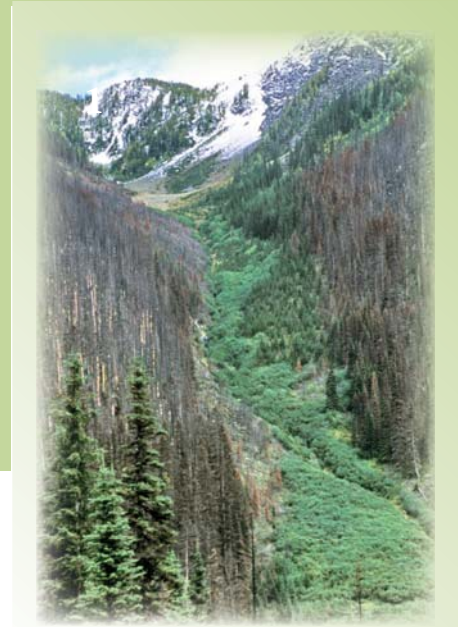




# Kootenay National Park Management Plan Review



## Minister's Message

*Kootenay National Park was established in 1920, building on the protected areas idea that originated in Banff in 1885. This idea has grown into a system of national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas that has given Canada a global reputation for leadership in conservation and tourism. Developing a management plan for so special a place is an important responsibility... one that Parks Canada invites every Canadian to share in. I look forward to the results of this important park management plan review on the eve of the 125th anniversary of protected heritage in Canada.*

**Hon. Jim Prentice,**  
Minister of Environment and Minister Responsible for Parks Canada

## Superintendent's Message

In 2009 Kootenay National Park is undertaking the second five-year review of its management plan. As we work to update the plan, we have been discussing a variety of topics with Canadians, and have been reflecting on what we have heard. I am now pleased to share highlights from our ongoing work to update the Kootenay National Park Management Plan.

The updated plan will replace the previous version. The draft management plan builds on the strengths of the 2000 plan, particularly in the areas of ecological integrity and collaborative approaches to park management, and incorporates new government policy and new directions for Parks Canada. The updated plan will ensure that the park continues to welcome a broad range of visitors, remains relevant to Canadians, and protects the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of Kootenay National Park for all time. Your input will help guide us in that direction.

This newsletter provides a summary of the key highlights of the updated plan, and outlines how you can provide your comments and ideas.

**Pamela L. Veinotte**  
Superintendent, Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay

## Contents

This newsletter provides a summary of the updated Draft Kootenay National Park Management Plan, including:

- An overview of the management plan review process, new plan format, timelines and participation opportunities.
- A draft vision for Kootenay National Park.
- A description of 3 key management strategies, and a brief summary of an additional 2 key strategies.
- A summary of 3 Area Concepts that have been developed for the park.



## Plan Review Process

The public phase of the park management plan review began in March 2009, with the approval of a scoping document by Parks Canada’s Chief Executive Officer. At that time each of the seven<sup>1</sup> mountain national parks in eastern British Columbia and Alberta were tasked with producing a plan that:

- outlines a Vision of the park at its future best
- describes the intended future results of management efforts
- integrates the three components of Parks Canada’s mandate – protection, visitor experience, and education
- outlines key management strategies at a strategic level, and area concepts with more detailed direction

This is the first time that the review of the seven mountain national park management plans was conducted jointly.

<sup>1</sup> These parks are: Banff National Park, Glacier National Park, Jasper National Park, Kootenay National Park, Mount Revelstoke National Park, Waterton Lakes National Park, and Yoho National Park.



## A Vision for Kootenay National Park

Kootenay National Park is a place of natural extremes. From the grasslands and cacti of the Columbia Valley to the glaciers of the continental divide, visitors to Kootenay experience a wide array of landscapes and scenic wonders representative of the west slope of the southern Canadian Rocky Mountains.

Entering from the Columbia Valley, visitors are welcomed to Kootenay National Park and the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site with distinctive facilities at the west entrance near the Village of Radium Hot Springs. Well-designed and maintained trails link the community to the park, providing a range of options for residents and guests to hike or bike between the community, the hot springs and other nearby areas of the park.

While ice scours the high peaks, fire moulds the forest landscape below. Signs of historical wildfires and recent prescribed burning are evident in the different stages of forest regeneration throughout the park. Visitors have opportunities to learn about the important role of fire through on-site exhibits, interpretive trails, and digital media.

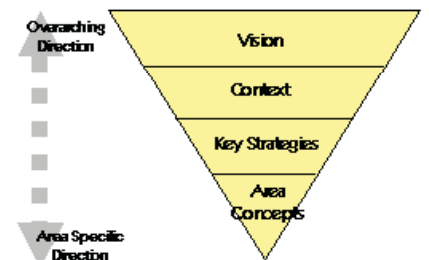
The Banff – Windermere Highway (Highway 93 South) provides a safe and enjoyable trip through the broad, wide valleys of the Vermilion and Kootenay rivers. Many conveniently located, attractive stops along the way entice travelers to take advantage of a relaxing stroll, picnic, learning opportunity, or to begin an adventurous day hike or multi-day backpacking trip into the wilderness of the Rockwall or adjacent areas. Paralleling the highway for most of its route, the turquoise coloured, glacially fed Vermilion and Kootenay rivers flow freely through broad forested valleys, providing opportunities for road side sightseeing, picnics, leisurely riverside walks, cycling, or exhilarating paddling.

Species at risk, such as badger and rubber boa, and other sensitive wildlife, such as westslope cutthroat trout, bighorn sheep and grizzly bears, find healthy, protected habitat that ensures stable or increasing populations. Restoration programs improve habitat structure and connectivity, and enhance biodiversity in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. These inspiring projects will be designed and implemented collaboratively with stakeholders, visitors and volunteers, further strengthening a sense of ownership and connection.

## A New Management Plan Format

The updated park management plan looks quite different from the 2000 version. It begins with an updated vision for Kootenay National Park that reflects the unique character of the park, and reflects the interests and aspirations of residents, visitors, Aboriginal people and other Canadians.

Two new sections, Key Strategies and Area Concepts, form the core of the updated plan. Key strategies are broad policy statements that describe the overarching management approaches that apply to the whole park. Elements of these key strategies are also shared with the other mountain national parks. Area concepts provide more detailed direction, objectives, and priority actions for specific geographic areas of the park. There are five key strategies and three area concepts in the updated Park Management Plan.





## Key Strategy

### Experiencing the Dramatic Effects of Fire and Water

Engaging and connecting with Canadians is a priority for Parks Canada. In Kootenay National Park, Highway 93S provides a remarkable opportunity to engage visitors in a variety of recreational and learning opportunities that deliver on this priority, as visitors travel through the scenic heart of the park. The natural forces of fire, water, snow and ice shape this landscape, and visitors have many opportunities to witness the effects of these processes, and learn about the role they play in maintaining healthy, diverse ecosystems. A focus on different interests, motivations and background will allow Parks Canada to provide targeted products and opportunities to visitors that respond to their needs and expectations. Connecting visitors seamlessly to experiences that are real and inspiring, and aligned with their interests, is integral to future management of Kootenay National Park, and the goal of this key strategy.

#### Work to Date

During the spring and summer, we held stakeholder workshops and worked with consultants to better understand current trends, needs and motivations, and to identify ways to enhance visitor experience. We also reviewed social science research conducted in the mountain parks, considered input from previous planning exercises, and listened to what park visitors, stakeholders, Aboriginal people, Parks Canada staff, and other Canadians had to say about their current park experiences and aspirations for the future.

#### What We Heard

Social science findings indicate that visitors are generally very satisfied with their park experiences. However, we also heard from participants that there is a desire to see Parks Canada improve the condition and quality of park facilities, create a better sense of arrival to the park, focus on improving the safety and experience of travellers on Highway 93S, and consider new or modified recreational opportunities that respond to the changing needs and expectations of actual and potential park visitors.

#### Highlights of Direction for Experiencing Fire and Water

- Use a consistent visitor experience framework to plan for and deliver five types of experience: Virtual Experience; Drive-Through Awareness; View From the Edge; Step Into the Wild; and Mountain Wilderness.
- Develop new products for the Virtual and Drive-Through markets, while work on the remaining experience levels will focus on renewal and promotion.
- Consider proposals for new recreational programs and activities that support Parks Canada's mandate and encourage new audiences to connect with the park.
- Improve understanding of potential markets, with a focus on regional and urban audiences, youth, new Canadians, and those seeking authentic natural and cultural heritage experiences.
- By March 2012, increase the number of visitors to the park by 9% above 2008-09 levels.

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#### Key Strategies

This section of the newsletter provides a summary of several key strategies that highlight areas of renewed emphasis in the updated plan.





### Additional Key Strategies

*Showcasing Conservation Innovation* – This strategy focuses on collaboration with partners, stakeholders, local residents and park visitors toward advancing conservation and stewardship success, and sharing the knowledge as widely as possible.

*Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live* – This strategy is designed to extend the reach of Kootenay National Park, through popular media, modern technology and outreach programming, bringing current, lively and engaging content into homes, schools and communities throughout the Columbia Valley, and through the internet, to Canadians anywhere.

## Key Strategy

### Celebrating the History and Culture of Kootenay National Park

Kootenay National Park protects a unique and rich cultural legacy. The stories that pervade this mountain landscape tell of early and contemporary Aboriginal use, European exploration and fur trading, the development of the first motor transportation route across the central Canadian Rockies, and the emergence of modern tourism based on an appreciation of the beauty of the Rocky Mountains. This strategy aims to increase the profile of the still-evolving cultural heritage of Kootenay National Park, so that history, culture and ecology become integrated into the ways in which people experience and interact with the unique heritage of the park.

#### Work to Date

In 2008, Parks Canada produced a state of the park report for Kootenay National Park, which evaluated the condition of the cultural resources in the park. Positive steps have been made on collaboration with Aboriginal people, setting the stage for improving the opportunities for all visitors to experience and learn about Aboriginal cultural traditions.

#### What We Heard

During this plan review, Canadians have expressed strong support for the protection of cultural heritage within Kootenay National Park. There is more work required to communicate history to park visitors, to link cultural resources to the broader park experience, and to collaborate with partners to enhance the delivery of heritage information and promotion.

#### Highlights of Key Direction for Celebrating History and Culture

- Work with Aboriginal people to document and renew cultural connections to the land, and develop interpretive programming for park visitors.
- Develop new interpretive and outreach materials to broaden the scope of cultural heritage education related to Kootenay National Park and features such as the Paint Pots, backcountry patrol cabins, Sir George Simpson monument.





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## Key Strategy Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

In Kootenay National Park visitors can experience a range of intact ecosystems that are governed by natural processes such as fire and erosion by water and ice. These healthy and evolving ecosystems support a range of nature-based recreational experiences that constantly attract new and returning visitors to the park. Parks Canada will work to maintain these healthy ecosystems, placing an emphasis on those areas that are most unique, rare or uncommon, or most vulnerable. Wherever possible, ecosystem management and restoration activities will incorporate opportunities to enhance visitor experience and learning.

### Work to Date

In 2008, Parks Canada produced a state of the park report for Kootenay National Park, which evaluated the condition of key ecosystem indicators, and assessed the results of ecosystem management efforts. Good progress has been made on some of the issues identified in the 2000 Park Management Plan, such as improving wildlife movement corridors, and restoring fire to the landscape. Additional work is required to continue this progress, and to address other issues of concern such as wildlife mortality on Highway 93 South.

### What We Heard

In general, there is agreement and support for Parks Canada's efforts to maintain the wilderness character of the park and sustain wildlife populations. There is significant concern regarding wildlife mortality along Highway 93 South caused in part by speed and inattention. Some participants called for increased research funding, speed limit enforcement, and more interpretation and education on the park's wildlife and fire restoration programs.

### Highlights of Key Direction for Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

- Maintain and restore connectivity of terrestrial wildlife corridors and aquatic ecosystems affected by poorly designed culverts or other barriers.
- Work with partners to address the issue of speed control and wildlife mortality on Highway 93 South.
- Focus on providing high habitat security for grizzly bears, which in turn ensures high quality wilderness recreation opportunities for park visitors.
- Continue to use prescribed fires, and carefully controlled natural fires where appropriate, to restore fire to the landscape, and provide visitors with opportunities to learn about the role of fire in maintaining healthy forest ecosystems.
- Develop and implement an ecological restoration program for disturbed sites such as old road rights-of-way and depleted gravel pits.





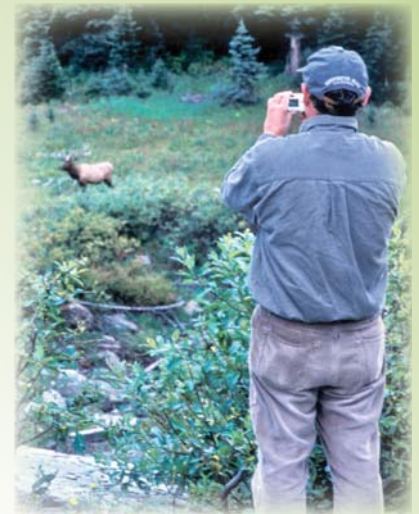
### Kootenay Corridor (Hwy 93 South)

From the icefields of the continental divide to the semi-arid forests and grasslands of the Rocky Mountain Trench, the Kootenay corridor presents visitors with a spectacular scenic route across a complete transect of the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. As they travel through the corridor, travellers have numerous opportunities to witness the effects of fire on the landscape. Picnic areas, short strolls, and interpretive exhibits are clustered at key nodes, providing those who stop with a menu of options. For those just passing through on their way to summer homes in the Columbia Valley, new educational media provide the opportunity to learn as they enjoy their sightseeing experience. Trailheads provide attractive, informative entry points for lengthier excursions into the park backcountry. Innovative action has engaged travellers in support of conservation, and reduced wildlife mortality along the corridor and these innovations become central to learning or leisure opportunities along the parkway.

#### Priority Actions

- Work with partners to reduce wildlife mortality along the highway.
- Identify opportunities to cluster facilities along 93S in order to provide a range of opportunities at key locations that will encourage more drivers to stop and experience the park.
- Improve sense of arrival at the northern (Banff) entrance of the corridor, with emphasis on introducing visitors to the west slope, the broad valleys of the Vermilion and Kootenay rivers, and a fire-driven forest landscape.
- Consider ways to enhance paddling opportunities on the Vermilion and Kootenay rivers.

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### Area Concepts

Kootenay Corridor  
(Hwy 93 South)

Rockwall Backcountry Area

Sinclair Canyon - Radium





### Rockwall Backcountry Area

The Rockwall is a destination of choice for backpackers seeking a multi-day wilderness experience. Abundant wildlife, mountain wilderness, moderate levels of use, and the beauty of the wild landscapes are highly valued. Here travellers find well maintained, challenging trails with dramatic vistas along the massive limestone escarpment that runs for more than 50 kilometres along the northwestern edge of Kootenay National Park. Several loop trail options provide opportunities to vary the length of the trip.

#### Priority Actions

- Improve trail conditions where significant deterioration has taken place, consistent with backcountry trail standards.
- Promote Rockwall as the major backcountry destination in the park and encourage responsible exploration.
- Enhance trailhead kiosks and information to provide up-to-date trail conditions, wildlife and avalanche information.
- Conduct social science research to determine potential for increasing the camping capacity in this area.

### Sinclair Canyon - Radium

Sinclair Canyon provides a dramatic entry to Kootenay National Park and the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site. The Redwall Fault and the Radium Hot Springs provide the backdrop for a renewed welcome that provides a unique sense of arrival to the park, and entices visitors to linger and explore the park. Well-designed and maintained trails through restored open forest and grassland areas, link the park to the Village and provide enjoyable strolling opportunities for visitors and locals alike.

#### Priority Actions

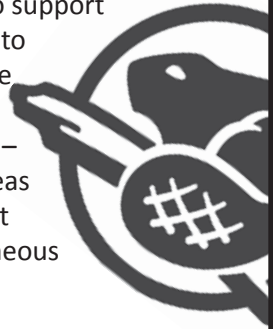
- Improve sense of arrival to Kootenay National Park and the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site at the southwest entrance to the park at Sinclair Canyon.
- Shift the focus of the gateway from primarily fee collection to the integrated provision of welcome and orientation information.
- Complete remaining priority actions for the Redstreak Restoration Project, including removal of infrastructure on the west side of highway, and additional prescribed fire.
- Explore opportunities for enhanced trail linkages with the Village of Radium Hot Springs.





## ZONING AND DECLARED WILDERNESS AREAS

The zoning plan is an important management tool that helps to support the park vision by directing development and visitor use levels to compatible areas of the park, while ensuring that rare, sensitive or exceptional ecological and cultural resources are protected. The zoning system includes five categories ranging from Zone I – Special Preservation Areas to Zone V – Park Services. Zone I areas include the Mount Wardle wildlife area, the Dry Gulch-Stoddart Creek area, and outcrops of the Burgess Shale and Ice River Igneous Complex.



Since the 2000 plan was approved, a large area of Kootenay National Park has been declared a wilderness area under Section 14 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. This provides strong legislative protection for the majority of Kootenay National Park, ensuring that the natural character of the landscape that supports outstanding visitor opportunities will be protected for the long term. Within a wilderness area, no activities may be authorised that might compromise its wilderness character. Some adjustments to the wilderness area boundary may be required in order to facilitate the installation of new communication infrastructure, such as cell towers.



### Timelines

The public review period for the draft Park Management Plan will run from early November to early December 2009.

Following the public review period, the plan will be revised to reflect the input received. The revised plan will then be submitted to the Minister of the Environment for approval by the end of March 2010.



### How Can I Participate?

Background information on the plan review is available on-line, under the heading *Help Shape Your Heritage*, at: [www.pc.gc.ca/kootenay](http://www.pc.gc.ca/kootenay)

Obtain a copy of the full draft plan, by contacting Todd Keith, Land Use Specialist for Kootenay and Yoho National Parks, at [todd.keith@pc.gc.ca](mailto:todd.keith@pc.gc.ca) or (250) 343-6101.

Written comments may be sent to Todd Keith, Yoho National Park, Box 99, Field, BC, V0A 1G0.

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