continuums that cross jurisdictional boundaries; Maintain close liaison with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and other land and resource management agencies and private groups that have an effect on the Central Rockies Ecosystem; • Work co-operatively with other government agencies and land managers to ensure wildlife (e.g. grizzly bear, bighorn sheep, mountain goat) habitat that exists external to the park is maintained, including effective connectivity throughout the region’s protected areas and wildlife management areas. • Work with the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Integrated Land Management Bureau to maintain high biodiversity emphasis adjacent to the park in support of the KBLUP-IS Conservation Objectives and Strategies and the Resource Management Zone objectives of the Higher Level Plan Order. • Provide input through provincial review processes for proposed major developments outside the park that may impact its ecosystem values (including fish and wildlife). • Monitor and provide input into forestry plans, mineral exploration projects, and commercial recreation proposals within the greater ecosystem area of the park that may affect the park. • Encourage links between databases for the collection, recording, and sharing of ecological

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	information; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage governments at the federal, provincial, and local levels to take an integrated ecological approach to land management.
To increase knowledge of ecological components and processes within the park and an understanding of their response to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and conduct monitoring and research into park hydrology and vegetation to support future management decisions. • Exchange inventory and research information on ecosystem values and processes with other agencies and jurisdictions. • Conduct reconnaissance habitat inventory, develop a species list for the park, and ground truth Predictive Ecosystem Mapping, preferably in coordination with similar efforts for the surrounding area. Place priority on those areas with present or projected recreational uses and on those areas such as alpine meadows that may have species at risk or unusual species diversity, or may be particularly sensitive to climate change.
To build and maintain the necessary public support for the ecological conservation goals within the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate the development of communication and educational resources with other agencies and private groups to enhance the overall effectiveness of activities that support ecosystem integrity.

Geology

Though in many ways typical of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Mount Assiniboine Park’s geology includes a number of features which merit both preservation and public appreciation. These include Mount Assiniboine itself, the 6th highest peak in the Canadian Rockies; the Valley of the Rocks, a relic of what may be the 4th largest landslide in Canada; the distinctive karst of Og Lake, with its underground drainage and nearby caves; and the Magog Lake fossil beds.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To study, interpret and protect as necessary the special geological features of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage research on the geological features of the park and publication of information about these features. (Features include glaciers, landslides, rock glaciers, karst and kame terraces.) • Manage public recreational activities and any facility developments to have minimal impacts on geological features such as fossils, caves and other potentially sensitive elements (e.g., Og Lake / Cave Mtn. Karst, Magog Lake Fossil Beds)

Water

The protection of water quantity and quality is important for both ecological and public health reasons. The park’s two main watersheds both flow from the Continental Divide; the Mitchell River draining the south half and the Simpson River the north half of the park. Although creek flows are primarily fed by rain and snow falls, it is likely that late summer stream levels are

steadily declining and temperatures increasing as permanent snowfields and glaciers continue to shrink and recede at noticeable rates owing to global warming. Ultimately, such changes will affect human water supplies dependent on presently low flows, particularly in karst areas where much drainage is already subsurface. They will also affect the viability of some fisheries and temperature sensitive species. Turbidity may also affect water quality if extensive areas lose vegetation to increased and more severe natural disturbances.

Subterranean water flow maintains supply to all lakes within the north core area. There are numerous lakes in alpine areas near the continental divide. Gog Lake (South Core), Rock Isle, Grizzly and Larix Lakes (North Core) are particularly attractive natural water features. Almost all the lakes in the park are located in broad alpine valleys and plateaus, where they typically occupy glacially- scoured depressions in resistant limestone bedrock. Only two lakes, Wedgwood Lake and Rock Lake, are found in valley bottoms below timberline. Except for Rock Lake, a small lake on Surprise Creek, there are no lakes in the south-western half of the park.

Under, Sunshine Village holds a Water Licence #118,172 on Rock Isle Lake for domestic use (15,240 m³ /year) which pre-dates park establishment. This supplements the Village’s main water supply within Banff National Park, but is essential to the resort’s operations. No obvious effects of the Village’s water use have been observed on the lake, but present knowledge of Rock Isle Lake hydrology is poor and the extent to which domestic water use effects may be altered by climate change factors is unknown. No other water rights, flooding reserves, or similar encumbrances exist in the park.

A surface stream currently supplies the Magog Rim Campground, and is particularly undependable during extended rain-free periods. The Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Naiset camp maintain an adequate summer domestic water supply via a piped; gravity feed system from a small weir that has an insignificant impact on water resources. In the central corridor, hiking and camping opportunities are limited due to a lack of potable water supply. Mount Assiniboine Lodge maintains a septic system, but all toilet facilities elsewhere in the park are outhouses.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To improve understanding of park hydrology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw on historical hydrological data, ongoing monitoring systems inside and outside the park and climate change effects projections to develop long term hydrological forecasts for the park, with particular reference to key aquatic habitats (i.e. for native rare or endangered species) and key domestic water sources (e.g. south core water supplies, Rock Isle Lake). • Collect key data specifically aimed at detection of long-term climate change trends including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - glacier terminus positions, - date and depth of peak snow accumulation, - date and volume of peak spring run-off, - annual lake freeze and thaw dates, - minimum summer stream flows.
To protect and maintain the quantity and quality of water resources in Mount Assiniboine Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that recreational activities have minimal impact on erosion of soils and do not

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
Park for their habitat values and use for domestic water supplies inside and outside the park.	<p>compromise water quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that sanitary facilities and recreational development and use in all park watersheds meet public health standards. • Encourage Sunshine Village to find alternate sources of water outside Mount Assiniboine Park to meet any increase over the presently authorized water use level (15,240 m³/year).
To provide safe and adequate drinking water supplies for park visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an adequate and dependable water supply for the Magog campground. • Investigate and develop potential sources for drinking water supply to hikers within the central corridor.

Vegetation

The management of vegetation is an integral part of the overall ecosystem management strategy for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park as part of the Central Rockies Ecosystem. Vegetative communities are often the key defining characteristic of the various component parts of an ecosystem. Therefore, how these various vegetative communities are managed can have a profound effect on the overall success of adopting an ecosystem approach to park management. Some of the fundamental issues that must be addressed in the management of Mount Assiniboine’s vegetative communities revolve around the issues of forest health (insect and disease), the role of and management of fire, interagency planning and cooperation, coordination with adjacent jurisdictions and the lack of detailed information on the park’s vegetative communities.

About 60% of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park falls within the Alpine Tundra Biogeoclimatic Zone (AT un - currently undifferentiated throughout the province), with the remainder in two subzones of the Engelmann Spruce- Subalpine Fir Zone (ESSF dk & dkp, with an additional portion identified as dku which has not yet been assigned to either dk or dkp). Forest cover in the west half of the park includes a mix of spruce, pine and fir of various age classes; subalpine vegetation features are essentially concentrated in the east half of the park. Subalpine vegetation exists throughout both the North and South core areas and is sensitive to intensive recreation activity. Trail reclamation and re-vegetation programs in the core areas have been effective in re-establishing vegetation, although scars still remain visible in many areas.

Underlying a number of other issues are the implications of climate change, which are difficult to predict for specific areas, particularly those with complex topography. General trends can be identified, such as the fact that mountain BEC zones will shift upward, insects and diseases will expand when not limited by cold, hardwoods and southerly conifers will expand their ranges while more cold-adapted conifers will lose habitat, and wildlife species along elevation bands in mountainous terrain will tend to lose habitat and decrease in numbers. Fully understanding the timing of these changes, their specific application to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park and their detailed implications for management would require considerable study. However, in the absence of data, such changes can be managed as “risks” rather than “certainties”. Because some elements such as future temperature, the direction of movement of the tree-line, snowline etc., are more certain than others, it may be possible to manage some of these risks without further study.

Wildfires and insect infestations have increased in frequency and severity to the west of the park and may be expected to affect park vegetation more directly as the climate continues to warm. Mountain pine beetle attacks have already penetrated into the Mitchell River. Evidence of reforested burns exists in Lachine Creek and lower Surprise Creek, and a major fire recently burned off the west side of the Simpson River below Surprise Creek. Firewood heating demands in the park increased with heavier winter use of the south core, but with most heating now converted to propane or presto logs, the remaining firewood demands are now being met through routine trail clearing and the consumption of hazard trees.

During spring and summer months, Banff Park elk herds graze over meadowlands in the south core area. Private-party horse use in the south core area has lessened significantly from the 1970s, thus reducing pressures on forage. Outside the core areas, forest succession has generally depleted forage by autumn, thereby limiting the resource for use by horses and ungulate populations. Particularly with the warming climate, natural meadows are at risk from forest encroachment. It will be important to understand what plant communities are at risk from this trend and what role natural grazing has in maintaining or altering the ecosystem.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To manage the park’s vegetative communities in a manner that increases resiliency to short-term and long-term environmental change and maintains their evolutionary potential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a comprehensive ecosystem management strategy aimed at maintaining or restoring natural disturbance regimes (insects, disease and fire) wherever possible, while considering: • The degree to which climate change factors may constrain or enhance management actions to maintain previous or current ecological conditions or to adapt to future conditions. • The present and future ecological role of the park in the greater ecosystem in which it is embedded (e.g. if particular vegetation is underrepresented in lands outside parks in the ecosection, or if the vegetative community is in an identified climate change refugium, the vegetation management objectives of the park should be to protect a higher percentage of this vegetation). • Conservation of vegetation patterns and rare species (e.g. alpine meadow species) within the limits imposed by climate change. • The habitat needs of wildlife. • Forage competition and Animal Unit Month (AUM) allocations for domestic animals. • The recreational and visual values of the park. • Public health and safety. • Adjacent forest resources. • Consistent with the provincial strategies for responding to the mountain pine beetle infestation, and in coordination with adjacent park jurisdictions, monitor and address as necessary the beetle activity in the Mitchell River valley and in other parts of the park as it occurs.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage human activities as necessary to provide high quality recreation experiences with least possible lasting impacts on park vegetation by – • directing all subalpine walking/hiking to identified trails; • rehabilitating all vegetation scars resulting from the abandonment or realignment of all trails and facilities; • avoid new surface disturbance and preclude it in sensitive and rare species habitat; • ensuring protection of sensitive shoreline vegetation by directing use to less vulnerable shoreline areas; • distributing concentrated recreation activity (e.g. group camping, intensely impacted campsites) to allow periods of vegetation recovery; • employing other modes of heating park structures so as to limit firewood consumption to that available from routine hazard tree removal; • permitting removal of vegetation only for authorized scientific study or presentation; • undertaking no large scale clearing of disease/insect infested forest stands; • authorizing grazing of domestic animals only within any areas that may be designated pursuant to the vegetation management plan; • minimizing deleterious human activity and monitoring conditions in the alpine tundra broad ecosystem inventory (BEI) zone, which has been identified as most sensitive to climate change. • Ensure public review and environmental impact assessment of - • Proposals for obviously visible tree removal or other measures to address fire, insect or disease disturbances (in keeping with the BC Parks Tree Removal Policy); • Activities that might damage park values or its ecosystem.
<p>To improve knowledge of the park's vegetative communities, with emphasis on protection of rare, endangered and vulnerable native plant communities and species including those elements most sensitive to climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider climate change impacts on rare, endangered, and vulnerable native plant communities and species, and potential management options to increase resilience. • Monitor for key ecotonal changes as a predictor of climate change effects: species present, physical forms trees take, soil moisture conditions, etc. • Encourage low-impact scientific studies of vegetation. • Complete a comprehensive vegetation inventory to locate, identify, and map plant communities, rare species and threatened plant

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<p>communities in areas that could potentially be impacted by climate change or recreation, particularly alpine meadows within the Nature Recreation Zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement priorities for applying BRIM (Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring) on sensitive vegetative communities. Develop appropriate visitor management strategies to ensure these sensitive vegetative communities are protected, particularly in the north core, Mt. Cautley Meadows and Terrapin Bowl. • Intervene where practical if natural processes threaten rare, endangered or vulnerable native plant communities and species. • In support of enforcement of the prohibition on wildcrafting in parks, educate the public about the values of maintaining the integrity of all components of the park’s vegetative communities.
<p>To complete the planning and coordination necessary to allow the natural progression of lightning-initiated fires in prescribed conditions and locations in the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Fire Management Plan that takes a proactive approach to fire in the park. This plan should be consistent with the fire management policies and protocols for protected areas and should prescribe where and under what conditions lightning-initiated fires can be used in the maintenance of natural ecosystem diversity. Recognize that the natural range of variation for fire disturbance is likely shifting due to a changing climate.
<p>Use ecologically friendly methods of vegetation management and firefighting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to the provisions of the <i>Wildfire Act</i>, promote “light hand on the land” fire fighting approaches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid road building or commercial logging to fight fires within the park. ▪ Avoid the use of heavy machinery to fight fires inside the park. • Allow burned areas to recover naturally to reduce erosion and protect the soil. To protect biological diversity and ecological integrity, leave burned wood on the ground to decompose wherever practicable. • Ensure that interagency insect management programs follow BC Parks’ Conservation Policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allowing natural processes to prevail; ▪ Removing and burning individual trees; ▪ Using large-scale prescribed burning. • Ensure that all tree removal complies with the Tree Removal Policy for Parks and Protected Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only for ecosystem restoration purposes; ▪ Minimal environmental impacts; ▪ Subject to BC Parks Impact Assessment Process;

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identified in and subject to Vegetation Management Plan.
To prevent the establishment of non-native plant species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cooperation with adjoining land management agencies and permittees, assess, monitor and control noxious and other invasive weed and non-native plant species using the most effective low-impact methods available. • Research and develop a management protocol for future scenarios in which non-native species may move into the park as a result of changing climate. Recognize that the arrival of some species may signal climate adaptation migrations.

Wildlife

The park's shared boundaries with two National Parks require consideration when managing wildlife populations. Fish and wildlife species of note in the park include the “charismatic megafauna” associated so strongly with the Rocky Mountains in the minds of residents and tourists alike, e.g. bighorn sheep, mountain goats, bears, elk, wolves, cougars and the large birds of prey. These species, along with those at risk of extirpation (red-listed badger and peregrine falcon, blue-listed bull trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout, bald eagle, grizzly bear), are relatively well documented and a number of measures have already been taken or are under consideration to reduce recreational impacts where problems have been identified.

However, the presence and population health of the smaller mammals has not been inventoried for many years. Recent volunteer studies of insects and plants in the South Core Area have identified red and blue listed species not previously known to be in the park. This highlights the incomplete nature of current species data. Wildlife studies should also consider the effects of climate change on species and what management options may be available were it desirable to mitigate such effects, for example, in cases where human activity outside the park might already have placed a species under particular stress.

The bird life of lower elevations (down to 1500 metres) is poorly documented. The 93 species of birds recorded for the park is probably considerably less than actually occurs, when compared with the 182 species confirmed in neighbouring Kootenay National Park.

Open meadowlands within the south core area are important summer range for Banff National Park elk herds, which are being studied and managed cooperatively with Parks Canada. Bighorn sheep in the park similarly share the adjacent national parks and are significant for being free of the diseases and parasites that have infected many other Rocky Mountain sheep herds, particularly through contact with domestic stock. Grizzly bears range through the three parks, and their apparently increasing presence in both the north and south core areas increases the risks of human interactions.

Around park accommodation facilities, the natural population balance of rodents has been upset by human development and lack of predation.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To manage the park’s wildlife species and habitats in a manner that responds to short-term and long-term environmental change and maintains their evolutionary potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a coordinated long-term regional approach to wildlife management with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and other government agencies and with First Nations, emphasizing species at risk, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining ecosystem representation, • consideration of the effects of climate change; • conservation and use, • management of biodiversity; • access, • connectivity and species movement; • range management; and • coordinating wildlife management objectives, particularly with respect to grizzly bears.
To present safe opportunities for public hiking access, wildlife viewing, study and other appropriate recreational uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with the BC Parks Bear-People Conflict Prevention Plan, develop and implement procedures to minimize potential bear/human conflicts in areas of known bear concentration through public information, location of trails, campsites and facilities, garbage management, area closures, and removal of problem bears if appropriate. • Coordinate bear and visitor management with Parks Canada at a regional scale in the Bryant Creek area and Sunshine Meadows. • Where appropriate, provide opportunities for wildlife viewing, studying and appreciation.
To maintain healthy populations of the range of species representative of the ecosystem, in numbers consistent with natural population cycles and environmental change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and manage all park wildlife to sustain natural behaviour. • Assess bear problems individually to determine management options (relocation, killing) that ensure public safety. Outside the north and south core areas, options will relate solely to visitor management (e.g. trail closure, re-routing) • Regulate domestic animals where necessary to protect park wildlife values (e.g. exclude dogs from the park and exclude domestic pack animal use other than horses to avoid possible transmission of disease to park wildlife). • Ensure adequate grazing opportunities for wildlife by allowing no domestic grazing other than limited horse grazing under permit. • Continue existing hunting policies for relevant species as prescribed in the Hunting Regulations.
To enhance the knowledge and understanding of the park’s wildlife species and their habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a wildlife and habitat inventory with priority on red and blue-listed species and species sensitive to climate change. Update grizzly bear inventories and habitat assessments. • Use wildlife inventories and annual guide-outfitter reports to maintain a park wildlife database for reference in sustaining abundant natural population levels and balance. • Coordinate inventory work with adjacent park jurisdictions to increase the knowledge and

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<p>understanding of wildlife, their habitat requirements both inside and outside the park, and how these requirements may be affected in the longer term by climate change factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage research aimed at better understanding the cumulative effects of recreational use (e.g. helicopters and hiker traffic) on species such as mountain goats, bighorn sheep and grizzly bears. • Encourage the assistance of volunteers and others to collect wildlife data with BC Parks Observation Cards (e.g. bird watching clubs, anglers, pilots and tour operators, etc.)

Fish and Aquatic Values

Native fish species in the Simpson and Mitchell rivers are the blue-listed Yellowstone cutthroat trout and bull trout. With the possible exception of Rock Lake in the Surprise Creek drainage, all the lakes in the park are believed to have been without fish in their pristine condition. The natural absence of fish stocks can be attributed both to physical barriers (waterfalls, steep stream gradients) that prevented the inward migration of fish prehistorically, and to the low productive capacity of the subalpine bodies to support sustainable recruitments to the populations. All lake fish populations in the park descend from artificial stocking that occurred in a somewhat haphazard and quite unscientific manner sporadically from 1935 until 1988. Over this period, the practice was entirely recreation-driven and there was little conception of ecological integrity or the possible consequences of such introduction of non-native species. The current park fishery is considered moderately productive, but sensitive to high-use pressure and over-harvesting because of the limited spawning environment and slow growth rates. While fishing has traditionally enhanced the park’s backcountry experiences, it is not central to the park’s appeal. The option of restoring at least some of the park’s lakes to their natural fish-less state should therefore be considered. No recent comprehensive or systematic field surveys of fish populations have been conducted in Mount Assiniboine, and critical gaps exist in fishery information.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies ⁶
<p>To compile accurate information on the fish populations of lakes and rivers in the park as a basis for future management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm species presence or absence, particularly in Rock Isle, Grizzly and Larix Lakes. Ascertain if possible which lakes in the park were originally without fish. • Conduct fish and fish habitat inventories by watersheds throughout the park, making GIS note of gradient (>20%) and other physical barriers; • Where feasible, do higher-level analysis and reporting of fish survey data; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document estimates of significant or imperilled species or populations.

⁶ Many of the draft strategies are based on the February 2001 *Synopsis of Fisheries Information Toward a Fish Management Plan for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park* by L. Amos and J Wright, and this document should be consulted for additional detail.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies ⁶
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey angling records and park users to ascertain the level of angling activity at each lake in the park. ▪ Identify areas in the park where angling's contribution to mortality is significant • Assess spawning beds to identify where natural recruitment is not sustainable, • Study competition and hybridization. If competition from introduced species is found to be serious, look at what's being done elsewhere for mitigation. • Project hydrological changes associated with climate change and assess their long-term effects on fish habitats. • Make recommendations to the Regional Fisheries Biologist regarding current management strategies (e.g., stocking, angling regulations, etc.), based on data collected during the recommended studies.
<p>To return some of the lakes in the park to their natural, fish-less state while continuing to provide naturally sustainable angling opportunities in streams and other lakes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select as priorities for return to their original fish-free condition lakes with some or all of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those experiencing the least angling use; ▪ Those where natural recruitment is not sustainable, or is only sustainable with highly restrictive regulation; ▪ Those which will be most resilient to climate change; and ▪ Those with sensitive shoreline vegetation. • Eliminate stocking as a means of sustaining introduced species in lakes and use only natural recruitment and fishing regulations as necessary to sustain fish populations for angling where desired. • Continue liaison with Ministry of Environment Fisheries specialists regarding fish management and user regulation. • Retain a fishing closure on all lakes in the north core area, in consideration of the limitations of the fishery and the fragility of shoreline vegetation • Continue inventories of fish populations as required.

Cultural Heritage

Studies conducted to the east in the Bow River valley and to the west in the Columbia River valley reveal a generally low density of both prehistoric and historic sites, but do document occupation in the region as far back as 10,000 years before the present time. The land now designated Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park is part of the asserted traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council. Based in the Columbia River Valley, the Ktunaxa traditionally ranged across the Rockies to hunt on the eastern side. Traversed in 1841 by Governor Simpson of the Hudson’s Bay Company, the Simpson River valley was undoubtedly one of the routes used prehistorically and it may contain evidence of transient campsites. No heritage studies have been completed within the park and no archaeological sites have been documented. Studies of prehistoric cultural sites within the park should be encouraged

Probably first sighted by a non-Native in 1845, Mount Assiniboine became one of the focal points for CPR mountain tourism from the mid 1890s, and the first ascent occurred in 1901. From 1920 until 1926, the annual “Wheeler Walking Tours” guided tourists on a 75-mile circular trip through the region, making regular use of the south core area and focusing attention on the backcountry tourism values of the area. This attention led directly to the establishment of the provincial park in 1922, the construction of the five Wheeler (Naiset) Cabins by the Alpine Club of Canada in 1924, the initiation of the Mount Assiniboine Lodge operation by the CPR in 1926 and the erection of the Sunburst Cabin by the Brewsters in 1928. Though new facilities have been added and use has evolved in the south core, the fact that all but one of these original structures are still in use and have retained much of their original atmosphere gives the heart of Mount Assiniboine Park unique heritage value as a cultural landscape of the early period of Rocky Mountain backcountry tourism.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To work with First Nations and other government agencies in researching and interpreting First Nations use of the park and in managing and protecting any archaeological sites located.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the Ktunaxa Nation traditional use data for relevant information and conduct research with First Nations to increase the knowledge and understanding of pre -contact history of the area. • Encourage and permit studies of prehistoric use within the park. • Assess the significance of any previously unknown First Nations traditional use sites located within the park prior to their alteration and protect important sites <i>in situ</i>. Such sites will not be identified on any public park literature in order to protect them from damage, but the fact that they are protected by penalties under the Heritage Conservation Act under should be publicized to deter vandalism. • In consultation with First Nations, develop educational and information material on the park’s pre-contact cultural values, focusing on themes of traditional areas, use of resources and trade with other tribes.
<p>To identify and protect significant post-contact cultural values within Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and permit exploration for the purpose of historical research within the park and investigate any additional historical remains discovered.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the continued use, preservation and interpretation of all heritage structures within the south core area as representations of early tourist use at Mount Assiniboine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institute formal photo monitoring at 2-5 year intervals to document the interior and exterior condition of all heritage structures in the park. • Replicate the “Wheeler Wonder Lodge” on its original site in the Naiset complex not for overnight accommodation but for use as a multi-purpose structure, one function of which would be expanded interpretation of the history of the park.

Landscape Setting and Feature Values

The visual values of Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park are nationally and provincially significant and highly photogenic. The landscape diversity and the contrasting scale of features are also primary reasons for the park's outstanding scenic quality. The visual highlights of the park are mostly clustered in the south-eastern heartland of the park around Mount Assiniboine and Lake Magog, and continue north along the alpine and subalpine meadows corridor to the Rock Isle Lake and Simpson Pass area. The north core area offers tremendous viewing opportunities, and most areas of the park are visible from the Continental Divide at this location.

The adjacent National parks provide an excellent visual setting for Mount Assiniboine Park, except on the south, where industrial activity continues to modify viewsapes. However, these visual impacts are reduced by being distant from most accessible viewpoints within the park. Inside the park, proper design, maintenance and user management are essential to avoid degrading the visual resource through such factors as trail braiding, architectural inconsistencies, poor water distribution line placement or helipad location, etc.

Visitor appreciation of the park’s setting and features can also be impacted by noise, not only from aircraft but also from operational elements such as chainsaws, pumps and generators and even from user activities, especially in camping or cabin situations. Although BC Parks has no authority over sight-seeing airplane trips which tend to disturb peace and quiet within park boundaries, landings are subject to special permit and can be controlled.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To provide strong management programs to protect and maintain the backcountry setting and visual resources that are key to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park's appeal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit no activities that would reduce the scenic appeal of the Mount Assiniboine massif as a special feature of the park. • Continue input into plans by other resource agencies and industry for activities outside but visible from the park in Landscape Unit 123 in order to protect the visual integrity of the park from impacts of adjacent uses. • Through fire management planning, identify the most important recreational and scenic nodes in the park and protect them from fire. (See also

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To design and situate park facilities in a manner that preserves the visual integrity of the park.	<p><i>Vegetation section)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the visual appeal of park features when considering such matters as shoreline activities, trails, wildlife habitat management and fire management. • Ensure that trails, bridges, signs and other structures in the park are visually harmonious with their settings. • Maintain the cultural heritage character of the south core area in any facility modification or expansion.
To minimize noise disturbances in the backcountry setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to regulate helicopter landing days, times and numbers to minimize noise disturbance in the park. • Encourage any commercial sight-seeing flights to observe route and elevation guidelines which minimize noise disturbances for visitors and wildlife. • Designate Assiniboine Pass as the primary flight route into the park south core area. • Encourage visitors to avoid creating noise which might disturb others' enjoyment of the park's backcountry atmosphere.



Figure #2: Mount Assiniboine Lodge defines the heritage character in the south core area.

Scientific Research and Education

Environmental stresses (e.g., global warming, natural disturbances, and recreation) on the park create greater need to establish a solid foundation of baseline scientific knowledge. To date, a minimal amount of scientific research and education has been conducted within the park.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To encourage and undertake appropriate scholarly research relating to the natural and cultural history of the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and undertake scholarly research on geology, biology, botany, hydrology, archaeology and other scientific areas under that benefit management of the park. • Limit scientific research that involves collecting specimens. • Ensure that any material that is collected for scientific research will remain the property of the Province of British Columbia, regardless of where it is stored.
<p>To encourage multi-agency cooperation in the field of protected areas scientific research and education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in the BC Protected Areas Research Forum (BCPARF) to identify research opportunities for academic institutions in the province. • Encourage colleges, universities, other agencies, and corporate sponsors to establish funding for and to undertake appropriate and timely research studies including inventory and monitoring of values at risk through climate change and other factors. • Pursue an active role in collaborative climate change research, offering the park to serve as the focal point of regional, high-elevation monitoring and study. Develop long-term multi-disciplinary monitoring programs aimed at the detection of ecological and hydrological trends related to climate change.
<p>To position the park as a potential comparative benchmark for monitoring ecological change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop website information, targeted printed material and on-site displays aimed at informing visitors, the general public and educational institutions about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the park’s role in representing an evolving ecosystem; ▪ the opportunities the park presents for observing and studying particular aspects of ecological change; ▪ the issues involved in managing the park as a “natural” benchmark within an ecosystem subject to extensive human modification outside park boundaries; ▪ the uncertainties and planning challenges associated with a changing climate.

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Management

Introduction

Generally, recreational use patterns in the Rocky Mountain Parks have evolved as use levels, tourism and technology advanced. Once remote wilderness areas such as Mount Assiniboine Park are now accessible by foot and horse from roads which penetrate deep into the mountains from all sides. Increased dependence on helicopters to transport backcountry visitors and tourists continues to profoundly affect the management of these special environments. Current park use is indicative of advancing trends which must be recognized and managed in the future.

This section of the management plan describes the strategies for managing outdoor recreation and park visitation and for providing park information. It will consider:

- Providing opportunities for people to experience the park in ways that are compatible with park features/values;
- Providing outdoor recreation activities in such a way that there are minimal conflicts between user groups;
- Providing the tools for creating public awareness of and respect for the natural and cultural values in the park; and
- Using the tools of science and research to guide recreational use decisions.

Access

The opportunity for backcountry and wilderness experiences largely depends on how access is managed. Access management helps define the type, impact, distribution, and amount of use. It is also important to maintain the backcountry and wilderness qualities of the park.

Mount Assiniboine, together with the national parks, continues to be one of the premier backcountry destinations in the Rocky Mountains, in both summer and winter. In addition, the Sunshine Village Resort on the boundary of Banff and Mount Assiniboine Parks provides winter skier access and serves as an access point for Sunshine Meadows summer uses.

Air access and overflights have visual and auditory effects on the experiences of park visitors and can affect park management objectives for conservation. Inconsistent use of airspace and landing sites may be hazardous, while vegetation in landing zones can be negatively impacted. All lakes other than Lake Magog are too small for floatplane access and even Magog poses serious hazards in terms of size, winds and surrounding topography.

Helicopter access is not permitted for day use and is closely regulated, but it has evolved to become the predominant mode of access and supply to the south core area of the park for overnight uses. This trend suggests a demographic shift toward park visitors who place higher value on the south core area experience than on the hiking or backpacking experience involved in getting there, and who are willing to pay for services which support their enjoyment of the south core. In spite of this trend, the overall number of flights annually has not increased from the level of 400-450 recorded between 1984 and 1992, owing to use of 6 passenger rather than 4

passenger helicopters, fewer management flights, consolidation of service into one company and a booking system.

Helicopters transporting visitors to the heli-pad at Mount Assiniboine Lodge originate from Mt. Shark in Alberta’s Spray Lakes Provincial Park and from Canmore, and cross part of Banff National Park. The helicopters follow established routes at agreed upon heights and the current arrangements appear to work well. Parks Canada has asked to be consulted if changes such as increased flights are contemplated, as there might be impacts on wildlife, particularly in the Bryant Creek valley, which is an important area for both grizzly bear and mountain goats. Helicopter and hiking access via Mt Shark is subject to occasional closures due to bears, fire bans and other management actions. Good communications are essential among Alberta, BC and National Park managers to ensure that helicopter use is well coordinated across the three jurisdictions and that the public receives timely and consistent information regarding air access. Helicopter access via Invermere and the Mitchell River staging area is somewhat longer, and offers alternate routes into the south core via the Mitchell valley or the Aurora Creek-Marvel Pass. Practically speaking, terrain and other constraints preclude fixed wing air access into Mount Assiniboine Park.

Because of markets and ease of auto-access to trailheads, primary overnight hiking and skiing access to the south core area will continue to originate from points north and east of the park, via Banff National Park (Sunshine Village, Bryant Creek) and Alberta’s Spray Lakes Provincial Park unless access is deliberately improved via the Mitchell River. However, unpredictable Bryant Creek trail closures because of bears in summer and fall can affect both visitor plans and the viability of commercial operations in the core area. The Sunshine Meadows/north core area remains the part of the park most easily accessed by hiking and skiing for day use, and access via Healy Creek/Egypt Lakes appears to be increasing overnight use at Eohippus Lake. The central corridor south from Sunshine Meadows is the secondary ground access route to the south core, particularly if Bryant Creek is closed, but winter access by this route is considerably more hazardous than via Assiniboine Pass. Road extensions in the Mitchell River valley have improved opportunities for hiking access from eastern BC, particularly to Assiniboine Lake, but the heavy mining and logging traffic on these industrial roads has raised safety concerns about encouraging greater recreational activity. Park managers have deliberately not maintained the Mitchell River trail or the route up the Simpson River to Citadel Pass in order to offer more primitive hiking and horse riding opportunities.

Horseback riding within the park is a historic recreation activity, although horse use for access has substantially decreased from 1970s levels. In adjoining parklands, only certain routes to Assiniboine are designated for horses or other domestic pack animals. Special trailhead and camp facilities for pack animals are often required. Current horse use is primarily by the licensed guide-outfitters, who undertake basic maintenance for horse use on the Mitchell and upper Simpson River trail routes.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To work with other park management agencies and the private sector to regulate air access to the park in a manner that supports public safety and high quality backcountry experiences for all user groups with minimal impact on wildlife and vegetation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue prohibition of all aircraft except as authorized by park use permit. • Continue to authorize by park use permit air access by helicopter, for overnight uses only, via designated routes to designated landing sites in the south core area.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor helicopter schedules, routes and altitudes to ensure that visual and sound impacts on wildlife and recreational quality are within acceptable limits, and revise as necessary. • Continue to monitor current helicopter access to ensure that the needs of the three types of south core area users (campers, hut users and lodge guests) are met as well as the lodge operators, and revise as necessary. • Consider issuing a permit for helicopter service to access the south core from the west to diversify access options. Any such service must be coordinated with existing flight schedules to ensure no increase in the overall number of flights into the south core area. • Consider reducing helicopter supply requirements for propane and improving safety by using the existing water supply weir to generate some electricity for the lodge. • Continue to use air access for management and emergency operations in a way that will minimize impacts on wildlife and backcountry recreationists.
<p>To work with appropriate agencies to ensure that trails accessing the park and road accesses to key trailheads remain open.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Banff National Park and Spray Lakes Provincial Park with respect to the management of access via the Healy Creek, Sunshine Village and Bryant Creek routes into the park. In particular, ensure close communication regarding public safety closures for bears or other reasons. • Coordinate with the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts on management of roads, trails, and trailheads on Crown lands that provide access to the park via the Mitchell River and Assiniboine Creek drainages. • Maintain access trails and routes in the park to serve a range of visitor interests and abilities and offer a variety of visitor experiences. (<i>See Hiking section below for details of proposed trail standards.</i>) • Encourage ski touring access to the south core via Assiniboine Pass and discourage such access via Sunshine/Citadel Pass for reasons of safety.
<p>To continue to offer the traditional horse access to the park in a way that minimizes impacts on wildlife and vegetation and respects other recreational activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to authorize private horse access to Mount Assiniboine Park via Assiniboine Pass, Mitchell River and Simpson River - Surprise Creek trails under Letter of Authority. • Continue to authorize guide-outfitter horse use in the Simpson and Mitchell River drainages under. • Continue to maintain the O'Brien Meadows horse camp and separate trails for horse use in the south core area, and to permit horse use on trails outside the north core area and Sunshine-

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	Magog corridor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor impacts of horse use, particularly as it may affect sensitive subalpine vegetation, and take management action as necessary to resolve problems.
To provide important visitor information at all access and departure points into the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install, maintain and keep current trailhead and access point signage and kiosks to ensure park visitors are provided with important park messages prior to their departure and entry into the park.

Angling

In general, the current park fishery is considered moderately productive, but sensitive to high-use pressure and over-harvesting because of the limited spawning environment and slow growth rates. Fish stocks in the north core area lakes (Rock Isle, Larix & Grizzly) are vulnerable to over-fishing based on the large number of day-users that the area experiences and shorelines are subject to erosion and vegetation damage. The lakes within the north core area therefore have been closed to fishing since the 1980s. As of 2005, Sunburst Lake had a trout quota of two fish daily, while Cerulean Lake, noted for trophy trout, had a bait ban and requires catch and release for trout and char. Other lakes are subject to the general regulations for the management unit, and Gog Lake in particular offers a special ambience which enhances the fly fishing experience. Guided hunting parties in the Mitchell River drainage have fished Wedgewood Lake on a regular basis, but stocks are of insufficient quantity to expand this opportunity.

Angling in Mount Assiniboine Park is conducted mostly within the south core area as a secondary recreation activity enhancing the general backcountry experience. BC Parks information packages contain little to promote or encourage angling, and the restrictive nature of the regulations reflect how marginal this artificially established lake fishery remains. As noted in the *Fish and Aquatic Values* section of this plan (p. 49), restoring selected lakes to their original fish-less condition would make the park more representative of the ecosystem, while other lakes more suitable for angling could continue to offer that recreational opportunity. Considerably more information on the park fisheries is required to assist in appropriate management toward this objective.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To maintain selected, naturally sustainable fisheries for angling, subject to the capability of the lakes and creeks and balanced by ecosystem management principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue an angling closure on all lakes in the north core area, in consideration of the limitations of the fishery and the fragility of shoreline vegetation • Disallow commercial fish guiding within the park, as natural fish stocks are incapable of supporting such demand. • Review current management practices and policies, and adjust to harmonize with the results and conclusions of the field studies and analyses recommended in the <i>Fish and Aquatic Values</i> section of this plan. • Continue liaison with Ministry of Environment fisheries specialists regarding fish management

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<p>and user regulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to the outcome of further fishery studies, select for recreational angling opportunities those lakes with some or all of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those with the highest angling use; ▪ Those offering angling opportunities widely recognized as outstanding or unique; ▪ Those capable of sustaining good quality angling opportunities without stocking or highly restrictive regulation; ▪ Those without wildlife or vegetation which might be adversely impacted by shoreline activity or angling. • Eliminate stocking as a means of sustaining introduced species in lakes and use only natural recruitment and fishing regulations as necessary to sustain fish populations for angling where desired.

Hunting

Because the National Parks are closed to hunting, Mount Assiniboine Park presents one of relatively few southern Rocky Mountain hunting experiences available in a pristine park setting. Commercial (guided non-resident) and public (B.C. resident) recreational hunting occurs in the Wilderness Recreation Zone and focuses on mountain goat and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, a particularly impressive trophy species with international attraction. The north and south core areas have been closed to hunting to ensure the safety of late summer hikers in those areas.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To allow commercial and public hunting in appropriate areas of the park, subject to conservation and public safety objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Fish and Wildlife section to obtain updated wildlife data for management of sustainable wildlife populations and appropriate hunting levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue requirements for the commercial recreation sector to support wildlife monitoring programs. • Work with the Fish and Wildlife section to permit the continuation of hunting in the Wilderness Recreation Zone of the park, subject to the Resource Management Policies of this plan and <i>Hunting and Trapping Regulations</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ continue resident and guided hunting as a low profile recreational activity within these zones; ▪ continue to use Limited Entry Hunts as a tool to ensure provision of a wilderness experience of the highest quality ▪ provide camping/shelter accommodation at designated sites. • Work with the Fish and Wildlife section to continue hunting closures on the north and south core areas in consideration of public safety.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Fish and Wildlife section to assess, monitor, and regulate hunting in co-operation with First Nations, hunters, and special interest groups to ensure conservation objectives are met. • Review on an annual basis with the MOE Fish and Wildlife open season species. • Review any subsequent proposed changes with First Nations and recreational hunters.

Hiking

The park has approximately 160 km of trails in various conditions which offer hiking opportunities ranging from easy day hikes to extended wilderness backpacking. The fact that all trail access to the park originates in adjacent jurisdictions requires close coordination of trail planning and management between BC Parks and the other agencies involved.

South core trails annually serve up to 5,000 day hikers based in the area's roofed or camping accommodations. These trails are generally in good condition because work was done to harden the surfaces and improve drainage in the 1980s and early 1990's. Additionally, the Lodge operator annually clear deadfall on the popular routes, as guiding recreational day hikers is an integral part of their business operation. These trails include Assiniboine Pass, Wonder Pass, Magog Campground and beyond as far as Elizabeth Lake and Mitchell Meadows, as well as northward to Og Lake. Surveys in 1975, 1986 and 2004⁷ indicate that day-hiking in the south core area is a major attraction to visitors and several superlative destination features exist. Signs directing visitors to these features require the utmost clarity, as core area trails are numerous and can be confusing.

Similarly, hardened trails in the north core (Rock Isle, Grizzly, and Larix Lakes) are maintained under permit by the adjacent Sunshine Village as a summer adjunct to their business. During the tourist months of July and August, Sunshine Village has hosted as many as 40,000 day hikers on trails in the scenic north core area of Mount Assiniboine Park. With such visitor numbers, the experience offered is an interpretive nature walk rather than a backcountry hike. However, the layout and hardening of the day-use trails and facilities has combined with supervised tours to prevent cumulative visitor impacts on the sensitive alpine meadows. As a result, Sunshine Village and the current tour operator have done an excellent job of achieving both the conservation and presentation management objectives for the zone identified in the 1983 Sunshine Summer Use Plan. Changes in the operating plans for Sunshine Village can have significant effects on north core area management. For example, current north core use has dropped to around 11,000 per year since Sunshine Village's summer operation was scaled down with summer closure of the gondola access. Potential exists to host handicapped (wheelchair) day-access to points within the north core area via Sunshine Village trails.

Periodic bridge maintenance, drainage upkeep and re-surfacing with gravel are essential to keep north and south core high-use trails fully serviceable and to prevent long-lasting damage to the highly vulnerable trailside subalpine vegetation.

⁷ See **Park User Attitudes** section in the **Background Document**, p.72.

In most cases, backpacking in Mount Assiniboine Park is for the purpose of getting to the south core area as an accommodation base from which to undertake other backcountry activity. Promotion of extended wilderness treks through Mount Assiniboine Park must compete with a multitude of other exceptionally attractive, well known Rocky Mountain backpacking routes.

Trails primarily associated with the guide-outfitter operations (Mitchell River boundary to Mitchell Meadows, Simpson River to Police Meadows via Scoup Camp) are informally maintained by those operators and are rarely serviced or patrolled. An implication of this situation is that there are frequently unbridged stream crossings and muddy sections unappealing to foot-travelers. Visitor safety from grizzly bears is also a management concern within the mid-Simpson River valley. These conditions offer primitive backcountry hiking/backpacking opportunities not found in the heavily used core areas, and thereby expand the diversity of the park. However, continued application of this concept to the lower Mitchell River trail effectively curtails increased access from the British Columbia side of the park. The costs and benefits of improving and publicizing the Mitchell River route access to the south core should be studied in light of the improved access to the south park boundary since 1989.

The remoteness of trail routes beyond the Sunshine Meadows day use radius has resulted in neglect, creating risks in terms of user satisfaction, liability and environmental impacts. In the case of Eohippus Lake, at the top of the North Simpson, the impact of such neglect is unknown and possibly insignificant, but the location appears to be receiving increasing use as part of the Egypt Lake backpacking circuit out of Banff National Park. Of greater concern is the trail through Citadel Pass and beyond to Porcupine Camp, Valley of the Rocks, and on to the south core. A classic backpackers' route, this Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail traverses the spectacular Rocky Mountain Divide and offers the most potential for in-park backpacking promotion. Regular maintenance is essential to achieve this potential, but the trail below Citadel Pass and Porcupine Camp are also poorly located in grizzly habitat and their relocation should be considered.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To offer and maintain a range of hiking opportunities appropriate to the different environments of the park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the south core area, maintain minimum Type 3 trails, except over sensitive alpine vegetation, for trails to all major day hiking destinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the "Nublet" Vista Circle Trail ▪ Mount Cautley Skyline Trail ▪ Lake Magog Shoreline Circle Trail ▪ Gog Lake and Waterfall Trail ▪ 3 Lakes Circle Trail (Sunburst, Cerulean, Elizabeth) ▪ Windy Ridge Trail • In the north core area, maintain existing Type 2 trails within the day-use area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooperate with other trail managers (Banff National Park and/or Sunshine Village) regarding such further refinement of routing, trail standard and visitor facilities as may be required. • Maintain minimum Type 3 trails over the primary backpacking routes in the park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assiniboine Pass Trail ▪ Wonder Pass Trail

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail. • Maintain minimum Type 3 trails over the secondary backpacking routes in the park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simpson River Trail from Simpson Monument to Surprise Creek. ▪ Surprise Creek Trail • Investigate use in the Eohippus Lake area and ensure that any developing routes are suitably located and marked and that any required trails are constructed and maintained to Type 3 standards to ensure public safety and to prevent environmental degradation. • Study the costs and benefits of improving and publicizing the Mitchell River trail route to the south core, maintaining the current primitive route standard in the meantime. • Ensure that adequate direction signs and information appropriate to the anticipated users are provided on all trails and routes.
<p>To ensure coordination of trail planning management and user information between BC Parks and adjacent jurisdictions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop formal protocols between BC Parks and Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and BC MOFR and MTSA regarding signing, trail standards and trailhead facilities for hikers destined for Mount Assiniboine Park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address such topics as cross-boundary trailhead information about campsites, reservations and permits and which areas are authorized for group use. ▪ Review information annually and update these protocols as required.
<p>To assess and monitor the impact of backcountry visitors on natural and cultural values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close, relocate or improve trails as required if bear and visitor safety problems arise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate the feasibility of relocating sections of the Central Corridor Trail in the upper Simpson River to reduce the risk of grizzly bear encounters. • Monitor trail use through a system of trail counters and use BRIM to assess problem areas.

Mountaineering

Regardless of recreational development at its base, the dramatic “Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies” will continue to attract mountaineers to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. A successful climb of Mt. Assiniboine is recognized as a respectable North American mountaineering achievement, and this prominence provides substantial promotion of mountaineering as a recreation activity in the park. Of lesser prominence to international mountaineering, but no less important for climbing opportunities are the associated peaks and ridges which form the Mt. Assiniboine massif.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To recognize and manage mountaineering as a recreational activity in the south core area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide base facilities for mountaineering activity (Magog Rim Campground and RC Hind Hut) • Ensure emergency response pre-plans for the safety of mountaineers in the park are prepared and updated annually.

Horse Use

Horse use is historically tied to mountain exploration, recreation and guiding activities in the park. Environmental constraints, evolving demographics and the development and promotion of horse riding services and opportunities elsewhere (Height of the Rockies, Kananaskis Country) have reduced the demand for horseback recreation within Mount Assiniboine Park. Use of horses at current levels in the park is environmentally sustainable and continues to offer a traditional wilderness opportunity becoming increasingly scarce elsewhere in the southern Canadian Rockies. The use of alternate domestic pack animals, particularly llamas, has expanded in other locations, but is not permitted in the park as there is a significant risk for disease transfer to mountain goats.⁸ The Wilderness Recreation Zone trail system is generally suitable for dual horse/hiker use, but hiker numbers within the Nature Recreation Zones require that the two user groups must be separated. Opportunities for circle rides within the park's Wilderness Zone were identified in the 1989 Plan, but are not worth pursuing at current decreased levels of use and demand.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To support traditional backcountry horse use where it is appropriate in consideration of other recreationists, terrain, trail and general environmental conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorize horse or pack animal use on trails within the Simpson River, Mitchell River and Surprise Creek valleys • Encourage maintenance of a horse camp corral at O'Brien Meadows and pack animal trail head facilities (parking, loading ramp, corrals) at Simpson River and at Mitchell River, in cooperation with riding clubs and/or guide-outfitters • Maintain separate packing and hiking routes in the south core area and within the Simpson and Mitchell River valleys where environmental conditions dictate. • Disallow horse or pack animal use in the north core area and the Eohippus Lake area. • Monitor horse use and routing regulations with adjoining jurisdictions to ensure consistency. • Provide no new permanent facilities for horse use activities in the park beyond any trail upgrading necessary to protect the environment.

⁸ *Examining the Risk of Disease Transmission between Wild Dall's Sheep and Mountain Goats by Introduced Domestic Goats, Sheep and Llamas in the Northwest Territories*, Government of Northwest Territories August 2005.

Winter Recreation

Gentle, open terrain in the north and south core areas is perfectly suited to light ski touring and is capable of attracting a wide range of skier abilities. Mount Assiniboine Lodge presents a good opportunity to comfortably introduce the beauty of the winter backcountry to park visitors. Similarly, Sunshine Village Resort introduces cross-country day skiers to the winter alpine of the north core area and in the past has maintained a set cross country ski track to Rock Isle Lake within its water supply permit area.

Winter routing between the north and south core areas passes through extreme hazard avalanche terrain, and winter use of this route has been discouraged.

Sunshine Village’s Continental Divide Express chairlift traverses a small portion of the north core area, pre-existed inclusion of this area in the park and continues under permit. Associated downhill ski runs also pre-existed park designation and continue under permit, offering well-managed downhill skiing opportunities atypical of a backcountry park but with minimal impact on the sensitive alpine vegetation beneath the protective snow layer.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To offer a range of non-mechanized winter recreation opportunities in the different environments of the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the south core area, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ manage winter accommodation base facilities to attract a variety of market groups; ▪ provide a variety of ski touring and cross-country skiing opportunities for all ability levels over ungroomed routes appropriately mapped and ground-marked where necessary. • In the north core area, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ permit management and operation of the pre-existing commercial downhill skiing as part of the Sunshine Village Ski area; ▪ permit installation of a power line to the proposed Bye Bye Bowl ski lift, subject to impact assessment and appropriate mitigation; ▪ provide cross-country ski opportunities from Sunshine Village, including on groomed trails managed by the Resort within its permit area. • Discourage skiing within the central corridor owing to avalanche hazards. • In keeping with <i>Park Act</i> Regulation 53, enforce the prohibition on the use of snowmobiles in Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park (except as authorized for management purposes by Sunshine Village under its permits). • Prohibit commercial helicopter skiing (involving multiple drop-offs and pick-ups) in the park. • Continue liaison with the Canadian Avalanche Association and Parks Canada with respect to providing up to date avalanche bulletins and education.

Overnight Facilities

From the range of different facilities that reflect the needs of a diverse public, the objectives and strategies for overnight use in a large park must define those most appropriate to the particular park's character, vision and clientele. The mountaineer may be self-sufficient, whereas other individuals and multi-generational families may have a diversity of needs from primitive campsites to roofed accommodation. It is not necessary to accommodate all of these needs within any individual park, as long as they are being met across all public lands and appropriately in the park system as a whole.

Long-term social needs are difficult to predict and rely on consideration of many sources such as trend information and population demographics to help plan for the future. While limited and concerned with broad concepts that can be difficult to apply to specific situations, future projections can be helpful in conveying some sense of what may happen over time. For example, some trends show that the older and aging "baby boomer" generation may need a higher degree of services and facilities in order to enjoy backcountry recreational opportunities. However, when considering such trends, it is important to protect long-term options and to respond appropriately across the entire land base, keeping in mind several key aspects of protected areas.

- Protected areas require cautious recreational management because of their conservation values.
- Protected areas represent very important natural land banks whose flexibility to meet changing environmental and societal needs in the future can be eroded by expanding commitments and physical developments of a type which may be difficult to reverse.
- Continuing population growth and resource development (including tourism related development) outside the boundaries of protected areas steadily increase their value as preserves of true wilderness.

Within this broader context, Mount Assiniboine Park is unique, in that it was established because of the south core area's significance in early Canadian Rocky Mountain backcountry tourism and it has retained most of its original roofed accommodations typical of that era. As a result, it offers a higher proportion and diversity of roofed accommodation and greater heritage character than any other backcountry Provincial Park in British Columbia.

The park presently offers four fairly distinct levels of overnight facilities: camping at designated sites (including horse and group camping at O'Brien Meadows), public cabin accommodation (Naiset Cabins and RC Hind Hut), guide-outfitter cabin/camp accommodation (Simpson/Surprise, Police Meadows, Mitchell River), and full-service lodge accommodation (Mount Assiniboine Lodge & cabins). To maintain the diversity of facility-based backcountry recreational opportunities, each of these four distinctive accommodation types and their associated recreational opportunities should be maintained and supported. In addition, certain users may have special overnight requirements such as group sites, horse facilities, shelter for mountain climbers and shelter for guided clients.

The concentration and variety of accommodations in the south core area is no coincidence, as this is where the most attractive features of the park are located and it is the focal destination for most park visitors. During the summer season, Mount Assiniboine Lodge accommodates clients who desire special quality service and those who may not otherwise be capable of enjoying an extended backcountry stay because of physical limitations. During the winter season, the Lodge

market segment is broader and includes individuals, families and groups that desire comfortable amenities and guided services.

The Naiset Cabins provide basic backcountry shelter for summer and winter visitors who desire roofed accommodation without additional services. Efforts to provide maximum sleeping accommodation in the cabins have left inadequate space for cooking or socializing. In winter or bad weather, this situation creates both discomfort and safety hazards. Over the longer term, the age of the structures will also demand major maintenance or reconstruction to assure their safety and utility.

The degree of campsite sophistication relates to the zone in which the campsite is located. Fewer services are demanded in remote areas of the park, but in the park's primary backcountry campground accommodation at Magog Rim, visitor characteristics and demands have changed since initial campground development and surveys of campers have indicated low "value for fee" satisfaction. In particular, the water supply stream dries up in drought periods, bear precautions are poor, and a cooking shelter, though identified as a priority in the 1989 plan, still has not been built.

Visitor surveys to date suggest that the total overnight accommodation capacity currently within the south core remains low enough and dispersed enough to provide visitors with the sense that they are in the kind of uncrowded backcountry setting Mount Assiniboine Park has represented since its establishment. South core overnight accommodation capacity has also been important to holding recreational use to levels that have not created observable impacts on vegetation and wildlife. As actual south core overnight capacity is reached only very rarely, there remains considerable scope for encouraging greater efficiencies and higher overall use if desired by such measures as providing cooking shelters for campers and public cabin users in order to make existing overnight facilities more attractive under less than ideal conditions and in shoulder seasons.

In the much more readily accessible north core, accommodations and road access are adjacent to, but outside park boundaries and day use occurs only in winter or on specially designed and constructed trails and under supervision in summer. As a result, physical impacts on the highly sensitive alpine environment are slight and readily reversible and a completely different type of interpretive experience is offered to large numbers of visitors.

Given the underutilization of overnight facilities in the park and availability of accommodation just outside the park in the adjacent ski resort, there appears to be little need in the foreseeable future to develop additional camping and roofed accommodations. In the future, climate change however may affect overnight accommodations in several ways over the life of the plan. Accommodation sites originally established close to reliable water supplies may lose those supplies periodically owing to gradually diminishing stream flows. Cooler, wetter summers may reduce the appeal of camping and increase that of roofed accommodations. Drier, warmer winters may also increase visitor demand for roofed accommodation.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To provide a diversity of overnight facilities that support high quality backcountry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="784 1871 1321 1921">• Maintain the current diversity and capacity of overnight park accommodation facilities (i.e.,

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>experiences in the park at a scale ensuring conservation of natural and cultural heritage resources.</p>	<p>campgrounds, basic public huts and a lodge).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider substituting basic public hut accommodation for a proportion of camping facilities in specific locations only if necessary to reduce environmental impacts or to meet demonstrable long-term (>10 year) trends in visitor demand. • Apply the BC Parks Impact Assessment process to any proposed modification of camping and fixed roof accommodation footprint particularly in the south core, ensure that any proposed change to overnight accommodation fully considers – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ alternatives to providing for overnight use in the specific area; ▪ construction, maintenance and operation costs; ▪ site-specific factors, including water supply, waste disposal and potential effects on vegetation, wildlife, species at risk and visitors; ▪ factors such as service levels and supply logistics (e.g. helicopter traffic); ▪ immediate and cumulative effects on the park’s character, its heritage, and the vision for its future; ▪ the need for full public involvement to ensure process credibility. • Protect sensitive special feature areas from new use and facility development impacts and reduce impacts of existing activities wherever possible by appropriate management actions. • Monitor use impacts in the Eohippus Lake area and prohibit overnight use if environmental impacts are identified. • Assess the environmental implications of designating separate primitive backcountry campsites for hikers and horse riders in the Wedgewood Lake area. • Designate separate hiker and horse rider campsites as appropriate if such designations would focus use onto acceptable sites and avoid unacceptable dispersal of impacts. • Close the area to camping if such uses would have unacceptable environmental impacts.
<p>To continue to provide a diversity of ecologically sustainable overnight camping facilities supporting a variety of backcountry opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade the Magog Rim Campground, retaining no more than the existing 28 site capacity, to better satisfy customer expectation and demand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ redefine and formalize campsites for increased privacy, ease of service and reduced impact ▪ provide up to 2 centrally located cooking shelters with stoves and picnic tables ▪ provide appropriately located bearproof food storage; ▪ provide a centralized potable water supply

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ system with an assured long-term source ▪ ensure that pit toilets have adequate capacity and meet environmental and health requirements; consider use of composting toilets as an alternative; ▪ provide group camping opportunities over a portion of the campground. • Maintain the O'Brien horse campground to serve both horse and hiking groups. • Provide defined campsites at Og Lake as accommodation for hikers through the Central Corridor • Provide defined, low-service campsites with toilets, centralized cooking shelter, bearproof food storage and a reliable long term water supply at a suitable site between Citadel Pass and Og Lake as the only accommodation for hikers within the Central Corridor NR Zone. • Seek a replacement for the present Porcupine Meadow site in order to reduce grizzly bear risks. • Provide designated, low-impact campgrounds for hiking and horse riding parties at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surprise Creek Outlet (Surprise Cabin) ▪ Scoup Camp ▪ Police Meadows (Cabin) ▪ Rock Lake ▪ Mitchell Meadows
<p>To continue to provide a diversity of roofed public accommodations that support or complement the park's heritage theme of early Canadian Rockies backcountry tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the continued use, preservation and interpretation of all heritage structures within the south core area as representations of early tourist use at Mount Assiniboine. • Institute formal photomonitoring at 2-5 year intervals to document the interior and exterior condition of all structures in the park. • Permit modifications to heritage accommodation structures to improve their safety and efficiency without changing their general size, appearance, historical character, capacity or the type of experience they provide. • Continue to provide full-service, high-standard backcountry accommodation at Mount Assiniboine Lodge • Maintain the lodge community (number of buildings) and general capacity at current levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specify building use, client services and operations details in approved 5 year operating plans. • Continue to offer minimal-service general public accommodation in the five Naiset Cabins • Modify the structures as necessary for safety, efficiency and preservation; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ limit Naiset guest capacity to safe, seasonally adjusted levels; ▪ replicate the "Wheeler Wonder Lodge"

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<p>on its original site in the Naiset complex, adapted to use as a central cooking / warming / park interpretation structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ formulate annual management plan, which includes, for Naiset Cabins, the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ seasonal capacities ▪ public safety and emergency response ▪ maintenance requirements • Continue support for the basic alpine shelter on the flanks of Mt. Assiniboine (RC Hind Hut) • Continue to permit the rustic cabin shelters and camps to serve guide-outfitters and park visitors at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mitchell River ▪ Simpson River (Surprise Creek) ▪ Police Meadows
<p>To assess and monitor the impact of backcountry visitors on the park’s natural and cultural values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate visitors about minimum impact camping (backcountry wilderness ethics) at all sites in the park to avoid site degradation and minimize human-bear conflicts. • Continue education and enforcement of regulations pertaining to “no dogs” and “no campfires”. • Use appropriate assessment tools such as BRIM (Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring) and LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change) to ensure that existing backcountry campsites and overnight roofed accommodations are not adversely impacting the park’s natural and cultural values. • If negative impacts are detected, mitigate them by visitor management techniques such as quotas, camping at designated sites only, site expansion and hardening, closures, seasonal and area restrictions, etc. • Use BC Parks’ Impact Assessment processes prior to any facility developments in order to assess and mitigate impacts.

Mechanized Uses

Although some mechanized activities, such as aircraft, ATVs, snowmobiles and mountain bikes, are accommodated in some provincial parks and protected areas in British Columbia, these activities may not be compatible with the backcountry nature and land use intent of other such areas. Most types of mechanized recreation are generally more suitable in areas that are less environmentally vulnerable and in areas supported by appropriate infrastructure such as a road/trail network.

Somewhat controversial in the 1970s and 1980s, helicopter access has now been accepted as the main means of accessing the south core area of Mount Assiniboine Park. However, it is not considered acceptable in other areas of the park, which rely in large part on the absence of air access to ensure a different type of backcountry or wilderness experience. As the *Park Act* regulations require a park use permit for all air access in the park, this allows tight control of such access to ensure that safety, and the environment and the backcountry experiences of other visitors will not be impaired. Practically speaking, terrain and other constraints preclude fixed wing air access into Mount Assiniboine Park.

Owing to the nature of access, the condition of trails and potential user conflicts, no public mechanized activities, such as ATV use, snowmobiling or mountain biking, are appropriate or permitted in Mount Assiniboine Park.⁹ The limited mechanized activity occurring at the edge of the north core is related only to Sunshine Village operations in their permit area.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To provide non-mechanized park access and activities compatible with natural and wilderness experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to exclude mechanized conveyances, including ATVs, ORVs, motorcycles and snowmobiles from Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park (pursuant to Park Act Regulation #52), except as authorized within the Sunshine Village permit areas. • Prohibit mountain bicycle riding in the park. • Prohibit the use of internal combustion engines on any craft on all upland lakes in the park.
<p>To manage aircraft use in the park in a manner that supports high quality backcountry experiences, public safety and minimal impact on wildlife and vegetation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to authorize by park use permit air access by helicopter, for overnight uses only, via designated routes to designated landing sites in the south core area. • Continue to monitor helicopter schedules, routes and altitudes to ensure that visual and sound impacts on wildlife and recreational quality are within acceptable limits, and revise as necessary. • Continue to use air access for management and emergency operations in a way that will minimize impacts on wildlife and backcountry recreationists.

⁹ Until Parks Canada closed Bryant Creek to mountain biking in 1997, mountain biking was permitted within Mount Assiniboine Park only for accessing the south core area via Assiniboine Pass. Other riding in the park was not permitted owing to concerns about physical impacts and issues with other users and wildlife.

Commercial Recreation Opportunities

Commercial recreation services have continued to evolve as part of the heritage of Mount Assiniboine Park since the early days of guided mountaineering, horse tour outfitting and the establishment of the Mount Assiniboine Lodge. Commercial operations which honour these traditions and transmit an appreciation of the park’s natural resources and recreational heritage to their clients, even as they meet contemporary service needs, play a key role in preserving the special qualities that make the park an icon of British Columbia wilderness recreation. Commercial operations such as the one which offers public tours of the Sunshine Meadows also play an important role in supervising and educating visitors to ensure protection of and appreciation for park resources. Opportunities may exist for additional commercial services, but as with the helicopter access example, impact assessments are essential to ensure that such services do not reduce the quality of recreational experiences or create new environmental pressures, particularly in sensitive special feature areas of the park.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>To encourage involvement of the private sector in supplying outdoor recreation services which are compatible with approved management objectives for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.</p>	<p><u>Park Access</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer a commercial opportunity to the private sector for the provision of helicopter transportation to park visitors. • Permit horse packing only as part of an existing guide/outfitting operation and territory in the park <p><u>Lodging</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to authorize by park use permit the operation of the Mount Assiniboine Lodge as a summer and winter backcountry, extended stay facility offering the following visitor services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ guest rooms and cabins to existing capacities ▪ dining room for Lodge guests ▪ staff accommodations within existing buildings ▪ opportunities for interpretive visits by other park users. • Continue to provide shelter to guide-outfitter clients in existing structures under permit. • Consistent with the intent to preserve the effective balance of recreation and conservation in the park by maintaining 2005 levels of overnight accommodation, entertain no expansion of commercial lodge or hut facilities. <p><u>Hiking</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer commercial opportunities under s for the provision of hiking guide services by suitably qualified operator, either as part of an existing operation or as a new permit. <p><u>Horsepacking/Riding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage existing guide/outfitter operators to offer summer guiding/packing, using domestic pack animals only on designated trails within the park <p><u>Hunting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the two commercial opportunities for

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<p>the provision of hunting guide-outfitter services in the park.</p> <p><u>Resource Appreciation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider offering a commercial opportunity for the provision of summer visitor programs for park visitors within the south core. • Promote private sector opportunities in the provision of education programs (e.g., Outdoor skills training), photography and filming consistent with park objectives and BC Parks management policy <p><u>Mountaineering</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer commercial opportunities under for the provision of mountaineering (climbing, skiing) guide services to guides certified appropriately by the A.C.M.G. <p><u>Ski Touring</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer commercial opportunities under for the provision of ski touring guide services by suitably qualified operators, either as part of an existing operation or as a new permit. <p><u>Downhill Skiing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to permit commercial management of ski runs within the designated ski area boundary of Sunshine Village, consistent with the BC Commercial Alpine Ski Area policy.
<p>To ensure that existing and new commercial recreation operations involving the park will remain consistent with the ecological, heritage and recreational vision for the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct BC Parks' Impact Assessment Process for new recreation services with specific concerns for environmental and social impacts. • Establish a verifiable monitoring program of commercial recreation use impacts using Limits of Acceptable Change or similar processes. If monitoring shows the environmental and/or backcountry carrying capacities are close to being exceeded, management intervention such as quotas may be set for commercial operators and limits set on public use. • Monitor and assess, with associated agencies, the impact of scenic overflights on wildlife and visitor experiences and develop improved operational procedures, practices, or other management options to minimize impacts on wildlife. • Work with commercial operators to collect data, and develop stewardship programs and a Code of Conduct for their businesses while operating within the park.

Management Services

Staff of the Ministry of Environment, Environmental Stewardship Division based in Cranbrook, B.C., ensure that management responsibilities are carried out according to the *Park Act*, the Park and Recreation Area Regulation and the established policy and procedures of the Ministry. Park Rangers have traditionally been stationed in the south core area seasonally and have carried out patrols in various areas of the park, concentrating heavily on the high-use south core. Since the 1970s, many operations and maintenance functions and services originally provided by park staff have shifted to contractors and permittees.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To administer the park from a base of operations which is close to the major overnight destination facilities in the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Park headquarters and staff accommodations building at its current location, scale and character within the south core area. • Continue to maintain the Sunburst Cabin as a heritage structure available for park operations and management accommodation purposes.
To ensure the various management responsibilities are carried out according to the guidelines of this management plan and the established policies and procedures of the ministry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an Annual Management Plan for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park that provides operational direction for conservation, recreation, and cultural management initiatives. • Develop and maintain adequate signs and information materials to ensure public safety and security, protection of the park's natural, cultural and recreational values, and compliance with park rules and regulations. • In collaboration with Parks Canada, the Provincial Emergency Program, and commercial operators and contractors in the park, prepare and annually update public safety / emergency pre-plans clearly addressing responses to identifiable risks (bear encounters, fires, search & rescue situations, etc.) • Investigate opportunities for the use of volunteers to supplement management activities.

Visitor Information

Introduction

Providing current information about provincial parks is an important aspect of visitor service management. Information about Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park will serve a number of functions. First, it will assist visitors in planning their visit so they will know what to expect. Second, this information will promote outdoor etiquette, risk management with respect to winter use and potential wildlife/human interactions, respect for the natural environment and careful appreciation of the variety of values found within the park. Third, it will foster an awareness of the cultural and conservation values and features of this area.

Visitor Experience

Mount Assiniboine Park’s spectacular scenery, heritage appeal and diversity of natural settings, access types, visitor services and facilities continue to offer a wide variety of internationally attractive backcountry experiences to visitors. Traditional wilderness experiences based on horse use and self-sufficient hiking remain available in the more remote and rugged wilderness areas of the park. “The Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies” and its surrounding peaks continue to excite and draw mountaineers. However, demographic trends toward an aging and more affluent population have been reflected in increasing use of the south core by young families and by older, less self-reliant hiking/skiing visitors, who generally favour roofed accommodations and more services. The south core has seen proportionately less use by young, single, self-reliant hiking, skiing and climbing recreationists. As noted under **Overnight Accommodations** above, without increasing current accommodation capacities, use by such visitors could probably be increased by providing cooking shelters and other refinements to make bad weather and off-season stays more comfortable. Meanwhile, although visitation remains below the planned full capacity, the north core continues to offer the rare experience of easy day use access to spectacular alpine meadows for exceptionally large numbers of international and domestic visitors of all ages and abilities.

Because of the relative remoteness of Mount Assiniboine Park, visitors generally arrive for a fixed period of time, with certain expectations and intentions to participate in specific forms of outdoor recreation activity. Accurate and complete information and focused marketing will ensure that the range of outdoor recreation activities offered matches visitors’ expectations for a rewarding experience. The conservation and recreation significance of the park must also be incorporated into strategies for information and marketing. Programs developed collaboratively by park managers and commercial service providers and which promote sustainability and environmental consciousness are necessary to ensure the park resources are understood, appreciated and respected by all users.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To provide accurate, comprehensive information to park visitors and potential park visitors in order to: i) heighten public awareness regarding Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park and its role in the conservation of special natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with adjacent jurisdictions and commercial operators in the park to develop a Communications Plan for joint delivery which will heighten public awareness of Mount Assiniboine Park and its role as a BC Park and will identify:

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>and cultural features, ii) inform about visitor opportunities and facilities, and, iii) assure visitor safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ key park natural and cultural heritage resources and measures required for their stewardship; ▪ specific interpretive features, programs and presentations; ▪ a signing and display strategy to include all access routes, facilities and accommodations; ▪ printed information for in-park distribution ▪ information for posting to appropriate websites • Provide contemporary, accurate information relative to park opportunities, services, trails and facilities for display on websites and at key locations as identified in the Communications Plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ within BC, through all forms of media (literature, journals, art, photography, video); ▪ through BC Parks awareness campaigns within B.C. and Alberta; ▪ through BC Parks brochures and the brochures of surrounding parks; ▪ through B.C. and Alberta tourist centers; ▪ through information material available from park permittees; ▪ through road and trail signing to designated access points (cooperatively with surrounding park agencies and permittees); ▪ through transportation concessionaires (helicopter); ▪ through park orientation/ information/ warning signs; and ▪ park visitor programs and activities. • Provide and maintain information kiosks or display facilities for current and long-term presentation of park information at appropriate locations within the north and south core areas.
<p>To attract a wide range of visitors to Mount Assiniboine Park, within capacities and constraints identified in this plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a marketing plan or strategies in the Communication Plan. • Design marketing initiatives to match targeted market groups with the appropriate package of backcountry experiences and services that they seek. • Continue marketing efforts to ensure continuing use by those most attracted to each of the separate facility/service levels in the south core of Mount Assiniboine Park. • Use marketing and information strategies to distribute overnight use seasonally and spatially to obtain optimum use of facilities within their design and environmental capacities.
<p>To deliver a contemporary range of recreation services through the private and public sectors intended to heighten visitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the delivery season of visitor services to winter and spring months as appropriate to demand and facility capacity.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>satisfaction within the park.</p> <p>To promote visitor participation in environmentally sustainable backcountry recreation activities at levels ensuring high quality experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and manage supporting facilities for, and promote sustainable use of the following outdoor recreation opportunities in Mount Assiniboine Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Multi-Day Activities.</i> <u>Lodge/Camping.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backcountry lodge vacation: 3 to 8 day backcountry lodge vacation. Forms the base for a variety of recreation activities. Lodge user enjoys high caliber amenities such as meals, heat, running water, private accommodation and rental equipment. Winter and summer seasons. • Backcountry cabin vacation: 2 to multi-day backcountry vacation. Naiset cabins provide rustic cabin accommodation. Forms a base of operation for other activities. Winter and summer seasons. Additionally, the Hind Hut provides rustic cabin accommodation for climbers on the Mount Assiniboine massif. • Backcountry camping vacation: 2 to multi-day camping experience using formal Park campgrounds in the South Core area and Eohippus Lake. Group camping throughout the South Core area. Summer season. Backpacking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 to 4 day backpacking treks through the Wilderness Recreation and Nature Recreation zones of the park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail: south core, to Porcupine Camp, to north core (Sunshine Village) ▪ Eohippus Lake: north core to Eohippus Lake, Egypt Lake, return. ▪ Simpson River Circle: south core to Ferro Pass, Rock Lake, Simpson River, central corridor, to north/south core ▪ Mount Assiniboine Circle: south core, to Marvel Pass, Aurora Creek to Mitchell River, to south core ▪ Kananaskis/Banff/Assiniboine Trek: Spray Lake, to Assiniboine Pass, south core, Wonder Pass, to Spray Lake <u>Horsepacking/Riding.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 to 6 day recreational horse-trekking through the Nature Recreation and Wilderness Recreation zones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simpson River Valley ▪ Mitchell River Valley ▪ Assiniboine Pass-Og Pass Circle trail <u>Hunting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-day horse-accessed hunting for guided non-residents or residents (limited entry on most species) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simpson River Valley

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mitchell River Valley <p><i>Single Day Activities.</i></p> <p><u>Hikes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half-day and full day hikes to high-interest areas within the north core and South Core areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rock Isle Basin Trails: .sub-alpine lakes, alpine vegetation ▪ Sunshine Meadows Trail: .alpine vegetation ▪ Nublet Vista Trail: view of the Assiniboine massif & south core ▪ Mt. Cautley Skyline Trail: alpine, moderately exposed ridge walk ▪ Magog Shoreline Trail: sub-alpine lake, fishing opportunities ▪ Gog Lake Trail: sub-alpine lake, unique setting ▪ 3 Lakes Circle Trail: Sunburst, Cerulean, and Elizabeth Lakes ▪ Windy Ridge Trail: landscape views, alpine features <p><u>Fishing.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-fishing opportunities previously offered within the south core area, but subject to revision pursuant to this plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elizabeth Lake put-and-take ▪ Og Lake put-and-take ▪ Cerulean Lake "trophy" ▪ Gog Lake fly fishing ▪ Sunburst Lake put-and-take <p><u>Mountaineering.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day climbs to a variety of mountain peaks may be accomplished from any of the accommodation bases in the South core area. • Ski Trips. • Day ski touring opportunities around the south core area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Og Meadows ▪ Cautley Meadows ▪ Magog Lake • Day cross-country skiing within the north core area from Sunshine Village Resort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rock Isle Basin • Special Feature Appreciation • Cultural Features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scheduled public access to Mount Assiniboine Lodge, in cooperation with the permittee, to foster appreciation for the historical development of park facilities and operations. ▪ Public access to heritage buildings throughout the South Core area • Natural Features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Photographing, painting or sketching spectacular scenery, wildlife, park buildings, etc.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observing plants and wildlife. ▪ Generally appreciating natural settings and features. • Interpretive and Education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpretive programs within the North and South Core areas (if offered). ▪ Coordinated information displays designed to inform and educate park visitors about the park. ▪ Commercially or non-commercially offered education and training opportunities to encourage group visits to the park (e.g. nature seminars, outdoor skills training, educational field trips). • Monitor user and outdoor recreation trends and identify research and consider development of facilities or services to support new recreational opportunities consistent with the resource and visitor service objectives of this plan.

Interpretive Themes

Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park offers significant recreational opportunities, while protecting important natural and cultural resources, all in a backcountry or wilderness setting. Widespread support for the park and the vision for its future are essential. Interpretive information, widely accessible to the park’s domestic and international clientele of both vicarious and actual users, will be key to ensuring such support through appreciation of Mount Assiniboine Park’s natural processes and features, the cultural history that is uniquely present in this area and the outdoor ethics appropriate to the park.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To identify, research and deliver park interpretive themes in an effective and efficient manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with adjacent jurisdictions, park commercial service providers and volunteers to identify sources of information and to research themes for interpretation of the park to the public. • Collaboratively consider how best to present interpretive information to the public as part of the process of annually updating the Communication Plan. Delivery methods may include off or on site displays, publications, websites and guided visits. • Encourage and authorize educational programs in wilderness skills, environmental studies and natural and cultural history within the park where facilities and general public uses are compatible. • Encourage private sector preparation of commercially viable promotional or informational products relating to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park themes.
To encourage public understanding and support for Mount Assiniboine Park’s role in ecological representation, protection of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop or encourage development of interpretive material on various park natural resource themes, including:

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
<p>outstanding natural features and the maintenance of biodiversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the park’s role as a component of the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site; ▪ the role of the park as a protected area representing the Southern Park Ranges ecosection and specific zones within the biogeoclimatic ecological classification (BEC) system; ▪ the issue of climate change and the effects it may have on protected areas such as Mount Assiniboine Park; ▪ park geology and hydrology, with particular emphasis on highly visible elements such as karst topography, glaciation, fossils, etc.; ▪ representative and unique vegetation, particularly that of alpine and subalpine meadows, with emphasis on conservation issues and ▪ park, wildlife and fish, including “charismatic megafauna”, species of concern and commonly seen bird and rodent species, emphasizing the issues involved in their interactions with humans (e.g., grizzly bears).
<p>To develop public understanding and support for Mount Assiniboine Park’s special role in preserving the structures and character of one of the cradles of Canadian Rocky Mountain backcountry tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve the cultural heritage knowledge and expertise of individual volunteers, contractors, permittees and cooperating organizations in management initiatives that are focused on preserving and interpreting the historic features of the park (e.g., Alpine Club of Canada). • Encourage permittees or cooperating associations to design an interpretive program presenting the historical development of backcountry tourism and mountaineering activities in the Park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Among other means of delivery, interpret park history through information and displays at a replicated “Wheeler Wonder Lodge” and at the Sunburst Cabin. • Encourage park service permittees, particularly the Mount Assiniboine Lodge operator, to interpret these themes to clients and the public by appropriate means. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to offer historical displays in the Lodge and to make them available to the general public visitor as well as Lodge clients.
<p>To develop public appreciation for the early history of human activity in the Mount Assiniboine area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that any research relating to the role of First Nations in the park involves First Nations peoples and the Archaeology Planning and Assessment Section. Research activities will require a park use permit. • With assistance from First Nations, the Archaeology Planning and Assessment Section, Integrated Land Management Bureau, and other knowledgeable sources, design an interpretive

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	program to present area pre-history with special reference to traditional trade routes and other uses.

Management Messages

Awareness and pre-trip planning information can help to set expectations, enhance the recreational experience, and influence attitudes and behaviours. A number of management messages should be delivered to prospective Mount Assiniboine Park visitors. The booking system in effect since 1998 for south core area helicopter access and accommodations is available to improve certainties for overnight and fly-in visitors, and it could be extended to cover the Magog Rim Campground if use requires. However, the high probability of Bryant Creek trail closures because of grizzly bear risks in the peak late summer-early fall hiking season creates an element of uncertainty of which hikers relying on this main access route should be aware. Bear encounters are possible anywhere in the park, particularly in the Simpson Valley and Porcupine Camp area and the lower Mitchell River Valley, and bears are increasingly likely to be found in the north and south core areas. In winter, while the core areas are relatively safe, the route between them is very hazardous around Citadel Pass. Though mountaineering accidents in the park are relatively rare, increasing use of access from the Assiniboine Creek side of the peak reduces the ability of Lodge or park staff to monitor and support climbing activity.

Specific information on pre-trip planning and expectations can be obtained from the park brochure and BC Parks website, and from the Environmental Stewardship Division’s Kootenay Regional Office in Cranbrook. Important information on current air and trail access conditions is posted on Banff National Park and Mount Assiniboine Lodge websites. Because of variable weather and the rugged nature of wilderness areas of this park, visitors need to be especially vigilant in their pre-trip preparations, particularly outside the core areas. When staffed, both the Lodge and Park Headquarters in the south core area maintain communications from within the park, but communications in other areas are limited to satellite phones and rescue services are not readily available.

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
To ensure that visitors have access to pre-trip planning information which can help to set their expectations, enhance their recreational experiences, and influence their attitudes and behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with adjacent jurisdictions, park commercial operators and tourism associations to provide appropriate pre-trip planning information to prospective visitors as part of the annually updated Communication Plan. • Provide specific information to enhance backcountry visitors’ understanding of the park, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ access options and constraints, accommodation options, appropriate recreational opportunities; ▪ park natural & cultural features, and conservation issues; ▪ wilderness etiquette, park regulations, potential hazards (e.g., bear encounters, avalanches) and techniques for avoiding or mitigating them, and emergency procedures. • Ensure that any public information on the Park

Draft Objectives	Draft Strategies
	<p>is current and accurate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that trail route and other signing is appropriate to the needs of the primary users of the zone and consistent with character of the zone.

Plan Implementation:

The plan implementation section provides information about the types of strategies that the Environmental Stewardship Division will implement as funding and resources permit. **This will be completed after plan review completed.**

Immediate (1 to 2 years)

Short Term (3 to 5 years)

Long Term (6- 10 years)

Monitoring

Appendix 1: Management Planning Zoning

Descriptions and Allowable Facilities & Activities

BC Parks Management Planning Zoning System Description

Intensive Recreation	Nature Recreation	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
OBJECTIVE				
To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.	To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.	To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features, or processes because of their special character, fragility, and heritage values.	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 high density and long duration types of use.	Relatively low use but higher levels in association with nodes of activity or access.	Generally low.	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				
All-weather public roads or other types of access where use levels are high (see "Impacts" below).	Mechanized (powerboats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles), non-mechanized (foot, horse, canoe, bicycle). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pickup points will be permitted.	Various; may require special access permit.	Non-mechanized; except may permit low frequency air access to designated sites; foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).	Non-mechanized (no air access); foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).
LOCATION				
Contiguous with all-weather roads and covering immediate areas modified landscapes or other high-use areas.	Removed from all-weather roads but easily accessible on a day-use basis. Accessible by mechanized means such as boat or plane.	Determined by location of special resources; may be surrounded by or next to any of the other zones.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.
SIZE OF ZONE				
Small; usually less than 2,000 ha.	Can range from small to large.	Small; usually less than 2000 hectares.	Large; greater than 5,000 hectares.	Large; greater than 5,000 hectares.

Intensive Recreation	Nature Recreation	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
BOUNDARY DEFINITION				
Includes areas of high facility development in concentrated areas.	Boundaries should consider limits of activity/facility areas relative to ecosystem characteristics and features.	Area defined by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of cultural resources (adequate to afford protection).	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access. Will be designated under the Park Act.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Will be designated under the Park Act.
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES				
Vehicle camping, picnicking, beach activities, power-boating, canoeing, kayaking, strolling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, snow play, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, specialized activities.	Walk-in/boat-in camping, power-boating, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, X-country snowmobiling skiing, river rafting, horseback riding, heli-skiing & hiking, and specialized activities.	Sightseeing, historic and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	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).
FACILITIES				
May be intensely developed for user convenience. Roads, trails, campgrounds, picnic/play areas, boat launches, visitor & admin buildings, service compounds, gravel pits, disposal sites, parking lots, etc.	Moderately developed for user convenience. Trails, walk-in/ boat-in campsites, shelters, service buildings may be permitted; facilities for motorized access e.g. docks, landing strips, fuel storage, etc.	Interpretive facilities only, resources are to be protected.	Minimal facility development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment e.g. trails, primitive campsites, etc. Some basic facilities at access points, e.g. dock, primitive shelter, etc.	None.
IMPACTS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT				
Includes natural resource features and phenomena in a primarily natural state but where human presence may be readily visible both through the existence of recreation facilities and of people using the zone. Includes areas of high facility development with significant impact on concentrated areas.	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 values are to be protected. Interpretation facilities to be limited to small areas.	Natural area generally free of evidence of modern 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 modern human beings.

Intensive Recreation	Nature Recreation	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES				
Intensive management of natural values and/or control of visitor activities. Landscape changes may occur to increase carrying capacity of the area. Direct management intervention may occur to protect natural values and enhance recreation opportunities. Compatible scientific research and monitoring is encouraged.	Management oriented to maintaining a natural environment where visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Direct management intervention may occur to protect natural values or enhance recreation opportunities. Compatible scientific research and monitoring is encouraged.	High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Natural processes will normally be allowed to continue unhindered; in some instances, protection of rare, unique, outstanding, threatened and endangered natural values may require specific management intervention. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and limit impacts. Any scientific study must be clearly justified and carried out under permit.	High level of management protection for pristine wildland. Active resource management programs may be allowed if essential for protection of significant natural values. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.	Highest level of management protection for pristine wildland. Natural processes will be allowed to continue unhindered. Specific management intervention will not be permitted unless essential to protection or survival of significant natural values. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
RECREATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES				
Management oriented toward maintaining a high quality recreation experience. Requires careful management and upkeep of intensive use outdoor recreation facilities. Facilities designed for efficient operation while remaining unobtrusive to the park visitor.	Management oriented to presenting high quality recreation experiences in a natural setting. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and methods of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).	Management dedicated to educating visitors through interpretation of features. Visitor access may be restricted to limit damage to features. Facility development and visitor use will be determined by the area's carrying capacity.	Management dedicated to maintaining a visitor recreation experience of solitude, freedom, and physical challenge in a primitive natural setting. Facility development and visitor use will be determined by the area's carrying capacity.	Management dedicated to maintaining a visitor recreation experience of solitude, freedom, and physical challenge in a primitive natural setting. Visitor use will be determined by the area's carrying capacity.
EXAMPLES OF ZONING				
Campground in Rath Trevor Beach Park; Gibson Pass ski area in E.C. Manning Park.	Core area in Cathedral Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.	Tidepools in Botanical Beach Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Moose River Valley in Mount Robson Park.	Central Valhalla Wilderness in Valhalla Park; Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy area.

Zoning System Allowable Facilities and Activities Matrix for Zones in Mount Assiniboine Park

Y = appropriate

M = may be appropriate if compatible with protected area objectives;

N = not appropriate;

N1 = not appropriate except for expressed management purposes as identified in the management plan;

N2 = not appropriate, but if specific activity or facility existed at the time of establishment of the protected area it is normally appropriate for it to continue.

Activity/Facility	Allowable in Zone			Comments
	NR	SF	WR	
Activity				
Aircraft Access	Y		Y	
Angling Guiding	Y	N	Y	
Beach activities (e.g. swimming)	Y		Y	
Boating (power)	Y		N	
Boating (non-power)	Y		Y	
Camping - backcountry	Y		Y	
Camping – auto or boat accessible	N		N	
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	Y		Y	
Commercial recreation (no facilities)	Y		Y	
Exotic insect/disease control	N1		N	
Exotic Pack Animal Use	N		N	
Filming (commercial)	M		M	
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	N		M	
Fire management (prevention)	N1		N1	
Fire management (suppression)	Y		N1	
Fishing	Y		Y	
Fish stocking and enhancement	M		N	
Forest insect/disease control	M		N	
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N1,2		N1,2	
Guide outfitting	Y		Y	
Heli - hiking	Y		N	
Hiking/Backpacking/Walking	Y		Y	
Horse / Non-Exotic pack animals	Y		Y	
Hunting	Y		Y	
Mechanized Off-road Access (non-motorized – i.e. mountain biking)	Y		N	
Mountaineering	Y	M	Y	
Motorized Off-road Access (not snowmobiles – i.e. 4x4, motorcycles)	M		N	
Noxious weed control	Y		N1	
Off-road Access (non-mechanical - dog sleds, horse sleds)	Y		M	
Recreational gold panning/rock hounding	N		N	
Rockclimbing	Y		Y	
Scientific research (manipulative activities)	N1		M	
Scientific research (specimen collection)	M		M	
Skiing (downhill & cross –country – groomed runs or trails)	N		N	
Skiing (helicopter or cat-assisted)	Y		N	

Skiing (self propelled. not groomed)	Y		Y	
Snowmobiling)	Y		N	
Trapping	N2		N2	
Facility				
Administrative buildings and compounds	N		N	
Backcountry huts and shelters	Y		M	
Boat launches	Y		N	
Campgrounds and Picnic Areas (vehicle access and services)	N		N	
Camp Sites (other)	Y		M	
Communication sites	N2		N2	
Fixed Roof Accommodation	Y		M	
Interpretation and information buildings	N	Y	N	
Roads and parking lots	N		N	
Ski Hills and Snowplay Areas	N		N	
Trails (hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horse)	Y		Y	
Utility corridors (power/transmission lines and other rights-of-way)	N2		N2	
Water control structures	N2		N2	

Appendix 2: Summary of Public Comments

Draft Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Management Plan

Introduction

Twelve people attended a public open house held at Radium in the East Kootenay on February 18, 2006 to review the Draft Management Plan for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. Subsequently, displays on the Draft Plan were mounted at the Mountain Equipment Co-op stores in Vancouver and Calgary. Viewers were invited to examine the draft plan on the Parks website and to submit comments. By the close of the comment period in mid-April, 14 written submissions had been received. The submissions included 4 e-mail messages, 3 letters and 8 Public Comment Forms (3 with additional covering letters).

This summary is intended to provide an indication of what people said about the draft plan, provide some response on those ideas, and to indicate a recommended for the plan on a particular issue. Note however that subsequent to this public process the plan is subject to Ministry internal review and First Nations consultation which could affect plan recommendations. Although attendance by the general public was poor, attendance by provincial interest groups representing large numbers of people was significant. Attendance by key stakeholders associated with the park was also significant.

Eleven submissions (6 Public Comment forms, 3 e-mails and 2 letters) stated that they generally supported the plan. The primary reasons given for supporting the plan were:

- its emphasis on conservation of wilderness and ecological values;
- its proposed limitations on visitor and facility levels and expansion of commercial development;
- its compatibility with the management of the other components of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

Two submissions (on Public Comment forms) and one letter stated they generally did not support the plan. The primary reason given for not supporting the plan was that:

- it favoured conservation to the detriment of recreation use and tourism activities and specifically did not provide for a lodge in the north core.

One submission (e-mail) commented on only one specific topic (horse use).

Most noted concerns for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park:

A proposal for a rustic lodge in the north core area of the park was supported in 3 submissions, specifically opposed in 5 others and opposed by implication in 2 other submissions that endorsed capping overnight accommodations at existing levels.

11 of the 14 submissions supported the draft plan's general direction, and most of these expressed some level of opposition to expansion of commercial activities, facilities and air access beyond current levels.

8 of the 14 submissions specifically welcomed attention to climate change in the plan, 1 implied that it was irrelevant and five made no comment.

Inventory and research were identified as crucial priorities in a number of submissions, particularly in view of potential climate change effects. Improved information and interpretation (but not marketing) were identified as desirable in a number of submissions.

Respondent opinions on hunting in the Park were divided, with two specific objections being raised to trophy hunting and hunting of blue-listed species. Greater funding to support a stronger BC Parks staff presence, direct involvement in inventory, monitoring and interpretation was advocated by several respondents.

The remainder of this appendix is a summary of the written comments submitted. The number in brackets after each of the recorded comments indicates the number of identical or similar comments received. All editorial comments are not included in the summary but changes were made to the plan where appropriate.

Issue: Vision Statement

Public Comments: (6 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

Although this is a good statement it does not speak to a vision of the next 50-100 years. It should say things like maintain existing values, continue to provide backcountry experiences, continue to balance recreational use with environmental awareness, and restrict further commercial use. (1)

It does not address creation of new backcountry lodges.

Excellent, but we suggest an addition to the first sentence, second paragraph, “The park is famous for ... abilities [and which allows for the possibility of a true wilderness experience in areas with a minimum of man-made facilities.”] (1)

Excellent – covers all the bases. Ecosystem-based management must continue to be the cornerstone of parks management. Protect the northern core. (1)

We agree with the intent and direction of the vision statement. However, we are concerned with the potential interpretation of a ‘wide variety of...commercial services’. We feel that current commercial opportunities in the park are wide ranging and sufficient. We would not support increasing the variety of commercial services. Some current services such as hiking guides, ski guides, etc. could be increased as long as the outcome does not negatively affect the natural environment or the quality of visitor experience. (1)

Firstly one would need to know who the author is and was it written as a policy statement since that would need to be signed by the Minister responsible. Secondly it does not address the above ministerial press release [November 18 & 26, 2003 regarding the creation of new backcountry lodge opportunities]. (1)

The vision statement makes a false assumption: maintaining accommodation levels at 2005 has caused a tremendous lack of opportunity, especially in the north section. You cannot get a reservation in fixed roof. More is needed. A proponent has environmentally progressive proposals that should go forward. (1)

I was adamant as one of the participants in the process that the vision reflects holding the park’s overnight accommodation capacity to close to or about 2005 levels, yet this was not reflected in the vision statement. (1)

Commentary:

Although only 6 of the 14 written submissions commented specifically on the Vision Statement, supporting comments (4) generally argued for a more conservative vision while non-supporting comments (3) criticized the Vision's failure to incorporate BC Parks' fixed roof accommodation policy. BC Parks' fixed roof accommodation policy at the time was only a proposal that had not been endorsed by government and therefore not considered in the planning process. The issue of new overnight accommodation is addressed in the Overnight Facilities section. Comments on other plan issues in the remaining submissions tended to support the Vision Statement intent.

Plan Recommendation:

The management vision for the park is supported by a majority of respondents, but there is obviously some polarization over aspects related to lodge and commercial development. Based on the input received, the Vision Statement should be retained in close to its present form.

Issue: Zoning

Public Comments: (2 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We strongly support zoning plans outlined in the draft management plan. (1)

We strongly support the Protected Area Zoning designations as proposed, in particular the Special Features areas and the change of designation of the central corridor from Citadel Pass to the South Core Area to Wilderness Recreation. (1)

I find there is an attempt made to make the park less accessible to the user by the means of rezoning some sectors making it more restrictive to users. (1)

Since the north zone is so small why not just leave the zoning the same for that zone and Sunshine Ski Village (SSV) specifically as changing it and making SSV non conforming has a negative connotation . SSV pre-existed the park designation, the zoning is non conforming not the use. (1)

Commentary:

Zoning is one of the most significant areas updated in the draft plan from the previous management plan of 1989. The policy and approach particularly with respect to how activities are addressed within zones is different. A key aspect of zoning now is the Activities/Facilities Matrix where, through coded notation, the status of various activities and facilities is addressed allowing zones to be specifically and uniquely defined. In particular pre-existing activities that are being continued such as the pre-existing Sunshine Ski Village facilities and uses, are able to be considered for all zones through the coded notation without affecting the intent and integrity of the objective of the zone. The use of the term non-conforming is no longer necessary when the matrix is used.

Plan Recommendation

The zone classes and application area will remain but some clarity in wording particularly, with respect to non-conforming uses, will be made.

Issue: Natural and Cultural Values Management

Public Comments: (6 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We support the objectives and draft strategies - in particular we are opposed to any new developments in the area of Sunshine Meadows/Rock Isle Lake. Keep it as untouched and natural as possible. The FBCN supports the emphasis on maintenance of the natural value for which Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park is renowned and also on retaining, and if needed restoring, the heritage buildings (Lodge, Naiset Huts, etc.) and trails which are also an important part of the appeal of this park. We support the maintenance of the ski-use and commercial activities at current levels by PUPs. (2)

No expansion of air access or overflights. (2)

Overflights and helicopter access should be monitored for impacts on wildlife, not only visitor experiences, and a conservative approach should be taken. (2)

This park in particular is lacking basic inventory information, which is the bare necessity to ensure prudent management. (1)

There is a number of issues that are wrongly presented or facts are not as they are (e.g. no daily limit on Sunshine water licence) (1)

This planning process seems reasonable, but will vary depending on natural occurrences such as mountain pine beetle and resulting major fires. Although global warming seems apparent, I don't think it is a proven fact that it will continue. (1)

Commentary:

While there is some divergence of opinion on emphasis, the current plan direction on this issue is generally supported.

Plan Recommendation:

Retain the general direction of this section of the plan with minor revisions to address comments and correct factual errors.

Issue: Ecosystem Management

Public Comments: (6 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We support the proposed ecosystem approach (3), especially strategies to maintain connectivity for wildlife. (1)

Parks must obtain basic inventory data regarding species and their habitats in the park (2), preferably through staff and independent qualified researchers to ensure quality and consistency. (1)

A precautionary approach should be taken in management actions where data is inconclusive or incomplete. Parks should be benchmark areas of relatively intact ecosystems and manipulation of those systems beyond the range of natural variability should be left to public lands outside of parks. (1)

It may be necessary to change management plans as climate changes occur. I think inventory work is needed to establish what exists in the Park now. However, trying to protect species that are not in their natural occurring environment due to climate change would be a waste of time and money. (1)

We strongly support improved education and communication with the public on aims and methods of ecosystem management. (1)

Does not acceptably balance the visitor experience with environmental issues. Goes overboard on conservation. (1)

There are some conflicting statements and assumptions related to the effects of global climate change. (1)

Commentary:

Specific comments generally support the ecosystem approach, though one submission believes it to be biased against the visitor experience. Additional research and baseline inventory work is identified as a priority for future funding and some inconsistencies in the climate change analysis are noted.

Plan Recommendation:

The plan should continue to emphasize the importance of managing the park for the greater ecosystem values of the region. Minor revisions should be made to address comments and eliminate inconsistencies.

Issue: Vegetation and Wildlife Management

Public Comments: (5 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

Fire may play a big role in the overall management of the park and should not be suppressed. Fire is a natural occurrence that historically defined the Park and the species within it. Wildfire areas provide important benchmark areas for scientific research and interpretation to the public.

(2)

Agree that a comprehensive ecosystem management strategy, a vegetation management plan and a fire management plan all need to be developed and implemented. (1)

We support the objectives and strategies, in particular strategies to reduce bear/human conflict and to maintain biodiversity. (1)

We strongly support the proposal for improved signage concerning the need to prevent damage to vegetation and designated rehabilitation zones; this is badly needed in meadows north of Wonder Pass where trail braiding and consequent damage to the wet meadows is severe. (1)

The B.C. government must be a willing and able partner in collaborative research and education projects. (1)

We support proposals to encourage groups such as naturalists and birding clubs to assist with inventory studies. (1)

Data collection and scientific studies are encouraged to monitor changes in vegetation as related to climate. (1)

We support the proposal to encourage research into the impacts of recreation and air access on wildlife. (1)

It is inconceivable that our provincial parks continue to allow hunting of blue-listed species, i.e. grizzly bears and mountain sheep. Please revoke the approval of this in the draft plan. (1)

Owing to uncertainties, more conditional language should be used in the paragraph on climate change in the vegetation section. (1)

Commentary:

Public comments on this issue reflect strong support for conservation and research.

Plan Recommendation:

The general direction of this section of the plan is supported and minor revisions should be made to respond to comments submitted.

Issue: Cultural Heritage Management

Public Comments: (7 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We support the management plan as presented. (3)

We agree that the park has significant cultural and historical significance in the Southern Rockies, which should be maintained, however not at the sacrifice of ecological values. (1)
We applaud the proposed efforts to have more First Nations involvement in inventories of traditional use sites and the inclusion of more information on their traditional use of the Park area. (1)

We also support maintenance of historic buildings and the proposed rebuilding of the Wheeler Wonder cabin for a cooking shelter and interpretive centre. (1)

Need more historic lodges. (1)

How come no mention of Erling Strom who built Mt Assiniboine Lodge? (1)

Commentary:

Public submissions appear to support the draft plan's proposed treatment of cultural heritage resources. Erling Strom's involvement with the Mt. Assiniboine Lodge is referenced in the *Background Document*.

Plan Recommendation:

No changes necessary to draft wording.

Issue: Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Public Comments: (8 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We support the management plan as presented. (1)

There appears to be a good balance between protection of ecological values as of primary importance in the Park and the scale of human activities proposed. (1)

We agree that outdoor recreation opportunities should generally be kept to existing capacities. (1)

More [outdoor recreation opportunities] are needed, especially for aging populations. (1)

The frequent references to mountaineering within the draft management plan are noted and appreciated. However, the Zone Activity/Use/facility Matrix tables on pages 30-34 do not include mountaineering (climbing, alpine climbing or ski touring) as a use or activity. We request that mountaineering be included in the tables for each zone and designated as allowable and applied in each zone. Mountaineering is not truly captured in the existing activities of hiking and walking, or the existing use of guide-outfitting (nature tours). (1)

We support angling closures on lakes in the north core and elimination of fish stocking in the park. (1)

We support the objectives and strategies related to winter recreation. (2)

We support the objectives and strategies outlined for mechanized uses in the park. (2)

We agree with the continued exclusion of mountain biking from park; it is dangerous for all concerned in bear habitat and very damaging to vegetation and trails especially in sub-alpine and alpine areas. (2)

Elimination of the use of mountain bikes is biased against one user group. (1)

We do not support hunting in the park – especially trophy hunting! (2)

Hunting is an appropriate conforming activity in the Wilderness Recreation zoning and in the Nature Recreation zoning. However, at the open house display in Radium hunting is mentioned as a non-conforming use that is allowed as long as the regulations allow it. (1)

We support relocation of trails out of prime grizzly habitat if possible. (1)

We can't stress enough the need for BC Parks to ensure staff and budget capacity for appropriate park management. (1)

Park interpretation should be carried out by BC Parks to ensure quality and consistency of messages. (1)

Commentary:

The plan's approach seems to be generally perceived as balanced, with some division of public opinion on the issues of mountain bike use and hunting. As explained in the plan text, until Parks Canada closed Bryant Creek to mountain biking in 1997, mountain biking was permitted within Mount Assiniboine Park only for accessing the south core area via Assiniboine Pass. Other riding in the park was not permitted owing to concerns about inadequate trails, physical impacts and issues with other users and wildlife. The Parks Canada closure effectively ended practical mountain biking activity in Mount Assiniboine Park.

Whether or not hunting is appropriate in provincial parks continues to be a provincial policy issue that cannot be addressed at an individual park level.

The recommendation that mountaineering be included as a distinct activity in the Zone Activity Matrix is not unreasonable, but as the Matrix is a provincial template it would require a change at that level.

Plan Recommendation:

Some clarification of the status of hunting may be required. Otherwise, this section appears to require no changes.

Issue: Access Management

Public Comments: (8 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We support the objectives outlined in the section on access management. (4)

No increase in mechanized access. (1)

There should be no exception for Sunshine Village permit areas regarding motorized access.

Keep ATVs, ORVs, motorcycles and snowmobiles OUT. (1)

No expansion of roads or air access into the park. (1)

The total amount of helicopter access to the park should not increase. (1)

Helicopter access is already excessive and should be further restricted or at least held to present levels. (2)

The FBCN is concerned about the proposed consideration of helicopter access from the western side; we suggest that if this is retained in the final draft, that it be qualified by a proposed reduction in flights from Spray Lake to avoid increasing disturbance from the helicopters to wildlife and other human users. The FBCN would support foot access into the South Core from BC via an upgrading of the Mitchell Creek trail in preference to additional helicopter flights. (1)

We suggest the addition of a statement in the draft plan that there be some mechanism set up with federal authorities to discuss any proposed sightseeing flights over Mt Assiniboine PP and possible impacts from these on the park. (1) Also, the item about possible fixed-wing access is disturbing. (1)

We hope that existing horse trails will still be available for equestrian use. (1)

I have found that horse use although not real common is discouraged by the lack of facilities such as O'Brien Meadows and should be improved. Access from the Mitchell River and Aurora and Assiniboine Creeks should be encouraged for the wilderness experience. (1)

I was particularly glad to see the proposals for improving the trail systems and camping facilities along the central corridor. (1)

Commentary:

The direction of the Access Management section is generally supported by the public submissions, but a number of respondents are concerned about the impacts of air access and advocate a conservative approach. The issue of fixed wing access to parks is a concern, but there is no apparent demand for fixed wing access to Mount Assiniboine Park and the plan indicates that there are sufficient natural and social constraints that opportunities for fixed wing access are very limited. Use of mechanized access by Sunshine Village to service its water supply facilities and downhill ski area is a legitimate exception as both tenures pre-existed park establishment in 1973.

Plan Recommendation:

The plan already recognizes the general concerns about mechanized access into the park. Minor revisions should address some of the specific comments.

Issue: Overnight Facilities

Public Comments: (9 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

On the roofed accommodation, I applaud the proposed freezing of numbers of spaces and outright ban on additional accommodation in the Sunshine Meadows area of the park. The area is far too ecologically sensitive and already supports a large percentage of park visits; to entertain more would be inviting serious damage to the ecosystem and its inhabitants. (5)

Clearly the plan does not provide sufficient facilities in the north. A proponent has advanced solid proposals worthy of acceptance. There is no environmental impact. (2)

Although the secret Park Lodge Strategy is supposedly only in “draft” stage and has never formally been released publicly, this document sets forth that applications for lodges must be processed while the draft is under consideration, and that the draft constitutes the “interim guidelines”. What then must we fear but that, while participating in the Assiniboine Provincial Park master plan process, a proponent may also have the privilege of a separate, secret process which may have already approved the lodge! (1)

We support the management plan – no increase in permanent structures. (1)

These traditional facilities are adequate. (1)

We applaud the proposal to keep the number of beds/sites at current levels while improving campsites and maintaining roofed facilities for human safety and protection of wildlife. (1)

We also support the proposal to add a campsite closer to Citadel Pass than Og Lake, if environmentally sustainable, and to remove the Porcupine Lake campsite and possibly replace it with one at a more appropriate accessible site. (2)

Shifting park development to accommodate shifting visitor demand is ... an alien and malignant concept. Park protection is meant to remain stable in the face of increasing pressures. (1)

Please reword [the strategy relating to modification of heritage accommodation structures] to reflect that no expansions in the size or visitor capacity of these structures are allowed. (2)

The proposal to encourage Sunshine Village to find another water source outside Mt Assiniboine is welcomed. (1)

Commentary:

As some of the public comments suggests the plan has not adequately clarified the role of the park management plan relative to the provincial strategy on cabins and lodges in the park;

however, as the strategy had not been completed and released at the time of the draft plan it was not possible to consider. There is obviously concern that the strategy may lead to lodge applications being entertained for any park zone where such facilities are permissible under the provincial zone Activity/Facility Matrix.

Although three submissions supported the proposal for a rustic lodge in the north core, the other seven submissions addressing overnight facilities supported capping overnight facilities at current capacities and four specifically opposed any accommodations in the north core. Objections were also expressed to the suggestion that accommodation types might shift within the current capacity to meet shifting demands. This approach was seen as potentially limiting the desired range of opportunities in the park.

Management direction provided in management plans for significant permanent facilities and services such as lodges that may positively or negatively affect important park values need to have sufficient information and significant public discussion. In considering overnight facilities in the north core of the park, the unfortunate low public participation in the planning process and lack information about the proposed rustic lodge including potential benefits and impacts to the park have not provided any clear direction on this proposal. While the majority of participants did not support the proposal the small number of participants may not be a good indicator of public views.

Information on the current use of accommodation in the park does provides some clear direction on future needs. Given that the current camping and roofed overnight facilities in the park are rarely used to capacity, there is little need to develop additional overnight accommodations.

Plan Recommendation:

Maintaining the status quo on amount of overnight accommodation will be reflected in the draft plan. The capacity of existing facilities should be fully and efficiently used before expanding the impact footprint of camping and roofed overnight facilities in the park. No new lodges, cabins or campgrounds are being recommended. The draft plan's general direction on overnight facilities requires only minor revisions to address some of the points raised.

Issue: Commercial Recreation

Public Comments: (8 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

We support the objectives and strategies outlined in the section for commercial recreation. (2)

Opportunities for commercial lodges or huts should not be entertained. (2)

Tourism and economic sustainability will be more important in the future. (1)

[Commercial recreation] should be restricted to present levels. The BC Wildlife Federation adamantly opposes any further construction of lodges in the park, such as being proposed at Sunshine meadows in the north core area. (1)

We strongly support the management plan, especially in Special Feature Zones. Sunshine Village operations under existing permit only – no increase and review of permit. (1)

Terrain for ski runs should not be modified within the park. (2)

We support the proposal to maintain commercial recreation at current levels and to limit guide-outfitters to routes and facilities already in place and separate from hikers (with the exception of routes such as the Simpson River not much used by hikers). (1)

Helicopter transportation for park visitors should not increase above current capacities. (1)

We believe core interpretive activities (hikes, nature walks, etc.) should be led by park personnel, not commercial operators. (1)

We especially support a “verifiable monitoring program” to monitor the impacts of commercial recreation within the park. The program should be appropriately funded and administered by BC Parks or at least by an independent contractor. (1)

We request wording changes to draft strategies for Hiking and Mountaineering. (1)

Remove “non-conforming” designation from the uses related to Sunshine Village’s PUPs related to water withdrawal and water utility as well with regards to the operation of the commercial ski area. (1)

Commentary:

Most comments accept current levels of commercial use, several specifically oppose expansion of helicopter use and commercial lodges and one calls for a greater direct role by BC Parks in monitoring commercial recreation impacts and in delivering interpretive programs. Some submissions propose specific wording changes for clarification.

Plan Recommendation:

The present direction in the Commercial Recreation Opportunities section of the draft plan seems to be generally supported, but some wording changes can be made to address points raised by public submissions and for consistency with changes previously addressed.

Issue: Climate Change

Public Comments: (9 submissions specifically addressed this issue)

Was the information about climate change and its potential impacts on the Park relevant to the management planning process?

The global climate always changes and there is probably very little humans can do to impact it.

Why did the Vikings call it Greenland and that was only about 1,000 years ago? (1)

Yes. (6)

Very much so as it shows the long-term nature of the planning process and the flexibility that the actions of such unknown factors will require in future management of our parks. (1)

Obviously vision statements and future planning must consider upcoming changes. (1)

Somewhat. It may be helpful to be aware of potential impacts. (1)

What would you suggest to improve the climate change information?

There is a contradictory assumption between increased precipitation on one side and drought on the other. On one side there is reference of forest encroachment into the high alpine opposite to loss of water resources due to melting glaciers on increase of temperature. Trees need lots of water to grow. (1)

If models from other related jurisdictions (Parks Canada and the Rockies parks?) are available concerning the possible effects of climate change on these areas, information from these could help put the situation in Mt Assiniboine PP into a clearer perspective for managers and the public. (1)

Include the information in the draft document available on the website so people can view at places other than the open house. (1)

What aspect(s) of climate change should future open houses cover in more detail?

The truth not speculative science. We only have hard data for maybe 150 years for a planet that is billions of years old – that is not relevant. (1)

Potential impacts on flora and fauna. (1)

[Models from other jurisdictions] if such models are available. Vegetation change and impacts on current wildlife populations, and predicted changes in recreation possibilities or desirability with changes in water availability, weather changes, etc. (1)

What are the expected changes in management plans due to climate change? (1)

What in your opinion are the three most important challenges facing the Park during the next 20 years?

Planning for aging population that is looking for more refined and comfortable backcountry experience. Planning to accept population growth – we can't build a fence around these parks to keep them out. (1)

Changing demographics – we must provide facilities for an aging population. Need to be supportive of the changing face of tourism. (1)

1) Increased use; 2) increased commercial pressure; 3) climate change (1)

1) Adjusting to recreational desires without damaging effects on the ecosystem; 2) carrying out the necessary inventory and research work to make informed choices on ecosystem management and recreational use; 3) adjusting management strategies to take account of impacts of climate change. (1)

1) Establishing a system of inventory databases for wildlife and vegetation and funding the system; 2) Establishing specific visitor use limits, based on effects to wildlife and vegetation; 3) Maintaining conservation integrity. (2)

Pressure to commercialize parks, pressure to provide more mechanized access, government commitment to continuing funding. (1)

Increasing development around the park (Park becomes an island); underfunding and pressure to “develop and commercialize”; climate change. (1)

What in your opinion are the three most important ways that climate change could affect the Park during the next 20 to 50 years?

I don't know. (1)

Impacts on wildlife and plant communities. (1)

1) reduction in extent of glaciers leading to drier late summer to early fall and higher chance of fires; 2) in-growth of forests and consequent reduction in meadows, leading to changed wildlife species populations and ranges; 3) extirpation of species currently on the edge of their range or already threatened by human impacts in and outside the park and for which climate change does not improve habitat. (1)

1) The terrain will support different species than it currently does, and visitor use may need to adapt; 2) Fire may be more of an issue; 3) Access to water may be more of an issue.

Extensive fires will see the return of elk, moose, deer and sheep in larger numbers. Rainy seasons during high visitor times will require trail hardening in heavily used areas. (1)

Loss of habitat for wildlife; loss of water/streams drying, melting glaciers, lack of snow, summers hot & fire. (1)

In your opinion, would ‘active management actions’ (such as those listed on the Comment Form) be justified in order to increase the resilience of the Park ecosystems?

Already doing an exceptional, if not overboard, job.

Only restricting visitor access and invasive species suppression – we don't support other measures. (1)

Insufficient knowledge to answer this; however...the issue of climate change also highlights the imperative to have thorough inventories of flora and fauna carried out in the next few years in order to assess where the pressures are occurring with climate change (or recreation) and to have monitoring procedures in place that will track major changes in vegetation, wildlife populations and movements, etc. as they occur. (2)

Perhaps (1)

Leave parks to return to their natural historical state without interfering other than to minimize damage done by overuse. (1)

Yes – they may be essential. I support limiting visitor access if necessary to protect fragile habitat or to allow animals such as grizzlies to feed undisturbed. (1)

Given the potential climate change impacts facing the Park in the coming years, what specific management options do you believe Park managers should consider/explore further?

No comment – these are hypothetical issues. (1)

Options must be maintained for the highest level of protection – no permanent structures/commercial activities. (1)

1) Comprehensive inventory of flora and fauna as soon as possible to provide current data against which change can be gauged. 2) Continued close cooperation with adjacent protected areas and Crown lands in provision of sufficient habitat for various wildlife over a wide land base to provide options for wildlife as conditions change. (1)

Establishing better base line data about the species living within the park, movement corridors (as appropriate) and numbers; this should be a management priority now. (1)

I don't know – try to preserve the beauty, the wildlife, the solitude, the wilderness – in whatever manner possible. (1)

Would you support Park management activities that seek to reduce the production of greenhouse gasses by visitors to the Park?

Would visitors be asked to stop breathing? (1)

Why? (1)

Yes. (4)

Would be interested in current ideas management has on how this might be done. (1)

No, I don't think the minuscule amount produced by visitors is relevant. Controlled campfires should be allowed. (1)

Commentary:

Most public respondents appreciated the plan's attempt to consider climate change as a factor that will influence management approaches over the longer term and recognized that thorough resource inventories are essential if the effects of climate change are to be understood, evaluated and addressed where appropriate.

Plan Recommendations:

The plan already flags a number of considerations related to climate change and should attempt to provide the best direction possible with the limited knowledge and research available at this time.

Additional Comments:

Generally, we are very supportive of the draft management plan. (2)

We encourage BC Parks to take a precautionary approach to management actions, especially for species or ecosystems that are not well studied or understood. ...We encourage erring on the side of conservation. (1)

The B.C. government has become a leader in the development of high quality tourism services. Why is this intent and direction not reflected in this pro-conservation plan? It doesn't reflect the direction provided at the workshop. (1)

With the current evidence of climate change, it is critical to reduce greenhouse gasses in our P.A. system. Parks must not commit to new permanent structures, more commercial tenures or any ? No changed use or access. (1)

I applaud the proposals for more and more readily available information. ...Information at the source (the park) and from people who know the area and of whom one can ask questions is ever more valuable, especially in educating people about appropriate, safe behavior and what they can expect to experience in the park. (1)

The FBCN strongly supports improved information and communication targeted to specific types of visitors, areas visited, activities undertaken and sensitivity of the areas. On-site interpretive programs, brochures, signs, etc. are needed to supplement the website information and educate and inform people who simply turn up at, say, Sunshine Meadows. (1)

Coordination with Parks Canada in this sort of information messaging and delivery would be helpful. (2)

Absolutely do not allow further marketing of this park. The federal Office of the Auditor General and the Parks Canada Panel on Ecological Integrity have advised that marketing brings excessive crowds of people that are the single heaviest impact on ecological integrity. (1)

There is a reference to fire threat to Sunshine Village structures from the southwest. This is hardly possible since the open Sunshine Meadows cover most of the area west and southwest of Sunshine Village. Sunshine Village fire threat is from the northwest to the northeast, i.e. from Kootenay and Banff National Parks. (1)

The draft background document still contains errors in information regarding the ACMG [details provided]. (1)

The BCWF as a major stakeholder should have been included from the beginning of this process. In the Kootenays and other parts of the Province we have a history of wanting and needing to be part of all Parks management plans on behalf of our 30,000 members. (1)

Commentary:

Additional comments tend to underscore points made in responses to other issues on the Public Comment Form, particularly relating to the need for better information and information management. These points and some additional corrections offered can be captured in the plan. The BCWF concern may result from a communication breakdown within that organization, as the BCWF Parks Committee Chair was contacted at the outset of the planning process. In future, both the Parks Committee Chair and the appropriate BCWF Regional organization should be contacted.

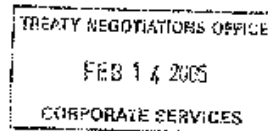
Plan Recommendation:

Address the additional points in the plan.

Appendix 3: Memorandum of Understanding

Establish an Effective Government to Government Working Relationship for the Management of Provincial Parks

DUPLICATE



Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to Establish an Effective Government-to-Government Working Relationship for the Management of Provincial Parks

BETWEEN:

The Ktunaxa Nation, represented by the Ktunaxa/Kanbasket Tribal Council ("K/KTC")

AND:

Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Province of British Columbia, represented by the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection ("British Columbia")

(each a "Party" and collectively the "Parties")

Whereas section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, recognizes and affirms the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Whereas the Ktunaxa Nation is engaged in tripartite treaty negotiations with British Columbia and Canada under the British Columbia Treaty Commission process and the parties in those negotiations believe that piloting a cooperative management process prior to concluding a treaty may help them to expedite the treaty negotiation process.

Whereas for the purposes of treaty negotiations in British Columbia, the K/KTC has identified as the Ktunaxa Nation's traditional territory the geographic area within British Columbia identified in its Statement of Intent received by the British Columbia Treaty Commission and shown schematically in Appendix A (herein the "Traditional Territory").

DUPLICATE

TREATY NEGOTIATIONS OFFICE
FEB 14 2005
CORPORATE SERVICES

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to Establish an
Effective Government-to-Government Working
Relationship for the Management of Provincial Parks**

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Columbia**, represented by the Minister of Water, Land and Air
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Whereas section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, recognizes and
affirms the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples
of Canada.

Whereas the Ktunaxa Nation is engaged in tripartite treaty negotiations
with British Columbia and Canada under the British Columbia Treaty
Commission process and the parties in those negotiations believe that
pursuing a cooperative management process prior to concluding a treaty
may help them to expedite the treaty negotiation process.

Whereas for the purposes of treaty negotiations in British Columbia, the
K/KTC has identified as the Ktunaxa Nation's traditional territory the
geographic area within British Columbia identified in its Statement of
Intent received by the British Columbia Treaty Commission and shown
schematically in Appendix A (herein the "Traditional Territory").

Whereas the Provincial Parks listed in Appendix B are located wholly or partially within the Traditional Territory.

Whereas the Parties wish to describe how they will work together on matters pertaining to the planning, management and use of the Provincial Parks that are located within the Traditional Territory.

Whereas the Parties intend to work cooperatively on the development of Park Planning Documents and the implementation of strategies to achieve the management objectives for the Provincial Parks.

Therefore the mutual understandings of the Parties are as follows:

Definitions

1. In this MOU:

"Aboriginal Rights" means aboriginal rights, including aboriginal title, pursuant to section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*;

"Ktunaxa Nation" means the Ktunaxa people (formerly referred to as Kootenay), including any member Bands of the K/KTC;

"Minister" means the Minister of Her Majesty the Queen in Right of British Columbia having the responsibility, from time to time, for the exercise of powers in respect of the matter in question and includes a person appointed to serve, in the department over which the Minister presides, in a capacity appropriate to the exercise of those powers;

"Park Planning Documents" means any of the following documents prepared by BC Parks:

- a) purpose statements,
- b) management direction statements,
- c) management plans, and
- d) 5-year plans;

"Provincial Parks" means the parks, protected areas and ecological reserves listed in Appendix B.

Purpose

2. This MOU describes how British Columbia and the Ktunaxa Nation will cooperate in carrying out management activities for the Provincial Parks that are located within the Traditional Territory and that are identified as priorities by the Parties each year.

Scope

3. This MOU applies to the Provincial Parks listed in Appendix B, and to any areas within the Traditional Territory that may be proposed to be added to or deleted from the Provincial Parks.

Objectives

4. The objective of this MOU is to establish an effective working relationship, based on mutual respect and understanding, that will enable the Parties to cooperatively:
 - 4.1. improve their respective processes for sharing information;
 - 4.2. discuss any plans to add areas to or delete areas from the Provincial Parks;
 - 4.3. review, amend and implement Park Planning Documents for the Provincial Parks in accordance with the management principles in sections 5, 6, and 7 below;
 - 4.4. plan and manage the Provincial Parks, in accordance with the Park Planning Documents, in a manner that:
 - 4.4.1. protects ecological attributes, natural resources, as well as cultural, recreational and historical values, including the written and oral history and cultural traditions of the Ktunaxa Nation;
 - 4.4.2. acknowledges the Ktunaxa Nation's use of the land and resources for food, social and ceremonial purposes in accordance with its asserted Aboriginal Rights;
 - 4.4.3. respects the authority of the Ktunaxa Nation on matters regarding the interpretation of Ktunaxa place names, cultural practices and history;
 - 4.4.4. integrates information provided by the Parties;
 - 4.4.5. provides opportunities for compatible recreation and tourism, and other compatible economic uses in accordance with the management principles set out in sections 5, 6, and 7 below; and
 - 4.4.6. provides for the continuation of existing permits.
 - 4.5. explore and develop economic and capacity building opportunities for the Ktunaxa Nation.

Management Principles

5. While recognizing any existing Aboriginal Rights and respecting the culture, traditions and history of the Ktunaxa Nation, the Parties agree to manage the Provincial Parks in accordance with this MOU, relevant Park Planning Documents and all statutory, constitutional and common law.
6. The Parties agree that the harvesting of resources by the Ktunaxa Nation from within the Provincial Parks will be for food, social and ceremonial use purposes only, unless other purposes have been approved in accordance with this MOU, the Park Planning Documents and all statutory, constitutional and common law, including any Orders in Council, in effect from time to time.
7. The Parties agree that any harvesting of resources in Provincial Parks by the Ktunaxa Nation in accordance with section 6 will be subject to measures necessary for conservation, public health or public safety.

Park Planning

8. The Parties agree that the primary purpose of park planning is to provide recommendations regarding appropriate strategies to protect, conserve and manage the Provincial Parks, while recognizing any existing Aboriginal Rights and respecting the culture, traditions and history of the Ktunaxa Nation.
9. Park Planning Documents may address, but will not be limited to, the following elements:
 - 9.1. a park description;
 - 9.2. a data or information inventory;
 - 9.3. a management vision;
 - 9.4. management strategies; and
 - 9.5. a Ktunaxa Nation food, social and ceremonial harvesting sub-plan.

Ktunaxa-British Columbia Provincial Parks Management Committee

10. Within sixty (60) days of signing this MOU the Parties will take steps to establish the Ktunaxa-British Columbia Provincial Parks Management Committee (the "Committee").
11. The Parties will each appoint two representatives to the Committee.

Management Principles

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11. The Parties will each appoint two representatives to the Committee.

-
12. The Committee may establish rules and procedures for its internal operations.
 13. The Committee may:
 - 13.1. invite other governments and other government agencies to participate in the cooperative processes established under this MOU; and
 - 13.2. for the purpose of obtaining a variety of perspectives and access to diverse sources of information, invite non-governmental stakeholders to participate in the Committee in an advisory capacity.
 14. The Committee will be responsible for attempting to resolve issues that arise regarding the funding of the operations of the Committee.
 15. Each Party will be responsible for their own costs to participate.
 16. The Committee will work cooperatively to acquire funds for projects.
 17. A primary function of the Committee will be to provide mechanisms to facilitate the Ktunaxa Nation's participation in:
 - 17.1. the planning for and management of the Provincial Parks;
 - 17.2. identification and development of potential economic opportunities associated with the management of these parks; and
 - 17.3. decisions regarding adding areas to or deleting areas from Provincial Parks.
 18. The Committee's tasks will include, but will not be limited to:
 - 18.1. ranking the Provincial Parks in the order of priority for Ktunaxa Nation participation in park planning and management activities, prior to the start of each new fiscal year;
 - 18.2. developing the consultation and review processes that the Parties agree are appropriate to implement prior to undertaking different types of activities (relevant activities may include creation of new parks, preparation, review, implementation and amendment of Park Planning Documents, reviewing new land use occupancy permit applications, reviewing research proposals and results);
 - 18.3. identifying priorities for conducting any inventories of cultural values in the Provincial Parks; and
 - 18.4. addressing matters related to the conduct of cultural activities by the Ktunaxa Nation within the Provincial Parks.
 19. Either Party may submit to the Committee for consideration any topic that is within the Committee's general mandate. The

Committee will provide a written summary of its considerations and/or recommendations to both Parties.

20. When the Committee forwards a recommendation to one of the Parties, the Party receiving the recommendation will provide in writing within thirty (30) days an explanation of any action the Party intends to take in response to the recommendation.

Nature of this MOU

21. This MOU describes:

- 21.1. the framework for a cooperative working relationship between the Parties, and
- 21.2. processes which form a component of consultation and accommodation,

but the MOU itself may not wholly satisfy the Crown's legal obligation to consult regarding any potential infringements of Aboriginal Rights and to seek workable accommodations as appropriate.

22. This MOU is not intended to:

- 22.1. be a legally binding contract;
- 22.2. be a treaty or a land claims agreement within the meaning of sections 25 and 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982;
- 22.3. create, amend, define, affirm, recognize, abrogate or derogate from, any Aboriginal Rights;
- 22.4. be interpreted or implemented in a manner that fetters the discretion of statutory decision-makers;
- 22.5. limit the positions either Party may take in any legal or administrative proceedings; or
- 22.6. constitute any admission of fact or liability.

23. For additional clarity, the Ktunaxa Nation asserts that its agreement to enter into this MOU does not mean that it accepts British Columbia's assertion of jurisdiction or authority respecting the management of Provincial Parks.

Dispute Resolution

24. When a dispute arises between the Parties during the term of this MOU regarding the interpretation or implementation of this MOU, the Committee may employ voluntary dispute resolution measures

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23. For additional clarity, the Ktunaxa Nation asserts that its agreement to enter into this MOU does not mean that it accepts British Columbia's assertion of jurisdiction or authority respecting the management of Provincial Parks.

Dispute Resolution

24. When a dispute arises between the Parties during the term of this MOU regarding the interpretation or implementation of this MOU, the Committee may employ voluntary dispute resolution measures

that may include mediation conducted in good faith and in an informal and non-adversarial manner.

25. With the written agreement of both Parties, other dispute resolution procedures may be used to assist Committee members to achieve consensus.

Amendment

26. The Parties will review this MOU and its effectiveness from time to time at the request of either Party but not more frequently than annually.
27. Any amendments to this MOU will require the written consent of both Parties and will take effect upon signing.

Notice

28. Where in this MOU any notice or other communication is required to be given by either Party, it will be made in writing and will be effectively given by any of the following methods:
- 28.1. delivery to the address of the Party set out below, on the date of delivery;
 - 28.2. pre-paid registered mail to the address of the Party, mentioned in this MOU, on the date the registered mail is delivered;
 - 28.3. facsimile, to the facsimile number of the Party, mentioned in this MOU, on the date the facsimile is sent; or
 - 28.4. electronic methods of communication, once these are developed and implemented with the agreement of the Parties.

K/KTC 7468 Mission Road Cranbrook, BC VIC 7E5 Fax: (250) 489-2438 Attn: Manager, Lands and Resources	Water, Land and Air Protection 205 Industrial Road G Cranbrook, BC VIC 7G5 Fax: (250) 489-8506 Attn: Regional Manager, Environmental Stewardship, Kootenay Region
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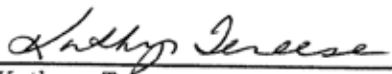
Termination

29. Either Party may terminate this MOU by giving the other Party thirty (30) days advance written notice of the intent to terminate the MOU and the reasons for terminating the MOU.


Signed on the 8th day of February, 2005.

On behalf of the Ktunaxa Nation

On behalf of Her Majesty the Queen
in Right of the Province of British
Columbia



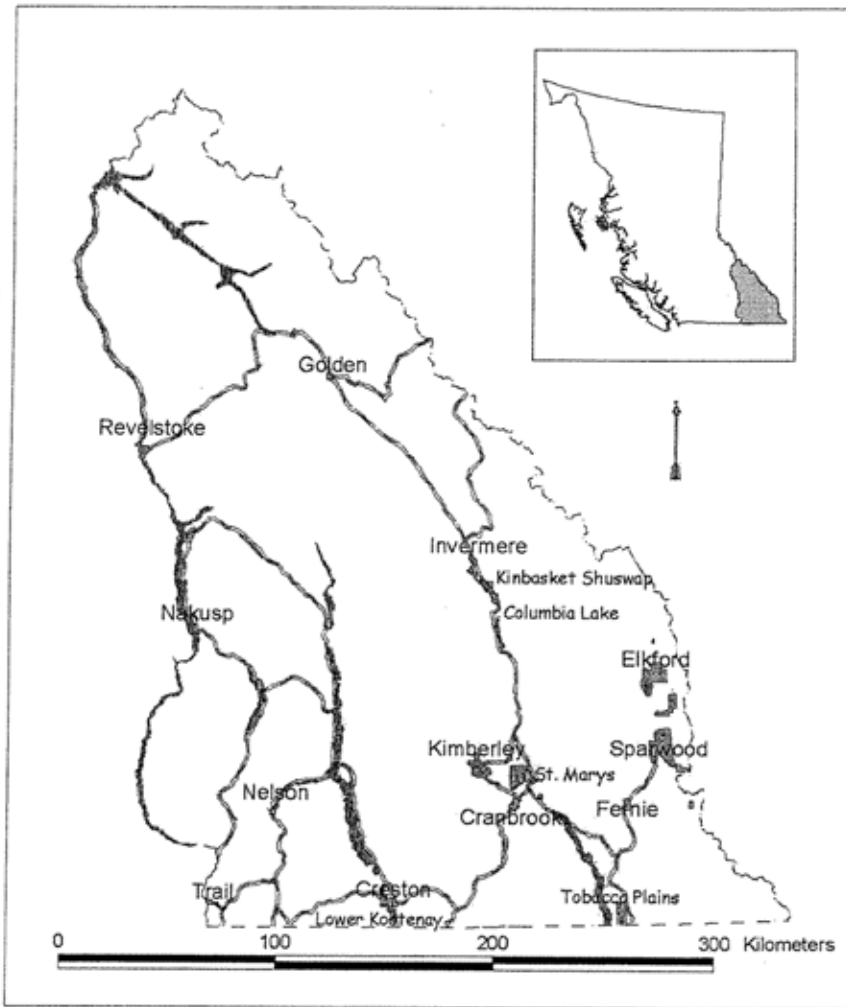
Kathryn Teeneese
Administrator, Ktunaxa/Kinbasket
Tribal Council



Honourable Bill Parisoff
Minister of Water, Land and Air
Protection

APPENDIX A

Traditional Territory of the Ktunaxa Nation



APPENDIX B

Provincial Parks within the Traditional Territory

PARK NAME	PARK LOCATION	TOTAL AREA (HA)
Akamina-Kishinena	B.C./Alta./Montana Borders	10921.00
Arrow Lakes - A Multi Site	Multi Site	
Arrow Lakes – Burton	Burton	18.00
Arrow Lakes – Eagle	Edgewood	38.00
Arrow Lakes – Fauquier	Fauquier	16.00
Arrow Lakes – Shelter Bay	At Shelter Bay	21.00
Beaver Creek - A Multi-Class	<i>Multi Designation Pa</i>	
a) Beaver Creek PA	13 Km E Of Trail	4.00
b) Beaver Creek Park	13 Km E Of Trail	67.00
Blanket Creek	25km S Of Revelstoke	318.00
Bugaboo	40km W Of Brisco	13646.60
Burges And James Gadsden	11km N Of Golden	401.00
Canal Flats	3km N Of Canal Flats	6.00
Champion Lakes	18km Nw Of Fruitvale	1426.00
Cody Caves	13km Nw Of Ainsworth	63.00
Columbia Lake ER	E Side Of Columbia Lake	32.00
Columbia Lake	S Of Fairmont Hotsprings	260.00
Crowsnest	51km E Of Fernie	46.00
Cummins - A Multi-Class	<i>Head Of The Cummins River</i>	
a) Cummins Lakes Park	Head Of Cummins River	21812.00
b) Cummins River PA		260.00
Drewry Point	32km S Of Balfour By Boat	26.00
Dry Gulch	8km S Of Radium Junction	29.00
Elk Lakes	137km N Of Fernie	17245.00
Elk Valley	18km N Of Fernie	81.00
Elko	32km S Of Fernie At Elko	22.00
Erie Creek	5km W Of Salmo	15.00
Evans Lake ER	Head Of Evans Lake	185.00
Gilnockie Creek	Vicinity Of Moyle & Elko Lakes	2842.20
Gilnockie Creek ER	East Kootenay District	58.00
Goat Range	Nw Of Kootenay Lake	78947.00
Goosegrass Creek ER	West Side Of Kinbasket Lake	2185.00

APPENDIX B cont'd

Provincial Parks within the Traditional Territory

Grohman Narrows	5km W Of Nelson	10.00
Height Of The Rockies	Adjacent To Banff Nat. Park	54208.20
Inonoklin	Edgewood	12.00
James Chabot	N End Windermere Lake	14.00
Jlmsmith Lake	2km S Of Cranbrook	13.70
Klanuko	40 Km N Of Creston	11637.90
Kikomun Creek	64km E Of Cranbrook	682.00
King George VI	10km S Of Rossland	162.00
Kokanee Creek	19km E Of Nelson	260.00
Kokanee Glacier	34km Ne Of Nelson	32035.40
Kootenay Lake - A Multi Site	Multi Site	
a) Kootenay Lake - Campbell Bay	Across Lake From Kaslo	25.00
b) Kootenay Lake - Coffee Creek	N Of Balfour	52.00
c) Kootenay Lake - Davis Creek	8km S Of Lardeau	5.00
d) Kootenay Lake - Lost Ledge	8km S Of Lardeau	38.00
e) Kootenay Lake - Midge Creek	16km N Of Sand Lake	223.00
Lew Creek ER	Sw Side Of Trout Lake	815.00
Lockhart Beach	19km S Of Crawford Bay	3.00
Lockhart Creek	E Of Nelson	3750.60
Marl Creek	24km N Of Golden	167.00
Martha Creek	20 Km N Of Revelstoke	71.00
McDonald Creek	10km Of Nakusp	468.00
Morrissey	16km Se Of Fernie	5.00
Mount Assiniboine	48km Sw Of Banff	39050.00
Mount Fernie	3km W Of Fernie	259.00
Moyle Lake	19km S Of Cranbrook	90.50
Nancy Greene	35km E Of Rossland	203.00
Norbury Lake	13km E Of Cranbrook	97.00
Pilot Bay	8km E Of Balfour By Boat	347.00
Premier Lake	40km Ne Of Kimberley	662.00
Purcell Wild Cons Corridor	E Side Of Purcell Wc Park	1990.00
Purcell Wild. Con. PA (East)	E Of Kootenay Lake	106290.60
Purcell Wild. Con. PA (West)	Ne End Of Kootenay Lake	91825.00
Ram Creek ER	20 Km Se Of Canal Flats	121.00
Rosebery	6km Se Of Rosebery	32.00
Ryan	10km N Of Yahk	58.00
St. Mary's Alpine	42km Nw Of	9146.00

APPENDIX B cont'd

Provincial Parks within the Traditional Territory

	Kimberley	
Stagleap	34km W Of Creston	1133.00
Summit Lake	18km Se Of Nakusp	6.00
Syringa	19km W Of Castlegar	4416.90
Thunder Hill	69km N Of Kimberley	44.00
Top Of The World	64km E Of Kimberley	8790.00
Valhalla	W Shore Of Slocan Lake	49893.00
Wardner	Wardner	4.00
Wasa Lake	21km N Of Fort Steele	144.00
West Arm	Sw Of Nelson	25318.60
Whiteswan Lake	10km E Of Canal Flats	1994.00
Windermere Lake	16km S Of Invermere	220.00
Yahk	Yahk	9.00

Notes: PA - Protected Area (Established under Environment and Land Use Act)
 ER - Ecological Reserve (Established under Ecological Reserves Act)