



# Mount Assiniboine Park Management Plan

Part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site

**November 2012**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization  
Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture



Canadian Rocky  
Mountain Parks  
World Heritage Site  
since 1984

Parcs des montagnes  
Rocheuses canadiennes  
Site du patrimoine mondial  
depuis 1984



**BC Parks**

Cover Page Photo Credit: Christian Kimber (Park Ranger)

This document replaces the direction provided in the Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Master Plan (1989).

Mount Assiniboine Park  
Management Plan

**Approved by:**

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# Plan Highlights

The management vision for Mount Assiniboine Park is that the park continues to be an international symbol of the pristine scenic grandeur of British Columbia's wilderness and the recreational enjoyment it offers. Key elements of the management plan include strategies to:

- Implement a zoning plan that enhances the emphasis on Mount Assiniboine 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 heritage structures from the earliest days of facility-based backcountry tourism in the Canadian Rockies. Approximately 86% of the park is zoned as Wilderness Recreation, 13% is zoned as Nature Recreation, less than 1% is zoned as Special Feature and less than 0.01% is zoned as Intensive Recreation.
- Develop an ecosystem management strategy that coordinates management of vegetation and wildlife in the park with that of adjacent protected areas under other agencies' jurisdiction and with activities on adjacent provincial forest lands. This includes a proposal to prepare a vegetation management strategy to maintain or restore natural disturbance regimes (i.e., insects, disease and fire) wherever possible.
- Develop a coordinated long-term approach to wildlife management in collaboration with other government agencies, emphasizing species of concern.
- Work with appropriate agencies and industry to protect the visual integrity of the park from impacts of adjacent uses along its southern boundary.
- Ensure that public access to the park is maintained by coordinating the management of roads, trails, trailheads and helipads on adjacent lands with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and appropriate B.C. government agencies.
- Prohibit all forms of motorized access into the park except for motorized access for management purposes and as provided for in this management plan (i.e., helicopter access and Sunshine Ski Village access to water supply and downhill ski facilities as currently approved by park use permit).
- Refine the current number and configuration of backcountry trails and campsites as necessary to ensure optimum utility and minimum environmental impact.
- Provide roofed accommodations based on existing heritage structures that have evolved in their traditional roles, and to ensure 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 area of the park.
- Provide new or replacement park facilities or services to improve the quality and efficient delivery of recreational opportunities without changing the general scale, character, or distribution of use in the park.

- Maintain operation of the historic Mount Assiniboine Lodge under park use permit and to support improved efficiency and services without departing from the traditional character of the structures or their accessibility for public interpretation.
- Continue the park's traditional guide-outfitting operations, which broaden the scope of park activities by offering a horse-based, wilderness recreation and hunting experience which are now very rare in the southern Canadian Rocky Mountains.
- Support low impact recreation services in the park where facilities and general public uses are compatible.

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of Mount Assiniboine Park.

This management plan:

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

Periodically, management plans are reviewed and updated to reflect changes in park infrastructure and context. This management plan draws from the Mount Assiniboine Park Master Plan (1989) and the Mount Assiniboine Park background reports (1987 and 2005). A workshop with a diversity of stakeholders at the draft stage of the management plan helped identify and address key issues. 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).

## 1.2 Planning Area

Mount Assiniboine Park lies adjacent to Banff National Park (Figure 1), close to the resort communities of Banff, Canmore and Lake Louise in Alberta, and near the East Kootenay communities of Radium Hot Springs and Invermere in British Columbia.

Ground-based access to the park is easiest and most direct from the Alberta side of the provincial border, via Banff and Sunshine Village Ski Resort to the North Core, and via Marvel Lake and four trails from Banff National Park to the South Core (Figure 2). 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 to the South Core to support visitors using both roofed and camping accommodations is available about 16 kilometres to the east from Spray Valley Provincial Park.

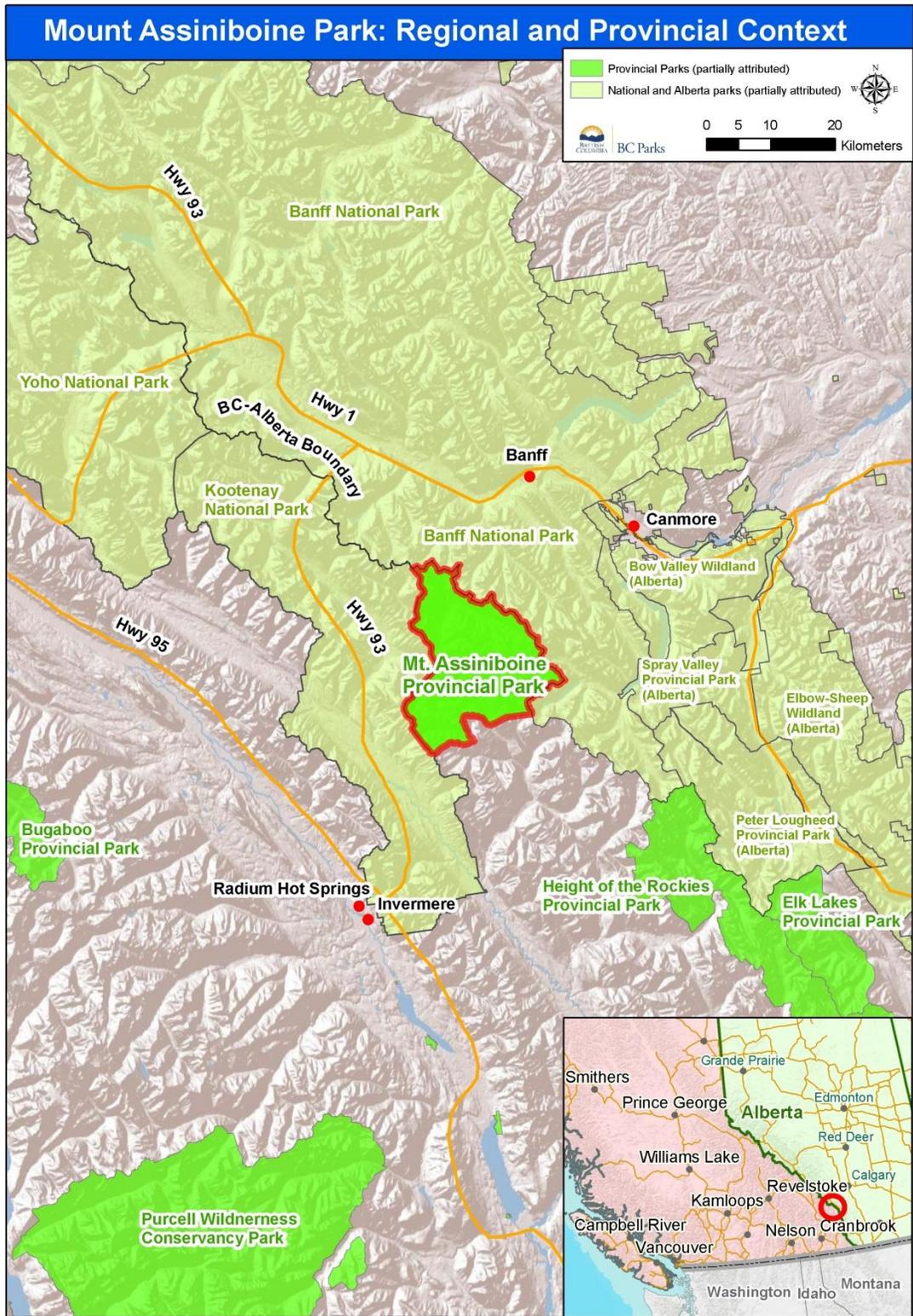


Figure 1: Mount Assiniboine Park Regional Context Map

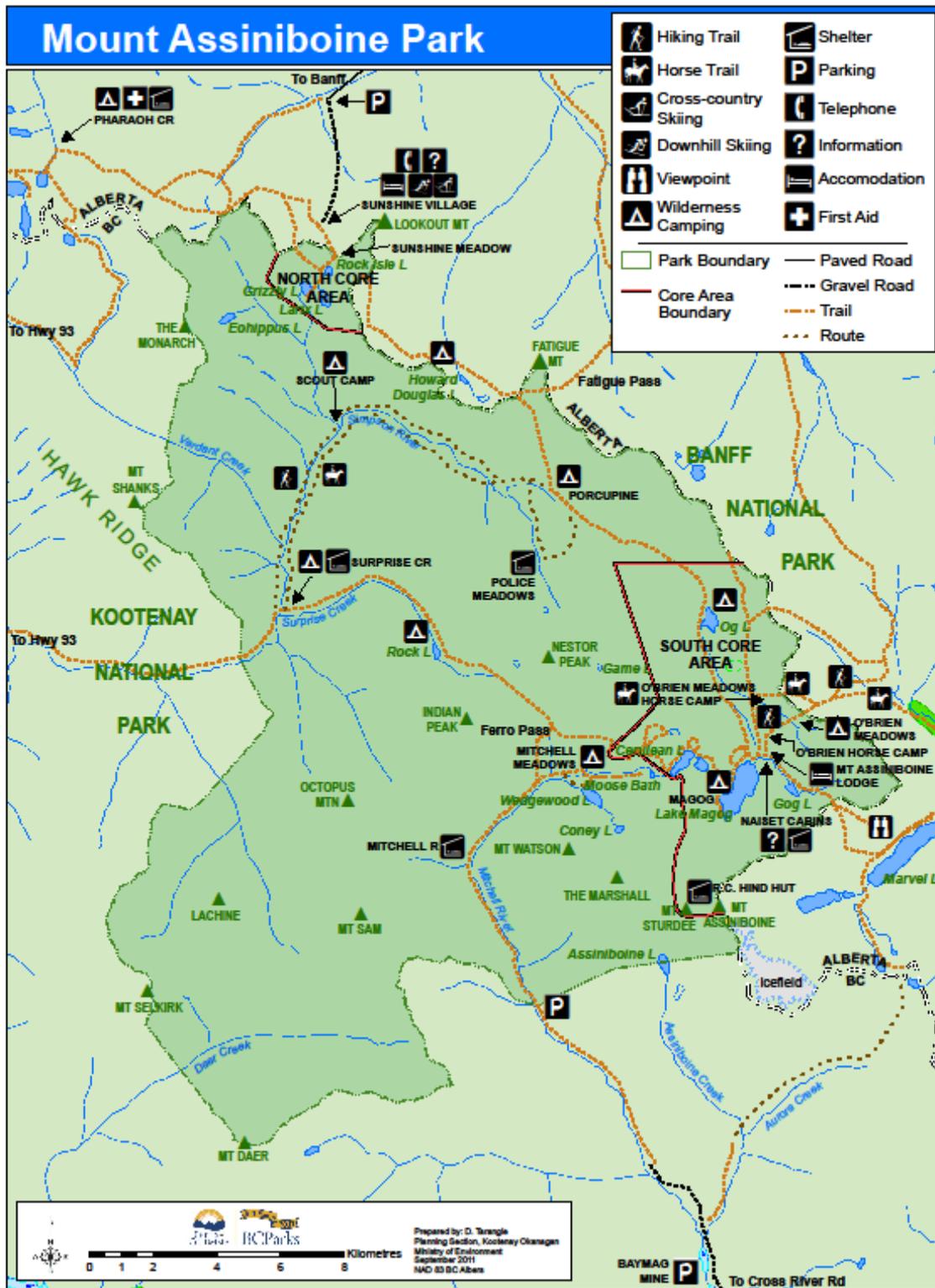


Figure 2: Park Features and Core Areas Map

Mount Assiniboine Park is both a wilderness area and a tourist destination, protecting a landscape and natural feature of provincial, national and international significance. In 1990 UNESCO added this park (along with Mount Robson and Hamber provincial parks) to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. Originally comprised of four contiguous national parks (Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay) the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site was established for its scenic splendour. Current park managers cooperate closely with adjacent British Columbia and Alberta government agencies and Parks Canada to ensure that biodiversity is maintained in the Central Rockies ecosystem and that the area is managed sustainably in a regional landscape context.

Mount Assiniboine Park is unique among protected areas in the Kootenay region in that it offers visitors a range of backcountry accommodations and services in surroundings that have changed little over 80 years of 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 hiking and camping.

### **1.3 Legislative Framework**

Originally comprising only 5,200 hectares in the vicinity of the mountain and Lake Magog, Mount Assiniboine 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, this Class A park was enlarged in 1973 to 39,013 hectares to protect the integrity of the surrounding alpine areas and watersheds and to provide a more complete provincial complement to the four Canadian Rockies national parks. Mount Assiniboine Park is named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

Class A parks are dedicated to the preservation of their natural environments for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public.

### **1.4 Management Commitments/Agreements**

"Parks and Wilderness for the 90s", a joint BC Parks and Forest Service 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 the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS) was completed in 1997. As a result of this planning process, the Assiniboine and Aurora creek addition was dropped as a candidate area under the Protected Areas Strategy, but seven other new protected areas were approved elsewhere in the East Kootenays. The designation of these areas brought the total amount of area protected within the Southern Park Ranges Ecosection to 32.6%.

In addition to allocating land use, the KBLUP-IS established land and resource management guidelines, objectives and strategies and emphasized measures to protect and restore connectivity corridors. The viability and effectiveness of core protected areas like Mount Assiniboine Park is enhanced through support zones and regional landscape connectivity.

Specific management direction contained in the KBLUP-IS relating to Mount Assiniboine Park includes:

- Managing the Cross River drainage south of the park boundary for high biodiversity emphasis for reasons of connectivity, Grizzly Bear and old-growth.
- Maintain wild fish stocks and the habitats of West Slope Cutthroat Trout.
- Maintain the regional connectivity corridor within the Kootenay River drainages

## 1.5 Relationship with First Nations

The Province and First Nations governments are working toward a new relationship 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 and foods, or as sacred sites. BC Parks needs to consider the traditional knowledge and concerns of First Nations.

The land now designated as Mount Assiniboine Park lies in the asserted traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and the Shuswap Nation. The management plan encourages the expansion of relationships between BC Parks and these First Nations in a number of areas to ensure that management of the park considers their traditional uses and values. 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 Council includes four Indian Bands: -aqam (St Mary's Band), -akink'umasnuqi? it (Tobacco Plains Band), akisq'nuk (Columbia Lake Band) and Yaqan nu? kiy (Lower Kootenay Band). The Ktunaxa Kinbasket Treaty Council is currently negotiating a treaty with the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia and signed a government to government memorandum of understanding with the Province in 2005 for the management of provincial parks in their traditional territory. The memorandum of understanding makes provisions for the parties to cooperate in a variety of park management activities including planning, boundary reviews, economic development and capacity building.

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

## 1.6 Ecosystem-Based Management Approach

BC Parks supports a more science based ecosystem management approach for protected areas. This requires:

- integration of available science-based information into management decisions;
- understanding 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
- inter-agency cooperation given that ecosystems extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries.

Mount Assiniboine Park's role as a link between Kootenay National Park and Banff National Park and as part of the even larger Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site strengthens the ecological integrity of the region, and significantly reduces the problems of habitat fragmentation which face many of the more isolated protected areas. However, close cooperation and coordination between BC Parks, Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and other British Columbia resource agencies are essential to realizing the benefits inherent in such a large multi-jurisdictional protected area. Inter-jurisdictional connections play a critical role in preserving the broad biodiversity of the ecosystem by supporting integration of the resource management practices of the agencies involved.

Global climate change will continue to alter weather patterns, hydrology and vegetation, with resulting effects on fish and wildlife habitat and on human activity. Ongoing monitoring of key environmental elements and the rate at which they may be changing can help protected area managers to identify and assess management options in order to maximize opportunities and minimize negative climate change impacts at a protected area or regional level. For example, habitat change projections can allow management options to be identified for species which may become stressed by a combination of climate change and human activity. Projections of changing hydrological conditions can help to ensure that safe and reliable drinking water supplies will be provided over the long term.

Management priorities for Mount Assiniboine Park include more thorough, long-term biological inventories and monitoring that can provide benchmarks for tracking the effects of both human activity and climate change. Without this information, park managers run the risk of being unaware of potential climate change effects and may not be able to identify effective options for avoiding irreversible impacts such as species loss.

## 1.7 The Planning Process

The management planning process for Mount Assiniboine Park involved a number of activities. 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 Park Management Plan.

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

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



Climbers going to the RC Hind Hut.

## 2.0 Values and Roles of the Park

### 2.1 Significance and Roles

#### Provincial and Regional Context

Within the provincial system of more than 1,000 protected areas, Mount Assiniboine Park fulfills several important ecological, recreation and cultural roles. It is also a key component 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.

#### Significance in the Provincial Protected Areas System

Mount Assiniboine Park is the fourth largest of twelve protected areas representing the Southern Park Ranges (SPK) Ecosection and because of its location between other protected areas to the east and west; the park's ecosystem representation is both significant and viable. The park is also significant because it protects:

- north-south wildlife movement corridors and wilderness areas;
- Mount Assiniboine, the 6<sup>th</sup> highest peak in the Canadian Rockies (highest in the southern part of the range at 3618 metres) and internationally recognized as “the Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies”;
- the Sunshine Meadows, the largest alpine meadows in the Canadian Rockies (their feature significance is enhanced by the presence of several adjacent water features);
- the rare Mount Cautley alpine poppy community;
- a number of peaks, alpine lakes and other recreational features, which while not unique, are of high recreational feature significance;
- geological elements including: Mount Assiniboine itself, the Valley of the Rocks (a relic of what may be the 4<sup>th</sup> largest landslide in Canada), the distinctive karst of Og Lake, with its underground drainage and nearby caves, and the Magog Lake fossil beds;
- aquatic resources and important wildlife habitats for species of concern, such as Badger, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep and Grizzly Bears, as well as for other species including Mountain Goat and Wolves; and
- the original Mount Assiniboine Lodge (1928) and Naiset Cabins (1925) - heritage structures of provincial and potentially national significance.

The significance of Mount Assiniboine's features, 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.

## 2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values

### Large Relatively Intact Ecosystem Representation

The natural values in Mount Assiniboine Park exemplify the qualities of ecosystem representativeness and biodiversity. The setting of Mount Assiniboine Park includes a core southeastern valley (the “South Core”) surrounded by a group of alpine lakes and striking high peaks along the Continental Divide, including Mount Assiniboine. 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 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.

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.

Mount Assiniboine Park is the fourth largest of twelve protected areas representing the Southern Park Ranges (SPK) Ecosection. Fully 31% or 344,684 hectares of this 1,107,272 hectare ecosection falls within national or provincial park and ecological reserve boundaries, and Mount Assiniboine Park itself contributes 3.5% of the total ecosection area and 11.3% of the total area protected within the ecosection.

Mount Assiniboine Park contains three biogeoclimatic zones<sup>1</sup> along an elevational gradient: the Montane Spruce (MS) Zone in lower elevations, the Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir (ESSF) Zone (from 1200 to 2450 metres) and the Interior Mountain-heather Alpine (IMA) Zone (above 2450 metres). The ESSF contains four subzones which occur along the elevational gradient (dk, dku, dkp, dkw) and vegetation includes Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, alpine larch, whitebark pine, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir and mountain hemlock. The Montane Spruce Zone contains one subzone (dk2). The Interior Mountain-heather Alpine Zone is currently undifferentiated throughout the province (i.e., it is comprised of one subzone referred to as IMA-un). Species typical to the IMA-un include mountain avens, alpine bluegrass, moss campion, willows, heather and forget-me-not.

Although Mount Assiniboine Park contributes relatively little to overall representation in such an extensively protected ecological unit, it has considerable value as a link between

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the provincial Biogeoclimatic Ecological Classification (BEC) zoning system, biogeoclimatic zones are areas with similar topographic, soils, climatic and biological characteristics.

two larger contiguous protected areas. This connectivity is particularly important in the current period of rapid climate change.

The representational qualities of Mount Assiniboine Park are summarized in the following table.

<b>Biogeoclimatic (BEC) Zone</b>	<b>BEC subzone</b>	<b>Area of BEC in the park (ha)</b>	<b>Total area of BEC protected in province (ha)</b>	<b>% Total area of BEC protected in province contributed by the park</b>	<b>% BEC protected in province</b>
Engelmann Spruce -- Subalpine Fir	ESSF dk2	8654	123534	7%	37%
Engelmann Spruce -- Subalpine Fir	Essf dkp	8463	42135	20%	40%
Engelmann Spruce -- Subalpine Fir	ESSF dku	9.4	27568	.034%	99%
Engelmann Spruce -- Subalpine Fir	ESSF dkw	13 876	36031	38%	21%
Interior Mountain-heather Alpine	IMA un	6012	65492	9%	65%
Montane Spruce	MS dk2	1744	66995	3%	30%



Sunshine Meadows

### **Wildlife**

The park protects a diversity of wildlife and habitat for a wide range of provincially listed species at risk and other species of provincial conservation concern. Wildlife found in the park includes several carnivore species (Gray Wolf, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, weasels, Cougar and lynx) as well as six species of ungulates (Elk, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Moose, Mountain Goat and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep).

Based on recorded sightings, more than 84 bird species inhabit the park. 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 fewer than those which actually occur given that 182 bird species have been confirmed in neighbouring Kootenay National Park. Although thorough information is lacking, observations to date in the South Core area indicate that Mount Assiniboine Park also contains a number of relatively rare insect and alpine plant species<sup>2</sup>.

### **Fish and Aquatic Values**

The fish and aquatic values are concentrated in the two core areas, with: provincially blue-listed Westslope 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 Appendix 5 for details.

Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout (also provincially listed) are native to the Simpson and Mitchell Rivers, but have also been stocked in a number of lakes. 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 natural condition. The natural absence of fish stocks can be attributed both to physical barriers (e.g., waterfalls, steep stream gradients) that historically prevented the inward migration of fish and to the low productive capacity of the subalpine bodies to support sustainable population recruitment.

The park's two main watersheds both flow from the Continental Divide; the Mitchell River draining the southern half and the Simpson River the northern half of the park. Subterranean water flow maintains supply to all lakes within the North Core area. Gog Lake (South Core), Rock Isle Lake, 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 there are no lakes in the southwestern half of the park.

### **2.3 Cultural Heritage Values**

No pre-contact archaeological sites have been found in the park, although several locations were probably used as campsites along established routes, 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.

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 document occupation in the region as far back as 10,000 years before the present time. The land now designated as Mount Assiniboine Park is part of the asserted traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation Council and the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council. Based in the Kootenays, these aboriginal people traditionally travelled across the Rockies to hunt on the eastern side of the park. Traversed in 1841 by Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Simpson River valley was undoubtedly one of the routes used historically and may contain evidence of transient campsites.

Probably first sighted by early explorers in 1845, Mount Assiniboine became one of the focal points for Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) mountain tourism starting in the mid-1890s with the first ascent occurring in 1901. From 1920 until 1926, the annual "Wheeler Walking Tour" guided tourists on a 75-mile circular trip through the region, making regular use of the South Core area and focusing attention on backcountry

tourism values. 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 Brewster's 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.



Mount Assiniboine Lodge (July 2012)

## 2.4 Recreation Values

### Diversity of Recreational Opportunities

The park offers an exceptional diversity of backcountry activities, many of which are supported by mountain guides and other recreation companies. These activities include day hiking, nature appreciation, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, mountaineering and caving, as well as ungroomed cross-country skiing and ski touring. The Sunshine Village Ski Resort (at the boundary of the North Core area) also has downhill skiing and groomed cross-country trail facilities.

Thanks to a variety of accommodation types and access options ranging from helicopters to horses to hiking, the park appeals to a wide spectrum of users. Though recreational use is concentrated in the feature areas of the Mount Assiniboine massif and the Sunshine Meadows, the park is large enough to provide extensive and more primitive backcountry and wilderness recreation opportunities as well.

## Visual Features

Landscape diversity and the contrasting scale of features are the main reasons for the park's outstanding scenic quality. Primary visual and recreational highlights are: the Mount Assiniboine massif (an internationally recognized symbol of the Canadian Rockies), its surrounding meadows and lakes (Gog, Magog, Sunburst and Cerulean) and the alpine lakes in the Sunshine Meadows area (Rock Isle, Grizzly and Larix). These features are complemented by alpine and subalpine meadows in the Magog to Rock Isle corridor, Wonder Pass, the forested creek drainages providing access to the alpine, and wildlife viewing opportunities for Grizzly Bear, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Elk and Mountain Goat. The North Core area also offers tremendous mountain and alpine meadow viewing opportunities, and most areas of the park are visible from the Continental Divide.

Because the park's provincially significant heritage structures (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.

## Mountaineering

Regardless of recreational development at its base, Mount Assiniboine - the dramatic "Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies" - will continue to attract mountaineers to the park. A successful climb of Mount Assiniboine is recognized as a respectable North American mountaineering achievement. Of lesser prominence to international mountaineering, but no less important for climbing opportunities, are the associated peaks and ridges which form the Mount Assiniboine massif.

## Facilities

The park presently offers four fairly distinct types of overnight facilities: camping at designated sites throughout the park (including horse and group camping at O'Brien Meadows), public cabin accommodation (Naiset Cabins and RC Hind Hut) and full-service lodge accommodation (Mount Assiniboine Lodge & cabins) in the South Core, and guide-outfitter cabin/camp accommodation (Simpson/Surprise, Police Meadows, Mitchell River).

More specifically, existing park facilities include: 10 camping areas with a total of approximately 75 campsites (including 28 defined sites at the Magog Rim campground); the five public Naiset Cabins with a combined capacity of 53; the R C Hind Hut with 12 spaces; the lodge complex which can accommodate a maximum of 30 guests (lodge, seven cabins, four staff buildings and a shower/sauna building); and three rustic backcountry cabins. Day use facilities and an interpretive trail system are available in the North Core area and about 160 kilometres 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 Sunshine Village Ski 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. Use of the facilities occurs under a park use permit.

The concentration and variety of accommodation types (three) 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 a high resort 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. Some renovation of the cabin interiors is needed. Over the longer term, the age of the structures will also demand major maintenance or reconstruction to assure their continued safety and utility. A replacement for the Wheeler Wonder Lodge (a four season cooking shelter) was constructed in 2007 to address concerns of inadequate space for cooking or socializing.

Visitor surveys to date suggest that the current overnight accommodation capacity within the South Core remains low 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. This level of use also has not created observable impacts on vegetation and wildlife. Actual South Core overnight capacity is rarely reached. It remains to be seen if providing cooking shelters for campers and public cabin users will make existing overnight facilities more attractive under less than ideal conditions and in shoulder seasons and increase occupancy.

The degree of campsite sophistication relates to its location. Fewer services have historically been demanded in remote areas of the park, but more recently, the visitor use profile in these areas and their demands have changed. In particular, recent user surveys conducted in the park's primary backcountry campground accommodation at Magog Rim have indicated low "value for fee" satisfaction. One key is that the water supply stream dries up in drought periods. Several improvements have been undertaken since the survey was conducted. For example, to reduce bear conflicts, new food lockers, two cooking areas and a cooking shelter were constructed in 2007.

### **Recreation Permits**

The park supports a number of operations under park use permits. In addition to one helicopter access permit, two guide-outfitting permits and the Mount Assiniboine Lodge

permit (which provides for guiding and operation of all South Core accommodation facilities), there are numerous guiding permits for operations within the park.

The Sunshine Village Ski Resort boundary extends into what is now the park, including a chair lift. The use of the area and associated facilities continue under park use permit. 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. During the summer, loop trails designed for high levels of use have provided summer access without significant impacts.

The historic Mount Assiniboine Lodge is operated by permittees who also manage the trails, 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 entire park and, except in the North and South Core areas (no hunting areas), operators offer horse-based, wilderness hunting opportunities now rare in Southern Rocky Mountain parks. In addition, there are nine permits for recreational guiding activities in the park (see also Economic Opportunities section). Most guide operators visit the park fewer than half a dozen times a year. These service providers enhance safe and informed public access to the range of opportunities available in the park.

Because of the iconic character of Mount Assiniboine, the park attracts a significant number of recreation guiding services based outside the park. The largest such operation is White Mountain Tours, which buses summer visitors to Sunshine Village Ski Resort for hikes into the North Core area, but most operate in the park less regularly with much smaller parties.

Commercial recreation services have continued to evolve as part of the heritage of Mount Assiniboine Park since the early days of guided mountaineering and the establishment of the Mount Assiniboine Lodge. Current operations honour these traditions and inspire appreciation of the park's natural values and recreational heritage among clients, even as they meet contemporary service needs. Operations also play an important role in supervising and educating visitors to ensure protection of and appreciation for park resources.

### **Visitor Demographics and Use Patterns**

Over half of park visitors are from Alberta, with the balance originating from British Columbia, the rest of Canada, the United States or elsewhere. The park plays a major role as one of the key scenic attractions drawing tourists to the region, even though very few of them may actually set foot in the park.

Park visitors generally fall into two broad categories: users that are young and physically fit and users that are physically limited and typically older. The largest proportion of visits is characterised by 2-3 people staying for 3-5 days. Satisfaction with the 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 days<sup>3</sup>. 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.

Because of the tourism market and ease of automobile access to trailheads, 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.

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.

### **Winter Recreation**

Winter use in the South Core tends to be primarily locally based. 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 abilities. Mount Assiniboine Lodge presents a good opportunity to comfortably introduce the beauty of the winter backcountry to park visitors. Similarly, Sunshine Village Ski 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.

### **Mechanized Activities**

Although some mechanized activities, such as aircraft, ATVs, snowmobiles and mountain bikes, are accommodated in some provincial protected areas in British Columbia, these activities may not be compatible with the backcountry nature and land use intent of other areas. Owing to the nature of access, the condition of trails and potential user conflicts, no mechanized activities, such as ATV use, snowmobiling or mountain biking,

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<sup>3</sup> The actual number of individuals visiting the park is lower, as this annual total counts each day an individual is in the park.

are appropriate or permitted in Mount Assiniboine Park<sup>4</sup> with the exception of limited mechanized activity for management purposes based at Mount Assiniboine Lodge and the Sunshine Village Ski Resort.

### **Helicopter Access**

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. The *Park Act* regulations require a park use permit for all aircraft landings in the park, allowing control of access to ensure that safety, 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.

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 fly over 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.

### **Fishing**

Fishing 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 fishing, and the restrictive nature of the regulations are reflective of how marginal this artificially established lake fishery remains.

The lakes within the North Core 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

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

subject to the general regulations for the management unit, and Gog Lake in particular offers a special ambience which enhances the fly fishing experience.

## **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. Guided (non-residents<sup>5</sup>) and public (BC residents) 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 are closed to hunting to ensure the safety of late summer hikers in those areas.

## **Horse and Pack Animal Use**

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.<sup>6</sup> The Wilderness Recreation Zone trail system is generally suitable for dual horse/hiker use, but high hiker numbers within the Nature Recreation Zones require that the two user groups be separated.

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.

## **Trails**

The park has approximately 160 kilometres of trails in various conditions which offer hiking opportunities ranging from easy day hikes to extended wilderness backpacking. In most cases, backpacking in Mount Assiniboine Park focuses on getting to South Core area accommodations which are then used as a base from which to undertake other backcountry activities.

South Core trails serve up to 5,000 day hikers annually. These trails are generally in good condition because work was done to harden the surfaces and improve drainage in the 1980s and early 1990s. Additionally, the lodge operator annually clears deadfall on popular routes, as guiding recreational day hikers is an integral part of their business

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<sup>5</sup> Residents from outside of BC are required to hire a guide for hunting in the park.

<sup>6</sup> Communicable Disease Risks to Wildlife From Camelids in British Columbia by Helen Schwantje and Craig Stephen, British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Biodiversity Branch Victoria, BC August 2003

operation. These trails include Assiniboine Pass, Wonder Pass, Magog Campground and beyond to Elizabeth Lake and Mitchell Meadows and northward to Og Lake. Surveys in 1975, 1986 and 2004<sup>7</sup> indicate that day-hiking in the South Core area is a major attraction to visitors due to the many superlative natural features. South Core area use levels appear to have remained fairly stable over the past thirty years.

In the North Core (Rock Isle, Grizzly, and Larix lakes) hardened trails are maintained under permit by the adjacent Sunshine Village Ski Resort as a summer adjunct to their business. Initially when the improved trails in the North Core were accessed by the ski area gondola during the key tourist months of July and August, as many as 40,000 day hikers used the trails. The gondola no longer operates in the summer but use levels are still significant, averaging around 11,000 visitors per year. Backcountry hiking opportunities in the area are therefore limited, and the available visitor experience can be categorized as an interpretive nature walk.

In the process of improving the North Core trails, the resort has restored damaged areas from previous use including braided trails and eroded areas. The layout and hardening of the day-use trails and facilities combined with supervised tours has prevented cumulative visitor impacts on the sensitive alpine meadows.

## 2.5 Other Park Attributes

Sunshine Village Ski Resort holds a Water Licence (#118172) on Rock Isle Lake for domestic use (15,240 m<sup>3</sup>/year) which pre-dates park establishment. This supplements the Sunshine Village Ski Resort's main water supply within Banff National Park, but is essential to the resort's operations.

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<sup>7</sup> See **Park User Attitudes** section in the **Background Document**, p.72.

## 3.0 Management Direction

### 3.1 Vision

The vision statement below describes the desired future condition of Mount Assiniboine Park. The statement projects what a visitor to Mount Assiniboine Park can expect to find at a future point in time and sets the tone for how the park experience may differ from what it is today. The vision provides the conceptual context for defining the ecological, recreation and cultural roles of the park.

Mount Assiniboine Park is seen as an international symbol of the pristine scenic grandeur of the British Columbia Rocky Mountain wilderness. The park 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 UNESCO World Heritage Site continues to support coordinated and well-researched intervention to conserve 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 respect and protect the park's natural and cultural resources as a trust to be enjoyed and as a legacy for future generations.

## 3.2 Management Issues, Objectives, and Strategies

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

### Ecosystem-Based Management

There are large gaps in the information and understanding of ecosystems in the park. Over the last several decades, much of the management effort has been directed to enhancing recreational values. An increased focus on ecosystem-based management and associated strategies is needed and existing knowledge gaps need to be filled.

Protected area management objectives typically aim at sustaining representative ecosystems and species, but may be thwarted by the effects of climate change (e.g., changes in precipitation levels, air temperature, etc.) which can alter the ecology of an area. Such effects may be subtle, but more dramatic natural disturbances such as wildfire, insects and disease are likely to increase in frequency or severity. With the ongoing effects of human land use activities outside protected areas already applying pressure on both rare and representative species and ecosystems, park managers may have to decide to what extent climate change effects can or should be evaluated or addressed within the park in order to help natural systems adjust or to support species that might otherwise be naturally extirpated.

Climate change may noticeably affect natural systems within Mount Assiniboine Park. While data specific to the park are limited, changes projected for the park to 2080<sup>8</sup> include:

- warmer winters, higher precipitation and general warming trends;
- increased frequency and/or severity of natural processes such as wildfires, forest pest infestations and droughts;
- changes in hydrology (e.g., reduction of glaciers and snowfields around Mount Assiniboine) and the timing of peak flows and low-water events;
- forest encroachment on alpine meadows (e.g., Sunshine Meadows) as ecological zones shift upwards;
- extirpation of some plant and animal species (e.g., cold-adapted conifers) including those in ecological pockets such as microclimates, or at the limits of their range; and
- changes in ecosystem composition and structure (e.g., expansion of hardwood tree species ranges).

In the absence of local data, projected changes for the region should be managed as “risks” rather than “certainties”. As some elements such as future temperature, the

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<sup>8</sup> Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Climate Change Assessment Dec 2005, Compass Resources Management Ltd.

direction of movement of the tree-line and snowline are more certain than others, it may be possible to begin managing some of these risks without further study.

Objectives	Strategies
To conserve representative ecosystems, ecological values and natural ecological processes within the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and apply an ecosystem management strategy that includes the major ecosystem components of vegetation, fish and wildlife and natural processes such as fire, insects, diseases, pollination and evolution.</li> <li>• Limit habitat fragmentation when considering facilities or uses to avoid cumulative impacts in the park.</li> </ul>
To support wildlife connectivity within and outside the park to maintain the integrity of sensitive ecological values in support of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure habitat for Grizzly Bear, Mountain Goat, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep and Wolverine in the park is managed to support connectivity over the landscape and work co-operatively with other government agencies and land managers to support connectivity outside the park.</li> <li>• Work with the appropriate government agencies to support the Kootenay-Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy Conservation Objectives and Strategies and the resource management zone objectives of the higher level plan order.</li> <li>• Provide input through provincial review processes for proposed major developments outside the park that may impact the park’s ecosystem values.</li> <li>• Monitor and provide input into forest development and mineral exploration projects, and commercial recreation proposals.</li> </ul>
To maintain biodiversity in the Central Rockies Ecosystem and manage the area as a sustainable regional landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a close liaison with Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and other land and resource management agencies and private groups that have jurisdiction in the Central Rockies Ecosystem to take an integrated ecological approach to land management.</li> <li>• Ensure habitat for Grizzly Bear, Mountain Goat and Wolverine in the park is managed to support connectivity over the working landscape and between the region’s protected areas and wildlife management areas by working co-operatively with other agencies and land managers.</li> <li>• Work with the appropriate government agencies 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.</li> <li>• Provide input through review processes for proposed major developments outside the park that may impact its ecosystem values.</li> <li>• Encourage links between databases for the collection, recording, and sharing of ecological information.</li> </ul>
To increase knowledge of ecological components and processes and an understanding of their response to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and conduct monitoring and research into park hydrology and vegetation to support future management decisions.</li> <li>• Exchange inventory and research information on ecosystem values and processes with other agencies and jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Conduct habitat inventory, develop a species list for the park, and field check existing 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.</li> </ul>

To build and maintain the necessary public support for the ecological conservation goals within the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 function.</li> </ul>
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## Geology

Mount Assiniboine Park’s geology includes a number of outstanding features of the Canadian Rocky Mountains which merit both protection and public appreciation. Very little is known about these features and in order to properly manage and provide more opportunities for the public to enjoy them, further research and caution in providing recreational opportunities are required.

Objectives	Strategies
To study, interpret and protect the special geological features of Mount Assiniboine Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage research on the geological features of the park and publication of information about these features (e.g., glaciers, landslides, rock glaciers, and karst and kame terraces).</li> <li>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).</li> </ul>

## Water

Although creek flows are primarily fed by rain and snow, it is likely that late summer stream levels are declining and temperatures increasing as permanent snowfields and glaciers continue to recede at noticeable rates owing to climate change. Ultimately, such changes will affect human water supplies, particularly in karst areas where a lot of the 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 due to increased and more severe natural disturbances.

No obvious effects of the Sunshine Village Ski Resort’s use of water from Rock Isle Lake have been observed , but present knowledge of Rock Isle Lake hydrology is poor and the extent to which domestic water use may be affected by climate change factors is unknown.

Magog Rim Campground is supplied with water from a surface stream but it is undependable during extended rain-free periods and the campground should have a permanent source of water. In the central corridor, hiking and camping opportunities are also limited due to a lack of a potable water supply.

Objectives	Strategies
To improve understanding of park hydrology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 (e.g., native rare or endangered species) and key</li> </ul>

	<p>domestic water sources (e.g., South Core water supplies, Rock Isle Lake).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect key data specifically aimed at detection of long-term climate change trends including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ glacier terminus positions;</li> <li>▪ date and depth of peak snow accumulation;</li> <li>▪ date and volume of peak spring run-off;</li> <li>▪ annual lake freeze and thaw dates; and,</li> <li>▪ minimum summer stream flows.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
To provide safe and adequate drinking water supplies for park visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an adequate and dependable water supply for the Magog campground.</li> <li>• Investigate and develop potential sources for drinking water supply to hikers within the central corridor.</li> </ul>

## Vegetation

Subalpine vegetation exists throughout the North and South Core areas and is sensitive to intensive recreation activity. A Conservation Risk Assessment completed for Mount Assiniboine Park in 2002 concluded that the greatest conservation risks are posed by the impacts of human use in the relatively fragile alpine areas (i.e., Rock Isle Lake and Magog Lake areas). 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. 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. Considering the sensitivity of alpine species to climate change and human activity, detailed inventories and studies are needed to support informed management.

Wildfires and insect infestations have increased in frequency and severity to the west of the park and may affect park vegetation more directly as the climate continues to warm. Due to the longstanding policies of fire suppression, major wildfires have not affected the park to any great extent. Heavy forest encroachment has occurred over the past 40 years as a result of fire suppression policies causing a reduction in habitat for some foraging species (e.g., reduced elk habitat in the Simpson River valley) as well as forage for horses. The park's approach to wildfire management must take into consideration the long-term influences of climate change as well as more immediate threats to wildlife, recreation and structures inside and outside the park.

The mountain pine beetle infestation currently affecting all parts of the British Columbia Interior has not significantly impacted Mount Assiniboine Park to date. An infection has appeared in the Mitchell River but this occurrence is considered by forest health specialists to be locally isolated. Assessment of forest pest and disease risks and management options for Mount Assiniboine Park should be undertaken in the broader context of Parks Canada and provincial responses to the mountain pine beetle in the area.

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.

Observations from guide outfitters suggest that there is also a growing issue with intrusion of non-native species and noxious weeds in some areas<sup>9</sup> but the nature and extent of the problem have not been identified.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To manage the park's vegetation communities in a manner that increases resiliency to short-term and long-term environmental change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the ecosystem management strategy, develop vegetation management strategies 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.</li> <li>• 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 beetle activity in the Mitchell River valley and in other parts of the park.</li> <li>• Manage human activities as necessary to provide high quality recreation experiences with minimal impacts on park vegetation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ directing all subalpine walking/hiking to identified trails;</li> <li>▪ rehabilitating all vegetation scars resulting from the abandonment or realignment of all trails and facilities;</li> <li>▪ avoid new surface disturbance and prevent it in sensitive and rare species habitat;</li> <li>▪ ensuring protection of sensitive shoreline vegetation by directing use to less vulnerable shoreline areas;</li> <li>▪ distributing concentrated recreation activity (e.g., group camping, intensely impacted campsites) to allow periods of vegetation recovery;</li> <li>▪ limiting the scale of clearing of disease/insect infested forest stands; and</li> <li>▪ authorizing grazing of horses only within any areas that may be designated pursuant to the vegetation management plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>To improve knowledge of the park's vegetation communities, with emphasis on protection of species at risk plant communities and species including those elements most sensitive to climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider climate change impacts on rare, endangered, and vulnerable native plant communities and species, when considering vegetation management to increase resilience.</li> <li>• Monitor key changes in the transition zone between plant communities as a predictor of climate change effects: species present, physical forms trees take, soil moisture conditions, etc.</li> <li>• Complete a comprehensive vegetation inventory to locate, identify, and map plant communities, rare species and threatened plant communities in areas that could potentially be impacted by climate change or recreation, particularly alpine meadows within the Nature Recreation Zones.</li> <li>• Intervene where practical if natural processes threaten rare, endangered or vulnerable native plant communities and species.</li> <li>• In support of enforcement of the prohibition on gathering plants in parks, educate the public about the values of maintaining the integrity of all components of the park's vegetative communities.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> John Niddrie & Albert Cooper, pers. comm., 2006 (Simpson River Valley).

<p>To use methods of vegetation management and firefighting that supports natural recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep up-to-date wildfire response directions and share management plan with wildfire responders to assist in protecting park values.</li> <li>• Allow burned areas to recover naturally to reduce erosion and protect soil.</li> <li>• Ensure that interagency insect management programs follow BC Parks' Conservation Policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ allowing natural processes to prevail;</li> <li>▪ removing and burning individual trees, and</li> <li>▪ using large-scale prescribed burning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure that all tree removal complies with approved policy for parks and protected areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ for ecosystem restoration purposes;</li> <li>▪ minimal environmental impacts;</li> <li>▪ subject to BC Parks Impact Assessment Process, and</li> <li>▪ identified in and subject to a Vegetation Management Plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>To prevent the establishment of non-native plant species.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Research and develop a management protocol for future scenarios in which non-native species move into the park as a result of changing climate. Recognize that the arrival of some species may signal climate adaptation migrations.</li> </ul>

## Wildlife

In terms of wildlife species at risk, there are 2 red-listed species and 5 blue-listed species in the park but the presence and population health of the smaller mammals have not been inventoried for many years.

Some wildlife species (e.g., Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep) have been studied fairly consistently but information on most other species is inconsistent and heavily dependent upon studies undertaken by the adjacent national parks. Additional baseline studies and knowledge of species' tolerances are needed to identify and respond to potential human and environmental impacts.

The park's shared boundaries with two national parks require consideration and coordination when managing wildlife populations. For example, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep in Mount Assiniboine Park use the habitat in the adjacent national parks, yet have successfully kept free of the diseases and parasites that have infected many other Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep herds, particularly through contact with domestic stock. Similarly, concerns that fencing along major highways may have impeded elk migration illustrates the need to update inventories for species other than Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, (e.g., Grizzly Bears, Mountain Goats, and Elk) and to relate such studies to human activity both outside and inside the park and across jurisdictions. Grizzly Bears range through the three parks, and their apparently increasing presence in both the North and South Core areas increases the risk of human interactions.

Suppression of wildfire in the park has affected original and natural wildlife habitats (e.g., former large Elk herds are no longer present; sheep are being forced to higher

elevations). Natural disturbances may restore some of these habitats, but climate change may also change the timing of migrations and affect predator-prey relationships.

Objectives	Strategies
To manage the park's wildlife species and habitats in a manner that responds to short-term and long-term environmental change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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:</li> <li>▪ consideration of the effects of climate change;</li> <li>▪ conservation and use;</li> <li>▪ management of biodiversity;</li> <li>▪ access;</li> <li>▪ connectivity and species movement;</li> <li>▪ range management; and,</li> <li>▪ co-ordinating wildlife management objectives, particularly with respect to Grizzly Bears.</li> </ul>
To present opportunities for hiking access, wildlife viewing, study and other appropriate recreational uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Coordinate bear and visitor management with Parks Canada at a regional scale in the Bryant Creek area and Sunshine Meadows.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, provide opportunities for wildlife viewing, studying and appreciation.</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Assess bear problems individually to protect wildlife and determine management options (e.g. relocation) that ensure public safety.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate grazing opportunities for wildlife by allowing only limited horse grazing under permit or letter.</li> <li>• Assess, monitor, and regulate hunting consistent with the hunting regulations under the <i>Wildlife Act</i>.</li> </ul>
To enhance the knowledge and understanding of the park's wildlife species and their habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a wildlife and habitat overview inventory with priority on red and blue-listed species and species sensitive to climate change. Update Grizzly Bear inventories and habitat assessments.</li> <li>• Use wildlife inventories and annual guide-outfitter reports to support maintaining abundant natural population levels and balance.</li> <li>• Coordinate inventory work with adjacent park jurisdictions to increase the knowledge and 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.</li> <li>• Encourage research aimed at better understanding the cumulative effects of recreational use (e.g., helicopters and hiker traffic) on species such as Mountain Goats, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep and Grizzly Bears.</li> <li>• 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.).</li> </ul>

## Fish and Aquatic

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 how much emphasis to place on maintaining recreational opportunities as compared with supporting or restoring natural conditions.

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. No recent comprehensive or systematic field surveys of fish populations have been conducted in Mount Assiniboine Park, and critical information gaps exist.

Objectives	Strategies <sup>10</sup>
To compile accurate information on the fish populations of lakes and rivers in the park as a basis for future management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Conduct fish and fish habitat inventories by watershed throughout the park, making GIS note of gradient (&gt;20%) and other physical barriers to fish passage.</li> <li>• Where feasible, do higher-level analysis and reporting of fish survey data including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ document estimates of significant or imperilled species or populations;</li> <li>▪ survey fishing records and park users to ascertain the level of fishing activity at each lake in the park;</li> <li>▪ identify areas in the park where fishing contributes to significant fish mortality;</li> <li>▪ assess spawning to identify where natural recruitment is not sustainable; and,</li> <li>▪ study competition and hybridization; if competition from introduced species is found to be serious, look at what's being done elsewhere for mitigation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Project hydrological changes associated with climate change and assess their long-term effects on fish habitats. Continue inventories of fish populations as required.</li> </ul>
To return some of the lakes in the park to their natural, fish free state while continuing to provide naturally sustainable fishing opportunities in streams and other lakes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discontinue stocking of select lakes and use natural recruitment and fishing regulations as necessary to sustain indigenous fish populations.</li> <li>• Select lakes for return to their original fish-free condition, prioritizing those with some or all the following characteristics:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ those experiencing the least fishing use;</li> <li>▪ those where natural recruitment is not sustainable, or is sustainable with highly restrictive regulation;</li> <li>▪ those which will be most resilient to climate change; and,</li> <li>▪ those with sensitive shoreline vegetation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> 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.

## Cultural Heritage

Pre-contact travel routes are known to have passed through the park and several sites of archaeological potential have been identified, however no specific archaeological studies of the park have been undertaken.

Objectives	Strategies
To work with First Nations and other government agencies to research and interpret First Nations use of the park and to manage and protect any archaeological sites located.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the Ktunaxa Nation traditional use data for relevant information to increase the knowledge and understanding of pre-contact history of the area.</li> <li>• Encourage and permit studies of pre-contact use within the park.</li> <li>• 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 <i>Heritage Conservation Act</i> under will be publicized to deter vandalism.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
To identify and protect significant post-contact cultural values within Mount Assiniboine Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and permit exploration for the purpose of historical research within the park and investigate any additional historical remains.</li> <li>• 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. More emphasis should be placed on presenting this history to the public, particularly in and around the Naiset Cabins.</li> <li>• Institute formal photo monitoring at 2-5 year intervals to document the interior and exterior condition of all heritage structures in the park.</li> </ul>

## Access

The main issue in terms of access to the park is access by helicopter. Helicopter access is closely regulated and has been reduced somewhat since 1986, but it has evolved to become the predominant mode of access and transport of supplies 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.

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 helicopter landing sites may be hazardous, while vegetation in landing zones can be negatively impacted.

There are few alternatives to the existing air access. 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 via Invermere is possible, and while 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, it does enable air access from a British Columbia location.

As dependence on air access is likely to increase, there is a need to consider whether the current air access policies appropriately balance public access, management needs, and preservation of backcountry experiences with minimal noise disturbance.

In terms of trail access there are three key trail access issues that need to be considered: 1) whether to continue the current policy under which the upper Simpson River Trail is essentially not maintained in order to offer a more primitive access experience for park visitors who may prefer it; 2) whether any coordinated management actions between BC Parks and other appropriate government agencies are needed regarding direct access to Mount Assiniboine via Assiniboine and Aurora creeks; 3) whether or not the Mitchell River trail staging area should be improved and promoted as a major British Columbia access route into the South Core area.

Road extensions in the Mitchell River valley since 1989 have improved opportunities for hiking access from western 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. 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.

Trail access from Sunshine Meadows for summer use has dropped considerably since the mid-1980s resulting in the day use facilities being underutilized. There is a need to determine if this capacity should be filled and whether any upward or downward adjustment of current peak use levels may be appropriate.

Objectives	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue prohibition of all aircraft except as authorized by park use permit.</li> <li>• Continue to authorize by park use permit helicopter access, following designated routes to designated landing sites in the South Core area for overnight users.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor current helicopter access to ensure that the needs of the three types of South Core area overnight users (campers, hut users and lodge guests) are met as well as the lodge operators, and revise as necessary.</li> <li>• Consider issuing a permit for helicopter service to access the South Core</li> </ul>

wildlife and vegetation.	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to use air access for management and emergency operations in a way that will minimize impacts on wildlife and backcountry recreationists.</li> </ul>
To work with appropriate agencies to ensure that trails and roads accessing the park remain open and to coordinate trail planning management and user information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the appropriate government agencies on management of roads, trails, and trailheads on Crown lands that provide access to the park via the Mitchell River, Assiniboine Creek and Aurora Creek drainages.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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 <b>Hiking</b> section below for details of proposed trail standards.</i>)</li> <li>• Encourage ski touring access to the South Core via Assiniboine Pass and discourage such access via Sunshine/Citadel Pass for reasons of safety.</li> <li>• Develop formal protocols between BC Parks and Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and other government agencies regarding signing, trail standards and trailhead facilities for hikers destined for Mount Assiniboine Park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Address such topics as cross-boundary trailhead information about campsites, reservations and permits and which areas are authorized for group use.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
To continue to offer the traditional horse access in a way that minimizes impacts on wildlife, vegetation and respects other recreational activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to authorize horse access by the public via Assiniboine Pass, Mitchell River, Simpson River and Surprise Creek.</li> </ul>
To provide important visitor information at access and departure points into the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

## Fishing

Managing fishing goes hand in hand with the sustainable management of the park’s fisheries. While this is a challenge within alpine lakes, a conservative approach to providing fishing opportunities can support sustainable management practices. Fishing has traditionally enhanced the park’s backcountry experiences, however it is not central to the park’s appeal. From the limited knowledge of the fishery in the park, it is not considered productive enough to sustain fishing as a primary recreational opportunity.

Objectives	Strategies
To maintain selected, naturally sustainable fisheries for fishing, subject to the capability of the lakes and creeks and balanced by ecosystem management principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue 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.</li> <li>• Review current management practices and policies, and adjust to harmonize with the results and conclusions of any field studies and analyses undertaken (see Fish and Aquatic Section).</li> <li>• Continue liaison with fisheries specialists regarding fish management and user regulation.</li> <li>• Subject to the outcome of further fishery studies, select for recreational fishing opportunities those lakes with some or all of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ those with the highest fishing use;</li> <li>▪ those offering fishing opportunities widely recognized as outstanding or unique;</li> <li>▪ those capable of sustaining good quality fishing opportunities without stocking or highly restrictive regulation; and ,</li> <li>▪ those without wildlife or vegetation which might be adversely impacted by shoreline activity or fishing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Hunting

Hunting issues are primarily associated with public safety, level of harvest and minimizing impacts on other park values and visitors’ experiences. With a long history of hunting in Mount Assiniboine Park, ongoing hunting management needs to be continued to ensure a quality experience and effective management.

Objectives	Strategies
To allow guided and public hunting in appropriate areas of the park, subject to conservation and public safety objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue park use permit requirements for the guided recreation sector to support wildlife monitoring programs.</li> <li>• Allow the continuation of hunting in the Wilderness Recreation Zone of the park, subject to the periodic review of the <i>Hunting and Trapping Regulations</i> and the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ continue to authorize guide-outfitter horse use in the Simpson and Mitchell River drainages under park use permit;</li> <li>▪ continue to use a conservative level of harvest approach to ensure provision of a wilderness experience of the highest quality; and</li> <li>▪ continue hunting closures on the North and South Core areas in consideration of public safety.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Hiking

The remoteness of trail routes beyond the Sunshine Meadows day use area has resulted in trail degradation, creating risks in terms of user satisfaction, and environmental impacts. In the case of Eohippus Lake, at the top of the North Simpson, the impact 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 achieving this potential, but the trail below Citadel Pass and Porcupine Camp are also poorly located in grizzly habitat and their relocation should be considered.

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. Risks to visitor safety from Grizzly Bear encounters are a management concern within these areas.

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 hikers. These conditions offer primitive backcountry hiking/backpacking opportunities not found in the heavily used core areas, and thereby expand the diversity of the park.

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. Signs directing visitors to these features require the utmost clarity, as core area trails are numerous and can be confusing.

Objectives	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"> <li>• 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"> <li>▪ the "Nublet" Vista Circle Trail,</li> <li>▪ Mount Cautley Skyline Trail,</li> <li>▪ Lake Magog Shoreline Circle Trail,</li> <li>▪ Gog Lake and Waterfall Trail,</li> <li>▪ 3 Lakes Circle Trail (Sunburst, Cerulean, Elizabeth), and</li> <li>▪ Windy Ridge Trail.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In the North Core area, maintain minimum Type 2 trails within the presently developed day-use area.</li> <li>• Cooperate with other trail managers (Banff National Park and/or Sunshine Village Ski Resort) regarding such further refinement of routing, trail standard and visitor facilities as required.</li> <li>• Maintain minimum Type 3 trails over the primary backpacking routes in the park:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assiniboine Pass Trail,</li> <li>▪ Wonder Pass Trail, and</li> <li>▪ Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maintain minimum Type 3 trails over the secondary backpacking routes in the park including Simpson River Trail from Simpson Monument to</li> </ul>

	<p>Surprise Creek and the Surprise Creek Trail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Ensure that adequate directional signs and information appropriate to the anticipated users are provided on all trails and routes.</li> </ul>
To assess and monitor the impact of backcountry visitors on natural and cultural values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close, relocate or improve trails as required if bear and visitor safety problems arise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the feasibility of relocating sections of the Central Corridor Trail in the upper Simpson River to reduce the risk of Grizzly Bear encounters.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Monitor trail use through a system of trail counters and use a recreation impact monitoring approach to assess problem areas.</li> </ul>

## Mountaineering

Though mountaineering accidents in the park are relatively rare, increasing use of access from the Assiniboine Creek side of the park reduces the ability of Mount Assiniboine Lodge or park staff to monitor and support climbing activity.

Objectives	Strategies
To recognize and manage mountaineering as a recreational activity in the South Core area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide base camp facilities for supporting mountaineering activity (e.g., Magog Rim Campground and RC Hind Hut).</li> <li>Ensure emergency response pre-plans for the safety of mountaineers in the park are prepared.</li> </ul>

## Horse Use

Horse use had major impacts on vegetation and soils near Lake Magog before it ceased in 1984. Although trail hardening and restoration of vegetation undertaken since the mid-1970s has helped restore heavily used areas of the park, these actions must be continued as necessary to sustain natural vegetation. Areas elsewhere in the park are equally vulnerable (such as the North Core), while others are fairly resilient (such as the Mitchell River).

Objectives	Strategies
To support traditional backcountry horse use where appropriate while considering other recreationists' interests and terrain, trail and site conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authorize horse or pack animal use on trails within the Simpson River, Mitchell River and Surprise Creek valleys.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Maintain separate packing and hiking routes in the South Core area and within the Simpson and Mitchell River valleys where site conditions dictate.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disallow horse or pack animal use in the North Core area and the Eohippus Lake area.</li> <li>• Monitor horse use and routing regulations with adjoining jurisdictions to ensure consistency.</li> <li>• Disallow new permanent facilities for horse use activities in the park while supporting trail upgrading as necessary to protect the environment.</li> <li>• Monitor impacts of horse use, particularly as it may affect sensitive subalpine vegetation, and take management action as necessary to resolve problems.</li> </ul>
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## Winter Recreation

In winter, while the North and South Core areas are relatively safe from avalanches, the route between them (central core) has significant avalanche hazards particularly around Citadel Pass.

Objectives	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"> <li>• In the South Core area, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ manage winter accommodation base facilities to attract a variety of market groups; and</li> <li>▪ provide a variety of ski touring and cross-country skiing opportunities for all ability levels over routes appropriately mapped and ground-marked where necessary.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In the North Core area, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ permit management and operation of pre-existing downhill skiing as part of the Sunshine Village Ski Resort;</li> <li>▪ permit installation of a power line to the proposed Bye Bye Bowl ski lift, in the existing right of way, subject to impact assessment and appropriate mitigation; and</li> <li>▪ provide cross-country ski opportunities from Sunshine Village Ski Resort, including on groomed trails managed within its permit area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Enforce the prohibition on the use of snowmobiles in Mount Assiniboine Park (except as authorized for management purposes or under park use permit).</li> <li>• Prohibit helicopter skiing in the park.</li> <li>• Continue liaison with the Canadian Avalanche Association and Parks Canada to provide up-to-date avalanche bulletins and education.</li> </ul>

## Overnight Facilities

The appropriate level of commercial activity and effect of commercial operations on the character of the park need to be addressed. In particular, there is a need to respond to expressed interest by Sunshine Village Ski Resort to establish a rustic lodge in the North Core area of the park.

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, environmental changes (such as climate change) or technological changes may affect overnight accommodations 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 the need for roofed accommodations. Greener technologies (e.g., composting toilets) and building standard changes may affect what accommodations are provided in the future.

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. Existing accommodation capacity would permit greater use in shoulder seasons.

To maintain the diversity of facility-based backcountry recreation opportunities, each of the four distinctive accommodation types and their associated recreation 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.

Objectives	Strategies
To provide a diversity of overnight facilities that support high quality backcountry experiences in the park at a scale ensuring conservation of natural and cultural heritage resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the current diversity and capacity of overnight park accommodation facilities (i.e., campgrounds, basic public huts and a lodge).</li> <li>• Consider substituting basic public hut accommodation for a proportion of camping facilities in specific locations if necessary to reduce environmental impacts or to meet long-term (&gt;10 year) trends in visitor demand.</li> <li>• Protect sensitive special feature areas from new use and facility development impacts and reduce impacts of existing activities wherever possible by appropriate management actions.</li> <li>• Monitor use impacts in the Eohippus Lake area and prohibit overnight use if environmental impacts are identified.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the environmental implications of designating separate primitive backcountry campsites for hikers and horse riders in the Wedgewood Lake area.</li> <li>• Designate separate hiker and horse rider campsites as appropriate if such designations would focus use onto acceptable sites and avoid unacceptable dispersal of impacts.</li> <li>• Maintain the O'Brien horse campground to serve both horse and hiking groups.</li> <li>• Seek a replacement for the present Porcupine Meadow site in order to reduce the risk of Grizzly Bear-visitor conflicts.</li> <li>• Consider formalizing primitive campsites with tent pads for hiking and horse riding parties at Scoup Camp and Police Meadows.</li> </ul>
<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Limit Naiset cabin guest capacity to safe, seasonally adjusted levels and ensure the operator formulates an annual management plan, which includes: seasonal capacities, public safety, and emergency response and maintenance requirements.</li> <li>• Continue to provide full-service, high-standard backcountry accommodation at Mount Assiniboine Lodge.</li> <li>• Maintain Mount Assiniboine Lodge and associated buildings at current capacity levels and specify building use, client services and operations details in park use permit.</li> <li>• Continue to offer minimal-service general public accommodation in the five Naiset cabins.</li> <li>• Continue support for the basic alpine shelter on the flanks of Mount Assiniboine (RC Hind Hut).</li> <li>• Continue to permit the rustic cabin shelters and camps to serve guide-outfitters and park visitors at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mitchell River,</li> <li>▪ Simpson River (Surprise Creek), and</li> <li>▪ Police Meadows.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<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"> <li>• Educate visitors about minimum impact camping and backcountry wilderness ethics in the park to avoid site degradation and minimize human-bear conflicts.</li> <li>• Continue education and enforcement of regulations pertaining to "no dogs" and "no campfires".</li> <li>• Use appropriate assessment tools such as Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring) to ensure that existing backcountry campsites and overnight roofed accommodations are not adversely impacting the park's natural and cultural values.</li> <li>• If negative impacts are detected, mitigate them by visitor management techniques such as quotas, camping at designated sites, site expansion and hardening, closures, seasonal and area restrictions, etc.</li> </ul>

## Economic Opportunities

Many key recreation opportunities in the park are commercially based and have operated for a number of decades. While these well established businesses continue to be successful and to operate at a level that is sustainable economically, socially and environmentally, continuing with this balance into the future requires enhanced efforts to monitor, assess and work collaboratively among operators. Overnight accommodation is a key determinant of many operators' service capacity (e.g., hiking guide outfitters). As most overnight facilities in the park today are underutilized, efficient use of current capacity needs to be achieved before considering expanded opportunities.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To encourage involvement of the private sector in supplying outdoor recreation services which are compatible with approved management objectives for Mount Assiniboine Park.</p>	<p><u>Park Access</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to offer opportunities to the private sector for the provision of helicopter transportation to park visitors.</li> </ul> <p><u>Lodging</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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"> <li>▪ guest rooms and cabins to existing capacities,</li> <li>▪ dining room for lodge guests,</li> <li>▪ staff accommodations within existing buildings, and</li> <li>▪ opportunities for interpretive visits by other park users.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to provide accommodation in existing structures to guide outfitters and recreation guides under a park use permit.</li> <li>• Maintain existing overnight accommodation capacity to preserve the existing balance of recreation and conservation in the park (i.e., there will not be any expansion of lodge or hut facilities).</li> </ul> <p><u>Hiking</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to offer opportunities for the provision of hiking guide services either as part of an existing operation or under a new permit.</li> <li>• Continue to manage summer use in the North Core under permit, consistent with the intent of the 1983 Sunshine Summer Use Plan and any approved future updates.</li> </ul> <p><u>Horse packing/Riding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage existing guide/outfitter or other operators to offer guided packing, using domestic pack animals only and with activity restricted to designated trails within the park.</li> </ul> <p><u>Hunting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the two opportunities for the provision of hunting guide-outfitter services in the park.</li> </ul> <p><u>Resource Appreciation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p><u>Mountaineering</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to offer opportunities for the provision of mountaineering (e.g., climbing, skiing) guide services to guides certified by the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.</li> </ul>

	<p><u>Ski Touring</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to offer opportunities for the provision of ski touring guide services either as part of an existing operation or under a new permit.</li> </ul> <p><u>Downhill Skiing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to authorize the Sunshine Village Ski Resort Continental Divide Express ski lift and runs, water supply and summer and winter use in the north core under a park use permit.</li> </ul>
To ensure that existing and new commercial recreation operations in the park will remain consistent with the ecological, heritage and recreational vision for the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a verifiable monitoring program for recreation services operations. If monitoring shows the environmental and/or backcountry carrying capacities are close to being exceeded, management intervention such as quotas may be set for recreational use.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Work with operators to collect data, develop stewardship programs, and establish a Code of Conduct for their business operations in the park.</li> </ul>

## Visitor Information

Providing current information about Mount Assiniboine Park is an important aspect of visitor service management. There is a significant amount of information to be shared from varied sources. The challenge is to have accurate and up-to-date information available in the most appropriate and effective forms.

Objectives	Management Strategies
To provide accurate, comprehensive information to park visitors and potential park visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with adjacent jurisdictions and commercial operators in the park on a communications plan to heighten public awareness of Mount Assiniboine Park as part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site including identifying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key park natural and cultural heritage resources and measures required for their stewardship;</li> <li>specific interpretive features, programs and presentations;</li> <li>access routes, facilities and accommodations; and</li> <li>the rationale for the park's role as a World Heritage Site.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Provide contemporary, accurate information about park opportunities, services, trails and facilities on websites and at select locations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>various forms of media (literature, journals, art, photography, video);</li> <li>BC Parks awareness campaigns within BC and Alberta;</li> <li>BC Parks brochures and the brochures of surrounding parks;</li> <li>BC and Alberta tourist centers;</li> <li>information material available from park permittees;</li> <li>road and trail signage identifying designated access points (cooperatively with surrounding park agencies and permittees);</li> <li>transportation concessionaires (helicopter);</li> <li>park orientation/information/warning signs; and</li> <li>park visitor programs and activities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Provide and maintain information kiosks or display facilities for short or long-term presentation of park information at appropriate locations within the North and South Core areas.</li> </ul>

## **Landscape Setting and Feature Values**

The visual and aesthetic values of Mount Assiniboine Park are nationally and provincially significant for their scenic quality. Enjoyment of these values can be negatively affected by activities both outside and inside the park.

For example, visitor appreciation of the park's setting and features can 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, landings are subject to a park use permit and can be controlled.



Mount Assiniboine

Objectives	Strategies
To provide strong management programs to protect and maintain the backcountry setting and visual resources that are key to Mount Assiniboine Park's appeal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not permit activities that would reduce the scenic appeal of the Mount Assiniboine massif as a special feature of the park.</li> <li>• Continue input into plans by other resource agencies and industry for activities outside but visible from the park in order to protect the visual integrity of the park from impacts of adjacent uses.</li> </ul>
To design and situate park facilities in a manner that preserves the visual integrity of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the visual appeal of park features when considering such matters as shoreline activities, trails, wildlife habitat management and fire management.</li> <li>• Ensure that trails, bridges, signs and other structures in the park are visually harmonious with their settings.</li> <li>• Maintain the cultural heritage character of the South Core area in any facility modification or expansion.</li> </ul>
To minimize noise disturbances in the backcountry setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to regulate helicopter landing days, times and numbers to minimize noise disturbance in the park.</li> <li>• Encourage sight-seeing flights to observe route and elevation guidelines which minimize noise disturbances for visitors and wildlife.</li> <li>• Designate Assiniboine Pass as the primary flight route into the park South Core area.</li> </ul>

### Scientific Research

Mount Assiniboine Park offers opportunities for protected area management research and other forms of environmental and (or) human use research, however it is important to develop research guidelines to ensure compatibility with park uses and sustainability.

Objectives	Strategies
To encourage and undertake appropriate research on the natural and cultural history of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and undertake research on geology, biology, botany, hydrology, archaeology and other scientific disciplines that benefit management of the park.</li> <li>• Ensure researchers are aware and follow BC Parks research guidelines.</li> </ul>
To encourage multi-agency cooperation in the field of protected areas scientific research and education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in the research forums where appropriate to identify research opportunities for academic institutions in the province.</li> <li>• Encourage colleges, universities, other agencies, and corporate sponsors to establish funding for and to undertake appropriate and timely research.</li> <li>• Pursue an active role in collaborative climate change research, offering the park 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.</li> </ul>

Objectives	Strategies
To position the park as a potential comparative benchmark for monitoring ecological change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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"> <li>▪ the park’s role in representing an evolving ecosystem;</li> <li>▪ the opportunities the park presents for observing and studying particular aspects of ecological change;</li> <li>▪ the issues involved in managing the park as a “natural” benchmark within an ecosystem subject to extensive human modification outside park boundaries; and</li> <li>▪ the uncertainties and planning challenges associated with a changing climate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Education

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 Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Park Headquarters in the South Core area maintain communications from within the park, but communications in other areas are limited and rescue services are not readily available.

Objectives	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"> <li>• Continue to provide information on pre-trip planning and expectations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ access options and constraints, accommodation options and appropriate recreational opportunities;</li> <li>▪ park natural and cultural features, and conservation issues; and</li> <li>▪ wilderness etiquette, park regulations, potential hazards (e.g., bear encounters, avalanches) and techniques for avoiding or mitigating them, and emergency procedures.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with adjacent jurisdictions, park operators and tourism associations to ensure awareness of up-to-date pre-trip planning information for prospective visitors.</li> <li>• Ensure that any public information on the park is current and accurate.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Zoning

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 and broad management objectives based on provincial policies, natural, cultural and recreational values, and existing and projected patterns of access and recreational use. The individual zones reflect the intended land use, degree of human use, level of management and development permitted in a defined area.

#### **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 33,747 hectares and applies to the entire 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 Simpson River drainage).

##### *Zone Rationale*

The Wilderness Recreation Zone provides for wilderness-based backcountry recreation with 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.

#### **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 4,616 hectares of the park and applies to the entire South Core area. 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 kilometres 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.

In the South Core area, sensitive features within the Nature Recreation Zone that will be actively managed include: two alpine meadows (Mount Cautley and Terrapin Bowl), Magog Fossil Beds, the karst landscape (Og Lake to Cave Mountain), the Mount Assiniboine Massif (includes alpine meadows and surrounding peaks) and the South Core heritage buildings (Mount Assiniboine Lodge, Naiset cabins and Sunburst cabin).



Rock Isle Lake (Special Feature Zone)

### **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*

The Special Feature zoning totals approximately 625 hectares and applies to 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).

### *Zone Rationale*

Special Feature zoning of the North Core area emphasizes 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. Opportunities for compatible education or appreciation are provided through a summer trail system, interpretive guiding, and special visitor constraints to protect sensitive natural features and ecosystems. The Sunshine Village Ski Resort water supply from Rock Isle Lake (i.e., pump house and waterline) predated the establishment of the park. They are grandfathered and noted as exceptions in the Activities/Facilities Matrix.

## **Intensive Recreation Zone**

### *Zone Objective*

To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.

### *Zone Description*

This zone covers about 25 hectares (includes the Continental Divide Express chairlift and associated downhill ski runs) and is defined by the park use permit area of the Sunshine Village Ski Resort operations.

### *Zone Rationale*

The small portion of the Sunshine Village Ski Resort that lies in the park is an existing use that pre-dated the establishment of this portion of Mount Assiniboine Park. It is a key component of the resort operation that has 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. It is intended to allow existing winter use only and not the full range of recreational opportunities and facilities usually associated with the Intensive Recreation Zone. Winter facilities are appropriate in the Intensive Recreation Zone and are noted as such in the Activities/Facilities Matrix.

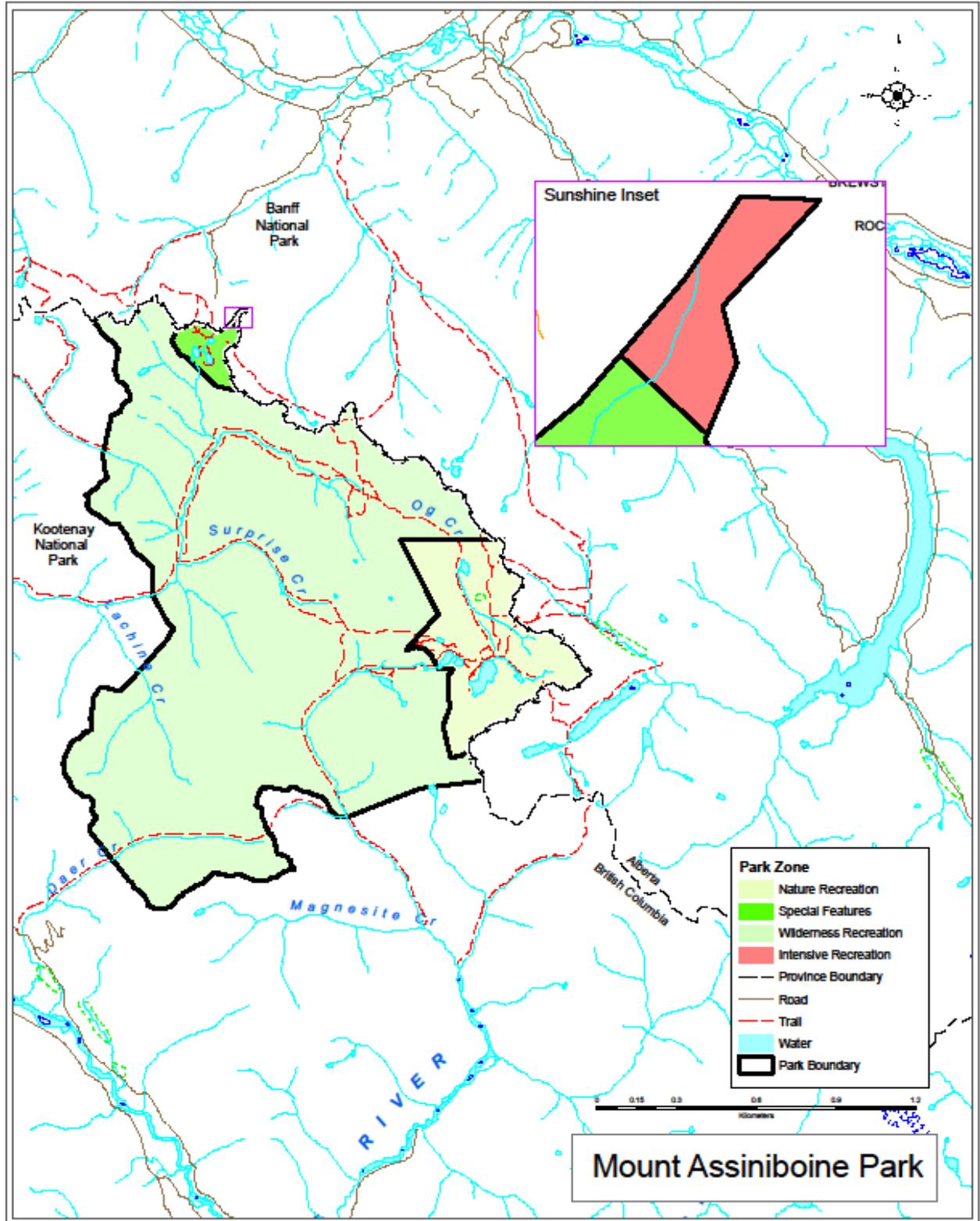


Figure 3: Zoning Map

## 4.0 Plan Implementation

### 4.1 Implementation

BC Parks will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement high priority strategies and to monitor key performance measures. Specific projects will be evaluated for their priority in relation to the overall protected areas system. Many of the initiatives contemplated are not funded as part of core BC Parks activities so jointly seeking funds or outside partners will be a key aspect of the management plan implementation.

### 4.2 High Priority Strategies

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

- Allow 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.
- Consistent with the provincial strategies for responding to the mountain pine beetle infestation, and in coordination with adjacent park jurisdictions, monitor and address the impacts of beetle activity in the Mitchell River valley and in other parts of the park.
- 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.
- Continue 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.
- Disallow horse or pack animal use in the North Core area and the Eohippus Lake area.
- Monitor use impacts in the Eohippus Lake area and prohibit overnight use if environmental impacts are identified.

### 4.3 Plan Assessment and Review

In order to ensure the management of Mount Assiniboine Park remains relevant and effective, BC Parks staff will complete an internal assessment of this management plan every 5 years at which time minor administrative updates may be identified and completed (e.g., update protected area details or maps where needed, etc.).

If the internal assessment reveals that management direction is no longer adequate, a formal review by BC Parks and First Nations and stakeholders will be completed to determine whether a plan amendment or a new plan is required. A formal plan review and amendment process would include an opportunity for public input.

# Appendix 1: Appropriate Uses Table

The following table lists existing and potential future uses in Mount Assiniboine Park. This is not an exhaustive list of uses that may be considered in this park.

The table is provided to summarize the uses which the management planning process has confirmed are not appropriate in Mount Assiniboine Park. Please note that many appropriate uses are geographically restricted (only allowed in certain areas of Mount Assiniboine Park or are only appropriate at certain times of the year. Please ensure that you are well informed of any restrictions on appropriate uses indicated in the table. It is a good idea to review the relevant sections of the management plan where indicated in the table.

Legend		
<b>N</b>	<b>Not an appropriate use in this zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It has been confirmed during the management planning process that this use is not appropriate in this zone.</li> <li>This may be an existing use which the management planning process has determined is no longer an appropriate use in this zone. The management plan details strategies for addressing this inappropriate use (e.g., phasing out, closing).</li> </ul>
<b>Y</b>	<b>May be an appropriate use in this zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This indicates that some degree or scale of this use may be appropriate.</li> <li>For existing uses, the management plan will provide guidance on the appropriate level or scale of this use (e.g., direction to reduce, restrict or increase the current level of this activity) and may address specific restrictions or enhancements (e.g., capacity, appropriate sites, designated trails, purposes, party size, time of year, etc.).</li> <li>For new or expanded uses, this does not constitute approval. This indicates that the use <u>may be considered</u> for further evaluation and possible approval (e.g., park use permit adjudication, completion of a review as part of the BC Parks' Impact Assessment Process). In some cases the appropriateness may not be confirmed until further assessments are completed.</li> </ul>
<b>N/A</b>	<b>Not an applicable use in this zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is applied where it is not feasible for the use to take place in this zone (e.g., mooring buoys in a terrestrial zone).</li> </ul>

Activity/Facility	Allowable in Zone				Comments
	IR	NR	SF	WR	
<b>Activity</b>					
Aircraft Access	N	Y	N	Y	
Boating (power)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Boating (non-power)	N/A	Y	N	Y	
Camping – backcountry	N	Y	N	Y	
Camping – auto or boat accessible	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	Y	Y	N	Y	
Commercial Recreation (no facilities)	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Exotic Pack Animal Use	N	N	N	N	
Filming (commercial)	Y	Y	Y	NY	
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	Y	N	Y	Y	
Fire Management (prevention)	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Fire Management (suppression)	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Fishing	N/A	Y	N	Y	
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N/A	N	N	N	
Forest Insect/disease Control	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Grazing (guide outfitter horses))	Y	Y	N	Y	
Guide Outfitting	Y	Y*	Y	Y	*Except untenured southern half of Nature Recreation Zone

Heli – hiking	N/A	N	N	N	
Hiking/Backpacking/Walking	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Horse / Non-Exotic Pack Animals	N	Y	N	Y*	*Except Eohippus Lake area
Hunting	N*	N*	N*	Y*	*Existing hunting regulations
Mechanized Off-road Access (non-motorized – i.e. mountain biking)	N	N	N	N	
Mountaineering	N/A	Y	Y	Y	
Motorized Off-road Access (not snowmobiles – i.e. 4x4, motorcycles)	N	N	Y*	N	*For management purposes under Sunshine Village Ski Resort park use permit
Noxious Weed Control	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Off-road Access (non-mechanical - dog sleds, horse sleds)	N	N	N	N	
Rock climbing	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	N	N	N	N	
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Skiing (downhill & cross –country – groomed runs or trails)	Y*	N	N	N	*Existing Sunshine Village Ski Resort park use permit
Skiing (helicopter or cat-assisted)	N/A	N/A	N	N	
Skiing (self propelled. not groomed)	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Snowmobiling	N/A	N/A	Y*	N	*For management purposes under Sunshine Village Ski Resort park use permit only
Trapping	N	N	N	Y*	*Existing tenure
<b>Facility</b>					
Administrative Buildings and Compounds	N	N	N	N	
Backcountry Huts and Shelters	N	Y	N	Y	
Boat Launches	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Campgrounds and Picnic Areas ( vehicle access and services)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Camp Sites (other)	N	Y	N	Y	
Communication Sites	N	N	N	N	
Fixed Roof Accommodation	N	Y	N	Y	
Interpretation and information Buildings	N	Y	N	N	
Roads and Parking Lots	N	N	N	N	
Ski Hills and Snow Play Areas	Y*	N	N	N	*Existing Sunshine Village Ski Resort park use permit
Trails (hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horse)	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Utility Corridors (power/transmission lines and other rights-of-way)	N*	N	N	N	*Existing chairlift r/w under Sunshine Village Ski Resort park use permit
Water Control Structures	N	N,	Y*	N	*Pre-existing - under Sunshine Village Ski Resort park use permit

## Appendix 2: BC Parks Zoning Framework

Protected Areas Management Planning Zone Descriptions			
	Intensive Recreation	Nature Recreation	Special Feature
<b>Objective</b>	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.
<b>Use Level</b>	Relatively high density and long duration types of use.	Relatively low use but higher levels associated with nodes of activity or access.	Generally low.
<b>Means of Access</b>	All-weather public roads or other types of access where use levels are high (see "Impacts" below).	Motorized (powerboats, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles) and non-motorized (foot, horse, canoe, bicycles). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pick-up points will be permitted.	Various; may require special access permit.
<b>Location</b>	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.
<b>Size of Zone</b>	Small, usually less than 2,000 hectares.	Can range from small to large.	Small, usually less than 2000 hectares.
<b>Boundary Definition</b>	Includes areas of high facility development in concentrated areas.	Boundaries should consider limits of activity and 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).
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>	Vehicle camping, picnicking, beach activities, power-boating, canoeing, kayaking, strolling, bicycling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, snow play, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, specialized activities.	Walk-in or boat-in camping, power-boating, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, bicycling, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, river rafting, horseback riding, heliskiing, helihiking and specialized activities.	Sightseeing, historic and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.
<b>Facilities</b>	May be intensely developed for user convenience. Campgrounds, landscaped picnic or play areas, trail accommodation or interpretative buildings, boat launches, administrative buildings, service compounds, gravel pits, disposal sites, woodlots; parking lots, etc.	Moderately developed for user convenience. Permitted: trails, walk-in or boat-in campsites, shelters, accommodation buildings, facilities for motorized access (docks, landing strips, fuel storage, etc.)	Interpretative facilities only; resources are to be protected.
<b>Impacts on Natural Environment</b>	Includes natural resource features and phenomena in a primarily natural state, but where human presence may be readily visible as both recreation facilities and 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.	None: resources to be maintained unimpaired.
<b>Management Guidelines</b>	Oriented to maintaining a high-quality recreation experience. Intensive management of resource and control of visitor activities. Operational facilities designed for efficient operation while unobtrusive to park visitors.	Oriented to maintaining a natural environment and high-quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation modes. Designation of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g., horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).	High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate, a high-quality recreational and interpretative experience. Active or passive management, depending on size, location and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.
<b>Examples of Zoning</b>	Campground in Rathrevor Beach Park; Gibson Pass ski area in E.C. Manning Park.	Core area in Cathedral Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.	Botanical Beach tidepools in Juan de Fuca Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mt. Assiniboine Park.

## Protected Areas Management Planning Zone Descriptions

	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
<b>Objective</b>	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities, depending 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, depending on a pristine environment where no motorized activities will be allowed.
<b>Use Level</b>	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.
<b>Means of Access</b>	Non-mechanized & non-motorized. May permit low-frequency air access to designated sites; foot, canoe and horse access may be permitted.	Non-mechanized & non-motorized; foot, canoe and horse access may be permitted.
<b>Location</b>	Remote, not easily visited on a day-use basis.	Remote, not easily visited on a day-use basis.
<b>Size of Zone</b>	Large, greater than 5,000 hectares.	Large, greater than 5,000 hectares.
<b>Boundary Definition</b>	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features.
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>	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).
<b>Facilities</b>	Minimal facility development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment e.g., trails, primitive campsites. Some basic facilities at access points, e.g., dock, primitive shelter.	None.
<b>Impacts on Natural Environment</b>	Natural area generally free of evidence of human beings. Evidence of human presence is confined to specific facility sites. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.	Natural area generally free of evidence of human beings.
<b>Management Guidelines</b>	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
<b>Examples of Zoning</b>	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Wilderness Zone in Spatsizi Park.	Upper Murray River watershed within Monkman Park; Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy Area.