

MONTH 2010

KOOTENAY

NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

Management Plan

WORKING DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

November 2009

FOREWORD

- to be completed -

RECOMMENDATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- to be completed -

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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 at Radium Hot Springs with distinctive facilities that help define the sense of place and feeling of entrance. Well-designed and maintained trails link the community to the park, providing interesting 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. These fires have created more effective habitat for wildlife and opened views of the landscape, exposing a fascinating mountain topography not found to this extent in any other mountain park. Visitors have opportunities to learn about the important role of fire through on-site exhibits, interpretive trails, and digital media products.

Water is an important part of the unique character of the park. Whether frozen in a glacier's embrace, flowing swiftly from the Continental Divide along fast moving rivers on their way to the Pacific, or percolating up from the depths beneath the Radium Hot Springs or the Paint Pots, water in its various forms helps to define Kootenay.

Highway 93S provides an informative and inspiring sightseeing trip through the broad, wide valleys of the glacially fed Vermilion and Kootenay rivers. Conveniently located stops along the way raise curiosity and capture attention. Innovative ecological restoration projects are the basis for visitor opportunities that promote understanding and inspire action. A full range of mountain recreation opportunities is available including inviting short strolls and picnic areas, exhilarating paddling trips, an adventurous day hike, or a multi-day backpacking trip into the wilderness of the Rockwall or adjacent natural areas.

Wildlife is abundant, and the lack of trees in the fire-affected areas combined with the wide spaces bordering the highway makes them easier to spot. Signage and information remind visitors to slow down and help keep animals wild and alive.

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, connected habitat that ensures their populations are stable or increasing. The stories of these animals, their requirements and habitats, are told through engaging outreach and on-site programs to Canadians in their homes and schools and to visitors alike. Restoration

programs improve habitat structure and connectivity, and enhance biodiversity in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and create new and sensitively designed visitor opportunities.

The effects of fire and water, along with many associated stories spark the interest and the imagination of visitors as they explore the park at any season of the year. It is not unusual to see people who have been camping in the park also spending time cycling beside or paddling on the rivers. In winter, visitors continue to explore the park by way of activities such as cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. Regional residents both those living in Calgary and in the Columbia Valley have rediscovered the park and will plan a break as they journey through the park to explore new areas or re-visit old favourites.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mandate

The *Canada National Parks Act* requires that each national park have a management plan. These plans reflect the legislation and policies of the Government of Canada, and are prepared in consultation with Canadians. Management plans are reviewed every five years. This management plan will guide the overall direction of Kootenay National Park for the next 10 to 15 years, and will serve as a framework for all planning and decisions within the park.

The management plan for Kootenay National Park was approved in 2000. The 2000 Kootenay National Park of Canada Management Plan has proven important and effective at improving the ecological health of the park and providing guidance for investments and decisions that support the continued relevance and attractiveness of Kootenay National Park as one of Canada's premier national parks. The plan was reviewed in 2005, at which time it was found to still provide sufficient direction, so no amendments were required.

Parks Canada's approach to management planning has evolved over the years. In 2008, the Parks Canada Agency finalized new national management planning guidelines. These guidelines aim to ensure that management plans provide strategic direction, as opposed to specific prescriptive measures, and that they more effectively integrate the three key elements of Parks Canada's mandate: protection, visitor experience, and education.

Parks Canada's Mandate

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

This second five-year review of the 2000 Kootenay National Park of Canada Management Plan coincided with an opportunity to substantially rewrite and reorganize the plan so that it is aligned with the new planning guidelines. This updated plan brings forward important policy direction for the ecological integrity of Kootenay National Park and integrates it with new content intended to identify opportunities and strategic direction for visitor experience and education.

1.2 Management Plan Review Process

The seven mountain national parks – Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Jasper, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Lakes – share many features and issues in common. Visitors travel among the parks, and stakeholders often have interests in several parks. Consequently, the management plans for the seven parks have been reviewed and amended concurrently, through a common process.

The management plans have been written with an overall mountain park vision and key strategies that often share common threads, reflecting the co-ordinated management approaches among the parks. The management plan also contains area concepts, in which detailed direction is provided for specific geographic areas of the park. The area concepts are presented in an integrated way to ensure that the three elements of the Parks Canada mandate are addressed in each part of the park.

1.3 Regulatory and Policy Context

Management authorities and accountabilities for national parks are established under the *Parks Canada Agency Act* and the *Canada National Parks Act*. The Park Management Plan provides strategic direction for a national park and is mandated by Section 11 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.

Strategic direction in the Park Management Plan, and all operational and business planning decisions, are subject, on an ongoing basis, to national policies and guidelines that frame Parks Canada's approach to all national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas. Some examples include:

- Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks;
- Management Bulletin 2.6.10. Recreational Activity and Special Event Assessments;
- Cultural Resource Management Policy;
- Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies.

The Parks Canada Corporate Plan 2009/10 – 2013/14 provides overall direction for the agency which must be reflected in park management plans. It includes the strategic outcome for the agency, which is:

Canadians have a strong sense of connection, through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for future generations.

Parks Canada will achieve this outcome, in part, by developing new programs that respond to the evolving needs and expectations of Canadians. This direction is reflected in the content of this updated management plan.

The Parks Canada Agency is accountable for ensuring that management of each national park gives first priority to the protection or restoration of ecological integrity. This ensures that national parks will remain unimpaired for the benefit, education and enjoyment of future generations. A primary tool in achieving this is the application of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and Parks Canada's Policy on Strategic Environmental Assessment to ensure thorough, science-based consideration of potential environmental effects, and appropriate public review, in advance of any development, licensing and policy decisions. In addition, Parks Canada has specific obligations under the *Species at Risk Act*.

Parks Canada publicly accounts for its performance by preparing, every five years, a State of the Park report that provides a synopsis of the current condition of the park based on key indicators, and assesses performance in advancing the Agency's mandate.

1.4 Co-operative Planning and Management

Kootenay National Park shares boundaries with Banff and Yoho national parks, and Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. These parks, together with Jasper National Park, and two other provincial parks in British Columbia (Hamber, Mt. Robson) have been designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site. Other boundaries of Kootenay National Park adjoin public land administered by the Province of British Columbia, and private lands in the Columbia Valley.

Given the shared importance of these parks as the core protected area in the Central Rockies Ecosystem, it is important that management strategies of the mountain national parks are coordinated and complementary. The 2009 review and updating of the Kootenay National Park management plan was conducted simultaneously with reviews of its neighbouring national parks and with three other mountain national parks in southern Canada: Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Lakes.

These seven mountain national parks share a common vision that aligns with, and frames, each national park's specific vision:

Canada's mountain national parks are renowned living examples of all that is best in the conservation of mountain ecosystems and history, facilitation of authentic nature-based experience, shared initiative, meaningful learning, and mountain culture. Visitors to these places feel welcomed into experiences that exceed their expectations.

The silent peaks, forest mosaics, living waters, wildlife, people, clean air and endless capacity to inspire bring rejuvenation, hope and self-discovery to future generations, just as they have for the many generations that came before.

Together, these national parks represent the Rocky Mountains and Columbia Mountains Natural Regions and are the result of the conscious choice of Canadians to preserve a large part of their mountain heritage in a natural condition, so that future generations can continue to be inspired by the kinds of experiences that Canada's mountain environments offer. Visitors, through-travellers, residents, and all Canadians benefit from and can contribute to this heritage. Dating back over 10,000 years, traditional use on these lands by Aboriginal people is evidenced by countless archaeological sites and cultural artefacts, as well as the oral traditions of Aboriginal communities. These parks also contain 15 national historic sites representing major themes in Canadian history.

While much of the direct management of these parks is the responsibility of Parks Canada, it is the advice and support of others that is critical to success. In collaboration with partners such as the Village of Radium Hot Springs, the Advisory Development Board, the Radium Chamber of Commerce, the Friends of Kootenay National Park, and others, along with the involvement of many Canadians in the development of the management plan, Parks Canada shares with others the leadership and challenge of managing this treasured place.

2. IMPORTANCE OF KOOTENAY NATIONAL PARK

Kootenay National Park was established in 1920, as part of an agreement between the provincial and federal governments to build the Banff-Windermere Highway (93S) – the first motor road across the central Canadian Rockies. A strip of land eight kilometres wide on each side of the highway was set aside as a national park to protect the natural mountain landscape along the route. Today the park encompasses 1,406 km², and represents the Western Ranges and Western Main Ranges of the Rocky Mountains Natural Region. The park shares boundaries with Banff National Park and Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park to the east, and Yoho National Park to the north, and is an important component of the 23,069 km² Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

Kootenay National Park extends from the icefields of the continental divide to the semi-arid slopes of the Columbia Valley. Glacial erosion and avalanches exert a strong influence on the alpine and sub-alpine areas, whereas wildfire and periodic population eruptions of forest insects are the main ecosystem drivers in the drier montane areas at lower elevation. The park protects the watersheds of the Vermilion and part of the upper Kootenay Rivers, excellent examples of broad, westslope drainage systems. The river valleys provide habitat for ungulates such as elk and deer, and movement corridors for carnivores such as wolves and grizzly bears. The drier southern section of the park provides important habitat for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, and the American badger, a species-at-risk. The rivers provide habitat for native westslope cutthroat trout.

For thousands of years, the area that is now Kootenay National Park was part of the traditional lands used by several First Nations, including the Ktunaxa (Kootenay), Stoney, Kinbasket (Shuswap), and Secwepemc (Shuswap) people. The park includes the Paint Pots ochre spring, and the Radium Hot Springs, two sites of great traditional and spiritual significance for First Nations. The valleys of the Kootenay and Vermilion rivers were used as travel corridors between the Columbia Valley and the Bow Valley and adjacent plains east of the Rockies.

The park is also important for its role in protecting Burgess Shale fossil deposits. First discovered by C.D. Walcott in 1909 in neighbouring Yoho National Park, the Burgess Shale is recognised as one of the most significant fossil deposits in the world. There are several known Burgess Shale localities within Kootenay National Park, which have yet to be fully investigated.

3. PLANNING CONTEXT

Approximately 450,000 people visit Kootenay National Park each year. Over 90% of these visitors are independent travellers, while 10% are on commercial group tours. Slightly less than half of these visitors are Canadians. Visitor use of Kootenay National Park occurs mostly in the summer and shoulder season. Only 18% of visitors arrive in the winter. Visitors to the park participate most commonly in the activities of sightseeing (86%), walking (78%) and hiking a trail (66%)¹. Many other travellers pass through the park without stopping on their way between Alberta and British Columbia. A significant component of this traffic is attributed to Alberta residents who are owners of recreational homes in the Columbia Valley.

Visitors to Kootenay enjoy the spectacular 94-kilometre scenic drive through the Vermilion and Kootenay valleys, while stopping to visit popular natural attractions like Marble Canyon, the Paint Pots, Sinclair Canyon, and the Radium Hot Springs. There are popular day hiking opportunities at the north and south end of the park. Marble Canyon and McLeod Meadows campgrounds and Kootenay Park Lodge provide accommodation along the 93S corridor. Redstreak Campground, the largest in the park, provides popular accommodation near Radium Hot Springs. The Rockwall area is a premium multi-day backpacking destination, and other trails lead to backcountry opportunities in Banff, Yoho and Mount Assiniboine parks. Approximately 98% of the park is a declared wilderness, which provides outstanding wilderness recreation opportunities with minimal facilities.

The north end of the park, nearest the continental divide, is mostly within the alpine and subalpine ecoregions. Forest vegetation is dominated by Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine, and meadows dotted with wildflowers occur above treeline. The lower elevation portions of the southern end of the park are within the montane ecoregion. These areas are characterised by Douglas fir, white spruce, trembling aspen, and lodgepole pine. Ponderosa pine and cacti also grow in the driest areas at the extreme south end of the park. The montane ecoregion is fire dependent. Wildfires and prescribed fires that have been intentionally ignited have created large areas of dead, burnt timber that are in various stages of regeneration. The valley bottoms of the montane ecoregion provide critical habitat and movement corridors for wildlife. This area is also where the highway and other developments are concentrated.

Aquatic ecosystems have been affected by the development of the transportation corridor, which may act as a barrier to fish passage, and the introduction of non-native fish species. Efforts are underway to restore natural aquatic connectivity, and to address the impacts of non-native fish. Recovery measures are being planned for the westslope

¹ IPSOS REID – Online Panel Composition Overview, ParksListens, March 2008.

cutthroat trout, a species that is a candidate for designation under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

The southwestern portion of the park is embedded within a regional landscape that has been modified significantly by forest harvesting, transportation infrastructure, ranching, tourism and real estate development. Development pressures and human population are increasing in this region.

The 2008 State of the Park Report rated the state of ecological integrity as fair and stable, cultural resource condition is as fair, visitor experience as fair and stable, and public education as fair and improving. The report identified the following challenges and opportunities for the future:

- Addressing land use pressures related to rapid population growth in the Columbia Valley and understanding the needs & expectations of the Calgary and Columbia Valley markets;
- Undertaking more rigorous cultural resource inventory and evaluation;
- Improving and updating existing visitor facilities;
- Addressing grizzly bear mortality;
- Reducing wildlife mortality on Highway 93 South;
- Restoring aquatic connectivity.

4. KEY STRATEGIES

Key strategies are the guiding concepts that define the approach Parks Canada takes to setting priorities, implementing actions and evaluating the success of park management. The following seven key strategies summarise the overall approach to achieving Parks Canada's mandate in Kootenay National Park

4.1 Showcases of Conservation Innovation

Conservation challenges associated with managing protected areas in a changing world are many and complex. Canada's mountain national parks have long been at the forefront of efforts to re-think and re-design the way in which people interact with protected landscapes. Parks Canada's mandated obligation to ensure that parks remain unimpaired for future generations, and the high value that Canadians attach to the ecological well-being and cultural heritage of their mountain national parks, focus research attention, innovation and investment on conservation challenges that are shared with many other mountain landscapes in the world.

As part of a community of protected areas, Kootenay National Park has benefited from experience gained in other places in Canada and the world, and from fresh thinking brought to the table by knowledgeable people who share an interest in these special places. Beginning with a strong knowledge base, and working collaboratively with others, facilitates the development and implementation of creative conservation solutions that add value to visitor experiences and ensure that the natural and cultural heritage of the park is protected for generations to come.

The management of Kootenay National Park is policy-based, and science-supported. Ecosystem science will provide insight and understanding related to the ecological health of the park, while also providing opportunities for visitor experience and collective learning through the engagement of stakeholders, park visitors and local community members. As our understanding of park ecosystems continues to evolve, research findings will continually be integrated into the stories shared with park visitors, stakeholders, and Canadians across the country.

This strategy focuses on:

- sustaining the critical analysis, creative thinking, and innovation that are needed to resolve conservation challenges through adaptive management;
- ensuring that community residents in the Village of Radium Hot Springs, regional stakeholders, park visitors, volunteers and broader communities of interest are fully engaged in the opportunities associated with the creation of new conservation solutions; and,

- making research and conservation successes a part of the national park visitor experience and of the stories the park tells the world, so that they contribute to enhancing the environmental literacy of Canadians, and inspire hope.

Direction:

- Create new stories of conservation success by engaging a diverse community of interested Canadians in sharing information, imagining solutions, and collaborating to implement strategies that address the most pressing conservation challenges, such as wildlife mortality on the 93S.
- Lead, or support, research activities that contribute to an increased understanding of park ecosystems, ecological processes, environmental change, and cultural resources.
- Consider the creation of common spaces, such as a “Bighorn Sheep Common Room” at the Radium VRC, where scientists, volunteers and visitors can share knowledge and coordinate research and monitoring efforts.
- Disseminate the results of ongoing research, monitoring and restoration projects through internet and new media to high visitor use locations in the park, and to schools and homes in surrounding communities, with an initial emphasis on the Redstreak Restoration Project and the Bighorn Sheep Monitoring program, and as work progresses, the Highway 93 South mitigation project.
- Participate in regional or national coordinated planning initiatives to help enhance knowledge sharing and improve decision making within the regional ecosystem.
- Design and implement conservation measures such as prescribed fires, reduced speed zones, salvage archaeology, seasonal closures and trail adjustments in such a way as to enhance experience and learning opportunities.
- Ensure that the management and operation of the park minimises impacts to park ecosystems by collaborating with partners to continually expand and improve the use of environmental technologies such as renewable energy, waste composting, recycling and water and energy conservation in campgrounds, day use areas, backcountry campgrounds, patrol cabins, and other built facilities.

Indicators of Success

- Number of Canadians participating actively in park research and conservation programs.
- Highway 93S mitigation in place.
- Number of new learning opportunities associated with research and conservation initiatives.
- Improvements in environmental performance of park facilities.

4.2 Experiencing the Dramatic Effects of Fire and Water

Connecting Canadians with real and inspiring park experiences is integral to successful delivery of Parks Canada's mandate. A renewed focus on experiential tourism will set the stage for visitors to have the best national park experience possible. This effort will be evident in every program and activity, and in every aspect of service delivery.

Kootenay National Park was established in conjunction with the construction of the Banff-Windermere Highway. This setting provides a remarkable opportunity to engage visitors in a variety of recreational and learning opportunities as they 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. The presence of the road also requires focused management attention in order to minimise impacts on wildlife and park ecosystems, and this provides excellent opportunities to share information on road ecology with park visitors.

For those travelling through Kootenay for the first time, the broad valleys and fire-generated open slopes reveal the fascinating topography of the Rocky Mountains, providing an introduction to one of the great iconic landscapes of the Canadian west. For regular through travellers or those making a return visit, the park offers unique opportunities to observe forest renewal and regeneration, as new fires and new growth continually redefine the views. For urban Canadians and youth, the park offers contrast, a chance to recharge, and opportunities for adventure and discovery. No matter their background or interest, visitors will find in Kootenay National Park the ability to create the experiences that are most meaningful and rewarding to them.

People with an interest in the park are not all the same. Informed by extensive demographical and psychographic information, product development and promotional activities undertaken by Parks Canada and its municipal and tourism industry partners will recognize this, providing a seamless delivery of products and programs that attract the attention and satisfy the needs of visitors with a wide array of interests and comfort levels.

“Welcome” will be a recurring theme, reflected in visitor infrastructure, local ambassadors, Parks staff and other service providers. Visitors to Kootenay National Park – whether from the east or west, north or south – will be acutely aware of having arrived in a special place, containing abundant wildlife in a landscape greatly affected by two of the earth's major elements: fire and water. Visitor experience has been enhanced through attention to trails, the backcountry offer and trip planning opportunities that are tailored to the needs of the hiker and the day-user.

Providing visitors with “**Opportunities to Participate**” is one way of encouraging meaningful and enjoyable visits that contribute to a sense of connection to the place. In collaboration with external stakeholders in both the environmental and tourism communities, and subject to an assessment process at the national and local levels, Parks Canada will consider proposals for new recreational, leisure and learning activities and services.

Like the other mountain parks, Kootenay’s visitor experience strategy is based on five types of engagement: the virtual experience; drive-through awareness; the view from the edge; a step into the wild; and mountain wilderness.

The first of these, the “**Virtual Experience**”, is targeted to visitors with an interest in nature and mountains, anywhere in the world within reach of technology. For these visitors, Parks Canada will provide brief, intense visual and/or auditory experiences of mountain heritage, delivered through technology or print media. For reluctant travellers, these experiences may be the visit; for others, they may be instrumental at the imagining/wishing stage of the trip cycle, and may provoke an actual visit.

Travellers who now journey through the park without stopping are targeted in the next type of experience, “**Drive Through Awareness**”. To date, these visitors have been largely ignored, even though they represent a significant volume on Highway 93S where wildlife mortality is a major concern. There is a tremendous opportunity to strengthen these through travellers’ connection to Kootenay National Park by providing learning opportunities and encouraging environmental stewardship. For this segment, a drive along the Banff-Windermere Highway to recreational properties in the Columbia Valley – complete with wildlife alert systems, fencing, crossing structures and complementary signage – will provoke curiosity, inquiry and understanding. Although still primarily a visual experience, subtle interpretation will promote understanding of and support for the protection of the scenic mountain panorama, and may provoke a return visit to experience the park in more depth.

Those who prefer to stay close to civilization, or stop briefly for a break on their way to other places, represent the second highest volume visitor group. They may stop to snap a picture, have a picnic, go for a short stroll, or relax in the hot springs. For this segment, better maintained infrastructure and an enhanced level of interpretation will set the stage for a deeper connection to place, in which all of the senses are engaged. Meaning and value will be added to this “**View from the Edge**” experience, through heritage programming and through provision of dynamic media that bring the wilderness to the campsite, village or gathering place. This will be particularly appealing for those seeking hassle-free travel, rejuvenation and relaxation, or freedom and excitement in outdoor settings.

“**A Step into the Wild**” experience is targeted to visitors who stop and stay in the parks for more than a few hours, but who do not venture physically or perceptually from civilization for too long. They may be staying in Radium, in one of the outlying commercial accommodations in Kootenay, or in neighbouring Banff National Park. This group may take advantage of commercial guiding and transportation services to stage further from the road in relative safety. Lesser in volume than the previous group, this segment has more time for personal reflection, in-depth learning, and possibilities of memorable moments with wildlife. Their park experience will give them renewal, freedom and authentic connection to nature and mountain culture.

Visitors who seek “**Mountain Wilderness**” have an inherent affinity for nature or have gained experience and comfort through repeated outdoor adventure trips over time. These visitors become immersed physically and perceptually in the natural environment, leaving behind at the trailhead the built human environment that characterises daily life. Their carefully planned, intensely personal experiences may include long, challenging day hikes, such as Kindersley Pass, mountaineering trips along the continental divide, or lengthy, unguided backpacking trips to the Rockwall, or other backcountry areas. These visitors already have a strong connection to the park, and this connection will be maintained through the provision of off-site trip planning information and unobtrusive assistance, and when desired, contact with experts. They themselves will be encouraged to deepen their connection to place, as ambassadors or stewards, passing on their passion for Kootenay to friends, family and colleagues.

Direction:

- Apply a consistent visitor experience framework throughout the trip cycle, from imagining/wishing to remembering, reinforcing that which is most authentic and inspiring about the Rocky Mountains
 - Use traditional methods and new technology to target and attract key segments, enhance the visitor experience, promote connections to place
 - Give priority to the introduction of new **Virtual Experience** and **Drive-through Awareness** products
 - Continually re-evaluate and renew products and promotion associated with **View from the Edge**, **A Step into the Wild** and **Mountain Wilderness** opportunities
 - Position **View from the Edge** experiences in the Marble Canyon/Paint Pots area as an introduction to the park and invitation to explore further
 - Develop and promote services and facilities that invite visitors to move from one type of experience to another.
- Build on the success and strength of programs and services for visitors seeking authenticity and cultural exploration, as well as those seeking opportunities for recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation

- Work with Banff National Park and partners like the Village of Radium Hot Springs, the Radium Chamber of Commerce, the East Kootenays Tourism Association and the Friends of Kootenay to re-direct visitors from busier areas to Kootenay opportunities and experiences that align with their interests
- Respond to the increased environmental sophistication of visitors by providing opportunities throughout the park to learn about the special nature of Kootenay, and be involved in stewardship efforts in the park and at home
- Continue to offer a range of recreational and leisure opportunities for visitors
 - Both internal and external proposals will be considered
 - Discussion will be based on principles stemming from Parks Canada's mandate:
 - Respecting Natural and Cultural Resource Protection Goals
 - Facilitating Opportunities for Enjoyable and Meaningful Visitor Experiences
 - Promoting Understanding and Appreciation
 - Valuing and Involving Local Communities
 - Respecting the Character of Place
 - Assessments will take place in a workshop format, with the exact format depending on the need for a timely decision, level of differing opinion and anticipated public reaction associated with the proposed activity.
- Continually refresh and renew content for an enhanced web presence in order to provide visitors with a wide range of up-to-date information for planning their visit
- Develop product for markets identified as new or renewed priorities for the park:
 - Segmented by geography:
 - Regional market, with emphasis on the Columbia Valley, the Southern Interior, Calgary and the Bow Valley.
 - Segmented by motivations/benefits sought:
 - gentle explorers,
 - no hassle travellers
 - rejuvenators
 - Segmented by demographics:
 - urban Canadians, especially Albertans and British Columbians
 - new (recently immigrated) Canadians
 - young Canadians under 20 years of age
- Invest strategically and sufficiently in front-line services and park assets
 - Based on standards developed around experience levels, develop a program to maintain an appropriate range of Level Three, Four and Five opportunities

- Improve reception and orientation facilities in the Sinclair Canyon area, and cluster multi-level opportunities in and around McLeod Meadows, Dolly Varden and Vermilion Crossing
 - Review the demand for frontcountry campgrounds, camper expectations, and ecological considerations, and revitalize the park's camping offer by investing in infrastructure for first-time campers, group campers, and those seeking hassle-free or alternative camping options, while maintaining or improving ecological conditions, and gaining operational efficiencies.
 - Consider opportunities to enhance the park trail system outside of priority wildlife habitat areas, using linkages to create loop trail opportunities and, where appropriate, connections to adjacent hiking and biking trail systems. Basic trail standards will be maintained in less used areas of the park.
 - Improve standards for trailhead signage throughout the park, as a means of encouraging visitors to explore the park; including improved appearance of kiosks, regular updating of information, posting of trail conditions, special notices, trail distances, elevation changes, and approximate hiking times for main hikes.
- Increase knowledge of market segments and measure success of promotional and programming efforts.
 - Create a comprehensive profile of the park's total visitor population, and monitor trends and shifts in visitation
 - Share market intelligence with municipal and commercial tourism providers
 - Enhance learning opportunities, with an emphasis on popular locations such as Redstreak-Sinclair Canyon, McLeod Meadows, and the Marble Canyon-Paint Pots area, utilizing a wide variety of media that cater to all types of visitors.

Indicators of Success

- At least 85% of visitors surveyed are satisfied, and at least 50% are very satisfied, with their experience.
- By March 2012, increase the number of visitors to the park by 9% above 2008-09 levels, by targeting markets with potential growth.
- Number of Virtual Experience products developed/ introduced online and associated market uptake
- Number of Drive Through Awareness products developed/ introduced and associated market uptake
- Increased % of Canadians who understand the importance of their national parks and Kootenay National Park in particular
- Increased % of Canadians who understand the importance of park stewardship, Parks Canada's role as park stewards and their own role as partners in stewardship
- Increased proportion of drive through visitors who stop and spend time in the park.

4.3 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. Understanding this cultural heritage allows visitors to experience a vivid sense of the past, and to personally connect with and contribute to this continuing human legacy.

This strategy aims to increase the profile of the rich, still-evolving cultural heritage of Kootenay National Park, so that history, culture and ecology become integrated into the ways in which people experience and understand the unique heritage of the park.

Direction:

- Conserve and restore significant cultural resources to ensure that these touchstones to our past remain intact.
- Strengthen the involvement of Aboriginal people in documenting and presenting their cultures and relationships to park landscapes, and renewing their spiritual and traditional associations with the land.
- Develop new interpretive and outreach materials to enhance the profile of cultural heritage sites such as the Paint Pots, Sir George Simpson commemorative plaque, backcountry patrol cabins, and archaeological sites.

Indicators of Success:

- Improving trend in the condition of cultural resources.
- Increased involvement of Aboriginal people in the park.
- Understanding – increased understanding of the historic places, people and events that help to define Kootenay National Park.
- Outreach Education – new products developed that bring the stories of Kootenay to audiences beyond park boundaries.

4.4 Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live

This strategy is designed to extend the reach of Kootenay National Park, through the popular media, modern technology and outreach programming, to bring current, lively and engaging content into homes, schools and communities so that Canadians can choose to make the mountains part of their daily lives.

To promote an ongoing dialogue and lifelong passion for parks beyond our boundaries, Parks Canada brings the ongoing stories of mountain culture, science, recreation and park management to people who may not otherwise have an opportunity to learn about or become involved in our national parks and national historic sites.

An increasing number of Canadians live in urban centres, and more than one-fifth were not born in Canada. Kootenay National Park will reach out to these audiences through innovative communications programming. Outreach initiatives such as environmental education programs at schools, extension events for special groups, and upgraded content on Parks Canada and partner websites will bring unique features of the park into people's homes and communities.

Direction:

- Explore opportunities to engage Calgary residents who own or use weekend residences in the Columbia Valley: in the city, en route through Kootenay National Park, and in the valley, in order to raise awareness of the potential impacts of roads on park ecosystems, engage them in efforts to address issues such as wildlife mortality, and increase their sense of place and connection to the park.
- Continually refresh and renew content for an enhanced web presence in order to provide learning and experiential opportunities for Canadians and others so that they can experience the excitement of being “virtually there”. Develop materials on the Redstreak Restoration projects as a priority.
- Collaborate with museums, zoos, botanical gardens and other institutions, as well as media outlets in the Columbia Valley, to deliver programs on unique features, places, events, and people in Kootenay National Park.
- Collaborate with the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network and school boards in the East and West Kootenays to support the *Wild Voices for Kids* speaker series in the area schools, and increase the mountain park content in this program.
- Identify opportunities to develop partnering arrangements with the Village of Radium Hot Springs and other communities in the Columbia Valley that enhance mountain park outreach and education around restoration and conservation projects, such as fire, aquatic health, species at risk, and highway wildlife mitigation efforts.
- Collaborate with the Provincial education authorities to tie national park themes and opportunities into school curricula at all levels.

Indicators of Success:

- Outreach Education – new virtual products developed and associated market uptake.

- Percentage of Canadians that appreciate the significance of Kootenay National Park.

4.5 Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Visitors to Kootenay National Park have an ideal opportunity to learn about the natural characteristics that are representative of the west slope of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region in ways that sustain this heritage for future visitors. Visitors find in the park intact ecosystems with all their component parts that are still governed by natural ecosystem processes, particularly fire. These healthy and evolving ecosystems support a range of nature-based recreational experiences that constantly attract new and returning visitors to the park.

While maintaining the ecological integrity of the whole park, Parks Canada will put an emphasis on the restoration and intensive management of those ecosystem processes and components that have the potential to yield significant conservation gains, or are rare or most vulnerable. Wherever possible, new visitor experience and learning opportunities will be incorporated into the management or restoration of these ecosystem features. Kootenay National Park will focus its ecosystem management efforts on the following areas.

4.5.1 Restoration of ecosystem processes

Parks Canada will place an emphasis on maintaining and restoring natural ecosystem processes that contribute to the evolution of park ecosystems. Fire, insects, erosion and deposition by ice and water, wind disturbance, animal migration, predation and herbivory will continue to influence the pattern and structure of park ecosystems and wildlife communities, providing a diverse array of habitat for wildlife, and distinctive, variable landscapes and wildlife viewing opportunities that enhance the experience of park visitors.

Fire is the primary ecosystem driver for Kootenay National Park. Natural wildfires, such as those experienced in 2003, and prescribed fires ignited as a means of reintroducing fire to landscapes where it has been suppressed, provide park visitors with opportunities to witness the effects of fire and learn about its role in maintaining healthy forest ecosystems. Prescribed fires will continue to be used as a means of restoring diverse forest and meadow communities in the park.

Learning programs will communicate the important role that ecosystem processes play in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Active management activities, such as prescribed fires and ecosystem restoration initiatives, will incorporate opportunities for visitors to experience and learn about these critical ecosystem processes.

Direction:

- Use prescribed fires and carefully managed natural fires to achieve 50% of the long-term fire cycle in areas below this target, and restore natural vegetation characteristics in all ecosystems, as detailed in the field unit Fire Management Plan (currently in draft form).
- Complete the Redstreak Restoration project to restore native grassland and open forest that provides important habitat for bighorn sheep and a host of other species. Conduct periodic, low-intensity burns to maintain these desirable habitat characteristics.
- Use research and monitoring of bighorn sheep movements and distribution to identify priority corridors between winter and summer ranges; apply prescribed fire as a primary tool to achieve restoration objectives for bighorn sheep movement.
- Recover mule deer and elk populations in montane areas of the park through reduction of highway kills and provision of suitable habitat through use of fire.
- Develop and periodically update communication products as fire and forest patterns change, in order to build awareness and understanding of fire and vegetation dynamics.
- Increase survival of large predators through measures to reduce mortality on 93S.
- Develop and implement an ecological restoration program for disturbed sites, such as old road alignments and depleted gravel pits. Identify two priority sites and implement restoration actions by 2014.

4.5.2 Maintaining and Restoring Ecosystem Connectivity

Mountain landscapes are fragmented by their very nature. The construction of the Banff-Windermere Highway and various forms of land use and development adjacent to park boundaries has increased fragmentation by creating physical barriers to wildlife movement and introducing serious causes of wildlife mortality. Park management will strive to reduce and minimise the impacts of these barriers, raise awareness among visitors and stakeholders of the challenges faced by wildlife, and maintain conditions that allow animals to travel through the park and regional landscape with minimal obstacles.

Direction:

- Collaborate with others to maintain and restore secure wildlife corridors at global (y2y) and regional scales. Priority wildlife corridors in the park are the Kootenay Valley east of the river, and the Vermilion-Wolverine-Dainard corridor, which provides the only connection through the Vermilion Range.
- Restore connectivity of streams and wetlands where they have been impaired.
- Develop and implement measures to reduce wildlife mortality on the highway.

- Develop communication products for park visitors and external audiences that raise awareness of wildlife movement patterns, barriers to dispersal, and efforts to improve connectivity.

4.5.3 Grizzly Bears

Parks Canada, along with provincial partners in British Columbia and Alberta, has established a goal of maintaining a non-declining grizzly bear population in the Rocky Mountains. Grizzly bear habitat within this ecosystem is naturally fragmented by large areas of rock and ice. Roads, railways, communities and other developments also fragment some of the best valley-bottom habitat. Recent scientific research has shown that the grizzly bear population on the east slope of the Central Rockies Ecosystem has the lowest known reproductive rate for this species. The survival of reproductive females is the key factor affecting population persistence.

Grizzly bear research across North America has led to the development of key concepts and analytical tools that can be applied to effectively manage for grizzly bears. These include habitat security and maintenance of core reproductive areas. Parks Canada will apply these concepts, in conjunction with the most recent knowledge of bear habitat use and behaviour in the mountain parks, in order to ensure a sustainable, viable population of grizzly bears, and provide visitors with the increasingly rare opportunity for wilderness travel in a landscape also occupied by bears.

Habitat security includes the consideration of physical habitat quality and levels of human disturbance within that habitat. Grizzly bear habitat is considered secure when the animals have a low probability of encountering humans, and can go about their activities with little human-caused disturbance. Areas with high habitat security are also likely to be high quality environments for wilderness recreation. Managing for habitat security will help to maintain grizzly bears, while also maintaining the unique character of place that contributes to visitor experience and enjoyment.

Parks Canada's focus on grizzly bears will aim to achieve several key objectives:

- Minimise bear-human interactions that may lead to habituation of bears;
- Prevent human-caused displacement of bears from prime food sources;
- Minimise the risk of human-caused mortality and human injury inflicted by bears;
- Maintain large, natural landscapes that provide opportunities for wilderness recreation, and support healthy bear populations; and,
- Demonstrate leadership, and work collaboratively with managers of lands within the Rocky Mountains for the ongoing protection of grizzly bears and a functional ecosystem.

Kootenay National Park will continue to use habitat security as a key tool in managing for both grizzly bears and high quality wilderness recreation opportunities in the park's seven landscape management units, and will strive to maintain or improve habitat security in each of these landscape management units (see Appendix 1).

Direction:

- Identify and implement solutions to reduce grizzly mortality on highway 93S.
- Where potential significant conflict between grizzly bears and park trail users is identified, consideration may be given to relocating trails out of high-quality grizzly habitat and into settings that offer improved recreational experiences and aesthetics (eg: out of riparian areas and onto the slopes above where the trail tread is better-drained and the scenic views are improved). Off-trail travel by commercial groups may be restricted in high quality grizzly habitat, in order to minimise conflict and maintain habitat security. Educational messages will be used to discourage off-trail travel by independent travellers.
- Minimize risk to female grizzlies and to visitors by seasonally closing or controlling recreational use of areas important for grizzly feeding and travelling, minimizing food attractants, and educating visitors on risk management in bear country.
- Maintain wilderness recreation opportunities geared toward self-reliant travel with minimal infrastructure in areas with high habitat security.
- Provide educational programming and products to increase visitor understanding of bear ecology, and of how to co-exist with bears.
- Work with adjacent land managers to maintain, and where possible improve, habitat connectivity through secure high quality corridors, allowing exchange between adjacent grizzly bear populations.

4.5.4 Protecting the Full Complement of Native Species

Kootenay National Park is home to a diverse community of plants and animals. The opportunity to see some of the interesting wildlife and forest communities in the park, such as Bighorn sheep, mountain goats and alpine larch forest, is a key factor that attracts many visitors to the park.

- Develop and promote new visitor experience opportunities by engaging anglers and other interested Canadians in activities to eliminate or reduce populations of non-native fish species that pose a risk to native populations through displacement or hybridisation.
- Work cooperatively with responsible federal and provincial agencies in planning and implementing recovery measures for species at risk such as American badger and rubber boa.

- Collaborate with stakeholders to implement proactive measures that will keep species from being added to Canada’s list of threatened and endangered mountain species.
- Prevent the introduction of new non-native species and control existing non-native species that are invasive, or harmful to native species.

4.5.5 Managing Development

Most visitor infrastructure in the park is located in the valleys, in close proximity to the highway. Although the majority of the park is legislatively protected as a wilderness area where major developments will not occur, much of the valley bottoms are not included in this designation. These valley bottoms are valued by visitors, but they also include much of the most productive wildlife habitat. Consequently, development and associated activities must be managed carefully in order to ensure that the natural and cultural attributes of the mountain parks that are valued by Canadians are not compromised. Recent restoration efforts in Kootenay National Park have reduced the development footprint and improved wildlife habitat in key corridors near Radium Hot Springs.

Direction:

- Design and construct frontcountry and backcountry wastewater and sanitation facilities to minimise or eliminate effects on water quality.
- Visitor facilities in the park, such as campgrounds, day use areas and trails, may be modified or consolidated to enhance visitor experience and achieve ecological objectives. Careful planning will attempt to minimise any increase in the development footprint, and any disturbed area no longer required for facilities or infrastructure will be restored.
- No additional park land will be released for commercial accommodation.

Indicators of Success

- The annual known, human-caused mortality of independent female grizzly bears shall not exceed 1.2% of the population, based on a 4-year running average.
- Maintain or improve habitat security in the park’s seven landscape management units.
- At least 85% of visitors surveyed are satisfied, and 50% are very satisfied with their wilderness recreation experiences.
- Improved aquatic connectivity – number of barriers remedied.
- Increase in the percentage of natural fire cycle achieved in landscapes where burned areas represent less than 50% of the estimated natural fire cycle.
- Increase in area of disturbed sites receiving restoration treatments.

5. AREA CONCEPTS

5.1 Kootenay Corridor

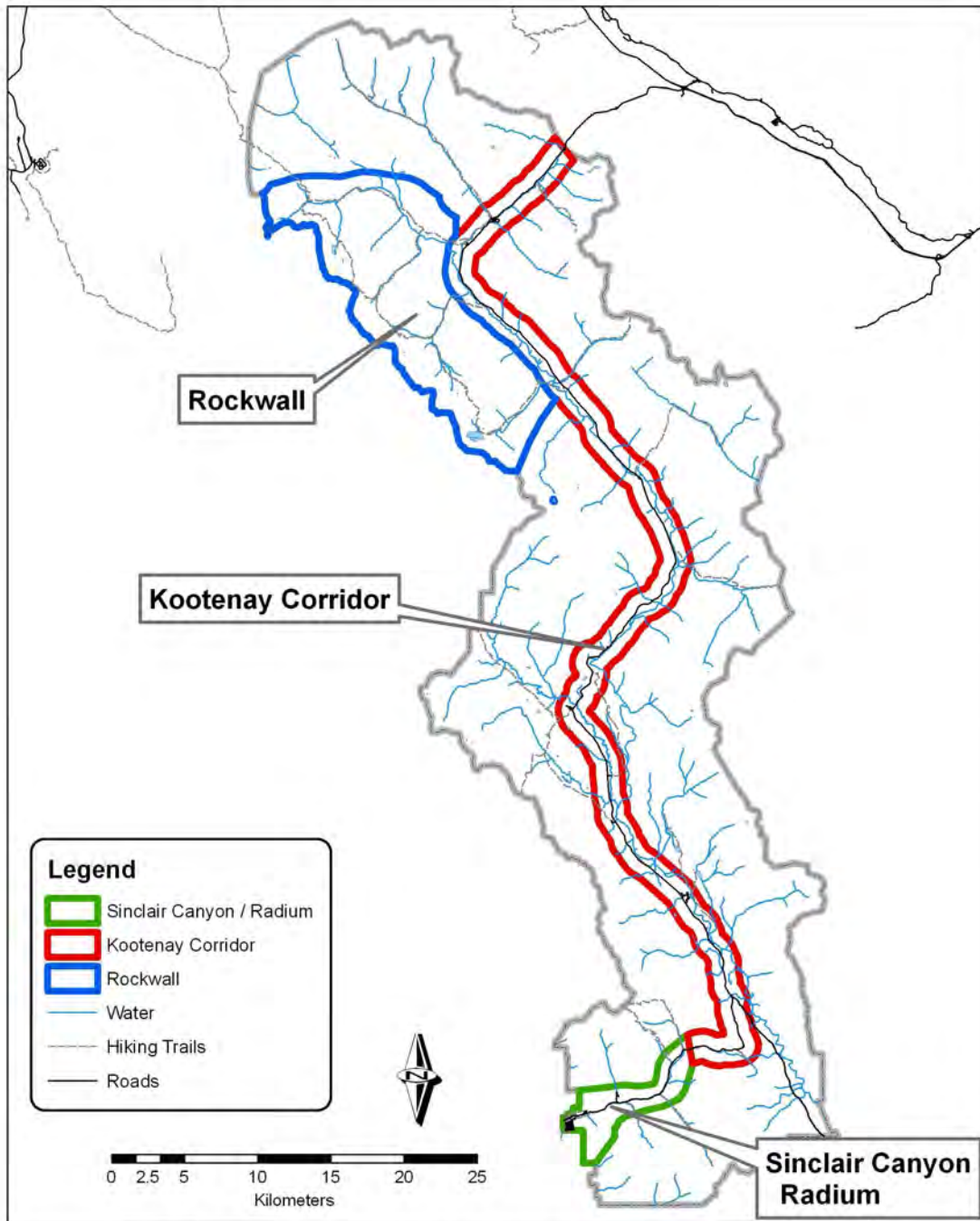
(Highway 93S, *The Banff-Windermere Highway*)

5.1.1 Future Best

From the icefields of the Continental Divide to the semi-arid forests and grasslands of the Rocky Mountain Trench, the 93S corridor provides visitors with a spectacular scenic journey across a complete transect of the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. The Kootenay corridor is a well-designed, integrated front country experience that encourages travellers to pull off the road to enjoy a variety of areas within the park. A welcome station provides a sense of arrival and park information for travellers crossing the Great Divide. The corridor begins here, beneath towering peaks of massive cliff-forming limestone of the Main Ranges, and then quickly descends into the broad valleys of the Vermilion and Kootenay Rivers carved into the more easily eroded shales of the Western Main Ranges and Western Ranges.

As travellers head west through the Vermilion River valley, they witness the dramatic influence of large wildfires on the landscape. In the Kootenay Valley more evidence of fire can be seen, in this instance related to prescribed fires intentionally ignited by Parks Canada fire specialists. The broad river valleys and gentler mountain slopes of this area provide panoramic views. Wildlife is frequently seen along this route, although at safe distances away from the edge of the roadway. Along the way, visitors may notice crossing structures, fencing, and other control measures designed to prevent vehicle-wildlife collisions, thus helping to keep humans and wildlife safe.

Throughout the corridor, conveniently located day use areas provide an opportunity for rest, relaxation and discovery. Clean and attractive picnic sites, short strolls, and interpretive exhibits are clustered together, providing visitors with a range of summer and winter opportunities at each location. Interpretive exhibits and digital media provide intriguing glimpses into some of the characteristic or unique features of this scenic corridor, inviting visitors to explore further. Key themes include road ecology, highlighting efforts to maintain connectivity and reduce wildlife mortality, and the fascinating science of fire, its role on the landscape, and its place in ecological restoration programs in the park. Trailheads with accurate and up-to-date details on trail conditions and features provide an informative introduction to a short excursion or an adventure into the backcountry.



Map 1 - Area Concept Summary

Map 1: Area Concept Summary

5.1.2 Current Situation

This planning area encompasses the highway corridor from Vermilion Pass at the boundary with Banff National Park to the margin of Sinclair Canyon near Radium Hot Springs. The Kootenay Corridor includes several popular day use areas, most notably Marble Canyon and the Paint Pots, but also the Continental Divide exhibit, Olive Lake, and the Kootenay Valley Viewpoint. Marble Canyon provides a dramatic walk along a narrow, water-sculpted canyon, and the Paint Pots is a geologically interesting mineral spring and ochre site, which is of great spiritual significance to some First Nations.

Three front-country campgrounds are located along the route (McLeod Meadows (98 sites), Marble Canyon (61 sites), and Dolly Varden (winter only – 7 sites). Roofed accommodation is available at the Kootenay Park Lodge at Vermilion River Crossing. Trailheads for a number of short strolls or day hikes offer travellers the opportunity to step into the wilderness. For the more adventurous, the corridor is the entry point to rigorous multi-day backpacking trips into the Rockwall area or Kaufmann Lake, or to link with adjacent backcountry opportunities in Yoho and Banff national parks, or Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. The trail to Kaufmann Lake has not been maintained beyond the Fay Hut junction, and significant blowdown of burned timber has occurred since the 2003 wildfires. The Fay Hut was destroyed by fire in 2008, and the Alpine Club of Canada has not yet made a decision on whether to rebuild.

The Vermilion and Kootenay rivers are never far from the highway, and they are both suitable for paddling (canoes, kayaks, rafts) although infrastructure is minimal and use levels are presently low.

The Kootenay Corridor is a major travel route between Alberta and the East Kootenay region of British Columbia. Many users are regular commuters travelling to recreational homes in the Columbia Valley. Others choose Highway 93S as a scenic route on the way to other destinations east or west. Of those travellers who stop to use the park, three quarters are day users, while the remainder stay overnight. Excessive speeding is a significant problem on this highway, increasing the risk to other travellers and wildlife. Wildlife mortality due to vehicle collisions is a major issue for the park.

The valley bottoms of the Kootenay and lower Vermilion rivers are in montane habitat that provides important winter and summer range for ungulates. These valleys, through which Highway 93S passes, are also important travel corridors for carnivores and ungulates. These factors often provide exceptional wildlife viewing opportunities throughout the corridor, but also increase the importance of developing effective education programs and highway management approaches that reduce the potential for wildlife mortality on the roadway.

5.1.3 Key Actions

- Evaluate existing day use areas and identify opportunities to consolidate opportunities and enhance the experience at key nodes in order to encourage drivers to stop for an opportunity to connect and learn about the park. Restore disturbed areas where facilities are closed or re-located.
- Develop and implement measures to minimise the effects of the highway on native biodiversity, with an emphasis on preventing wildlife mortality, and controlling the introduction and spread of non-native plants. Consider options to reduce mortality, such as roadway design, highway fencing, crossing structures, reduced speed zones, and the use of prescribed fire in strategic locations to lure wildlife away from the 93S highway corridor into regenerating habitat.
- In conjunction with efforts to mitigate wildlife mortality on the highway, design and install on-site media at one or more high profile day use areas that increases awareness and understanding of measures to prevent human-caused mortality and maintain habitat connectivity.
- Develop communications and outreach programs, and upgrade on-site signage, in order to increase awareness of the range of opportunities available along the corridor, particularly among target audiences in Calgary and the Columbia Valley.
- Improve sense of arrival at the northern entrance, with an emphasis on introducing visitors to the west slope, the broad valleys of the Vermilion and Kootenay rivers, and a fire-driven forest landscape.
- Improve trailheads at the Hector and Dolly Varden bike trails and promote this as a bicycle loop circuit. Consider trail connections to reduce or eliminate the need to ride on the 93S.
- Work with the paddling community to identify ways to better facilitate and support paddling opportunities on the Vermilion and Kootenay rivers. Considerations include access/egress points, portage trails, riverside camping, and trip planning information.
- Implement culvert restoration or replacement as recommended in the culvert inventory, in order to remove barriers to fish movement and restore aquatic connectivity.
- Review camping infrastructure, demand, camper expectations, and ecological considerations, and modify, renew, or relocate facilities in order to enhance camping experiences, maintain or improve ecological conditions, and gain operational efficiencies.
- Work with Banff and Yoho national parks and partners in the Columbia Valley to develop a Circle Tour linking the communities of Banff, the Village of Radium Hot Springs, Golden, Field and Lake Louise.
- Use prescribed fire to restore open meadow communities in the Kootenay River valley.
- Implement measures to reduce the spread of invasive non-native plants along the corridor.

5.1.4 Indicators of Success

- Increased percentage of travellers stopping to use the park.
- Visitor satisfaction with facilities throughout corridor.
- Decrease in wildlife mortality along the highway.
- Number of artificial barriers to fish movement remedied, with evidence of restored aquatic connectivity.
- Improved river paddling opportunities.
- Healthy meadow habitats exist within the range of natural abundance in the Kootenay Corridor.
- Reduction in area of non-native plant distribution.

5.2 Rockwall Backcountry Area

5.2.1 Future Best

In the future, the visitor to this area will find it essentially unchanged. The wilderness characters for which it is valued – abundant wildlife, few signs of civilisation, moderate levels of summer use, and the beauty of wild landscapes – continue to be evident. Backcountry hikers 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. Four valley trails provide loop options to adjust the length of the trip. The visitor experience has been enhanced through attention to trails, the semi-primitive backcountry camping experience, and trip planning information tailored to the needs of backpackers and hikers.

5.2.2 Current Situation

The Rockwall planning area consists of the backcountry area between the Floe Lake trail and the border of Yoho National Park. Four valley trails provide links to Highway 93S. Backcountry campgrounds are located at Floe Lake, Numa Creek, Tumbling Creek and Helmet Falls. Eighteen campsites are available at each, thus setting the carrying capacity for overnight users. These sites are all located a reasonable day-hike apart from one another making the Rockwall a premium destination for moderately challenging, multi-day backpacking trips. Six additional campsites are located at the junction of Helmet and Ochre Creeks, providing additional options for backcountry campers. Portions of the Rockwall route can also be completed as long day hikes by strong hikers. The valleys along which most of the trails are located are also important wildlife travel corridors, particularly the Ochre-Wolverine and Ochre-Ottertail valleys.

5.2.3 Priority Actions:

- Improve trail conditions where significant deterioration has taken place, and trail sightlines, consistent with backcountry trail standards.
- Conduct social science research to determine if users feel there is a need to consider potential improvements to the current camping experience, such as establishing roofed shelters or increasing the number of available campsites.
- Upgrade trip planning information on the park website and in park print publications.
- Improve trailhead information and keep up-dated with current trail conditions and other information such as wildlife and avalanche notices.

5.2.4 Indicators of Success

- At least 85% of visitors are satisfied, and 50% are very satisfied with their Rockwall experience.
- Trails meet Parks Canada backcountry standards.

5.3 Sinclair Canyon – Radium

5.3.1 Future Best

In the future, visitors to this area will feel a sense of arrival and welcome as they enter the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site from the south. Driving slowly, or strolling from the village or nearby campground through the pedestrian-friendly area, they are impressed by the natural entry afforded by the red rocks of the canyon before it opens up to an area that acts as the main park entrance. Visitors can hear the sound of water from the nearby river as it tumbles through the canyon. Visitors find a variety of informative media on the parks of the World Heritage Site here, including 3-dimensional models. The Radium Hot Springs offer rejuvenation and relaxation, and an opportunity to learn about the important Aboriginal heritage of this area. Guided tours by local experts are available, as are self-guided itineraries catered to different visitor travel values, motivations and interests.

5.3.2 Current Situation

The Sinclair planning area consists of the main human use area of the park adjacent to the Village of Radium Hot Springs. It includes the dramatic Sinclair Canyon and Redwall Fault, the park entry gate, the Radium Hot Springs pools, the Redstreak Campground, the park's largest (242 sites), and the Radium Hot Springs Lodge. A number of short hiking and walking trails link the pools, the campground and the Village. There is also an interpretive trail that explores the Redstreak restoration area

where forest thinning and prescribed fire are restoring open forest-grassland habitat for bighorn sheep. The park gate is located at a narrow point along the road, which creates congestion problems during the summer season.

This planning area has the warmest and driest climate in the mountain national parks. Two Environmentally Sensitive Sites (Radium Hot Springs and Iron Gates Pictographs) and a Zone I - Special Preservation area (Dry Gulch/ Stoddart Creek) contribute to the uniqueness of this area. Two species at risk, the rubber boa and American badger, occur in this area.

This is the most intensively used portion of Kootenay National Park. The Redstreak campground is busy throughout the season, catering to both summer vacation travellers and regular weekend visitors to the Columbia Valley. The Hot Springs is a popular year-round attraction. Many others pass through the area as they enter or exit the Highway 93S corridor.

5.3.3 Priority Actions

- Improve sense of arrival to Kootenay National Park and the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site at the south/west entrance.
- Explore the feasibility of re-locating the entrance facility to an area above the Hot Springs.
- Re-focus the purpose of the entry facility to provide a greater emphasis on providing information and interpretive services, rather than primarily fee collection.
- Complete remaining priority actions of the Redstreak restoration project, including the removal of remaining infrastructure on the west side of the highway and on the Redstreak bench, and the completion of forest thinning and prescribed burning. Conduct low-intensity prescribed fires to maintain open forest-grassland ecosystem.
- Review existing trails and explore opportunities for improving pedestrian and bicycle connections between the park, the Village of Radium Hot Springs, and the Dry Gulch area.

5.3.4 Indicators of Success

- Visitor satisfaction.
- Decreased congestion at park entry.

6. TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

Highway 93S bisects Kootenay National Park, from Vermilion Pass at the Alberta-British Columbia border, to the west gate at Radium Hot Springs. The highway is both a corridor for the efficient movement of people and goods, and the primary means for

people to experience the park. Many travellers may never leave the road, yet still enjoy a sightseeing experience. Others use the highway as the starting point for their exploration of the park. In addition to the highway, Settlers Road is a secondary gravel road that links the park with provincial Crown lands in the Kootenay valley. Both park visitors and industrial trucks hauling ore from a nearby magnesite mine and logs from provincial crown lands outside the park use this road.

Utility corridors provide essential energy and communication services for communities in and around the park. These are found only in the vicinity of Radium Hot Springs.

Transportation and utility infrastructure must be carefully managed to minimise potential impacts on natural and cultural resources. These impacts may include terrestrial and aquatic habitat fragmentation, wildlife mortality, environmental contamination, disturbance of cultural resources, and aesthetic impacts. Parks Canada will continue to work with transportation and utility partners in order to provide safe and efficient travel and utility corridors, and to mitigate potential impacts on visitor experience, and ecological and cultural resources.

6.1 Key Actions

- Investigate and test approaches to reduce wildlife mortality on highway 93S, including fencing, wildlife crossing structures, and reduced speed zones. Provide educational opportunities for visitors.
- Replace dysfunctional culverts in order to restore aquatic connectivity for fish and invertebrates.
- With partners develop best practices for managing potential contaminants, including procedures for minimising road salt application near sensitive aquatic ecosystems, and spill response protocols for hazardous materials.
- Continue to manage Settlers Road for mixed uses.
- Prepare a long-term gravel extraction plan for the mountain national parks to support future highway and road requirements.
- Where gravel sources are identified within wilderness areas, begin the process of changing the wilderness boundaries through an amendment to the *National Parks Declared Wilderness Area Regulations*.
- Restore all depleted gravel pits to appropriate functioning ecosystems. Include future ecological restoration costs in estimates for highway construction and recapitalization. Apply these funds to ecological restoration of depleted gravel sources and old disturbed sites, in accordance with a long-term restoration plan.
- Permit changes to the existing system of utilities where there is a clear and demonstrable need, significant environmental benefits will result, and aesthetic effects will not diminish the visitor experience.
- Proposals to establish towers for wireless communications will be considered. Changes to the boundaries of designated wilderness areas may be required.

6.2 Indicators of Success

- Reduced wildlife mortality on roads.
- Improved aquatic connectivity.
- Water quality meets standards.
- Reduction in area of disturbed sites.

7. ZONING AND WILDERNESS AREA DECLARATION

7.1 The National Park Zoning System

The zoning system is an integrated approach used to allocate land and water use in a national park. 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 plan for Kootenay National Park is illustrated in Map 2, and the individual zones are described below. This plan has not changed significantly from the zoning described in the 2000 Park Management Plan.

7.1.1 Zone I – Special Preservation

The Zone I designation applies to those areas of the park that are among the very best examples of the features that characterise the natural region, or that support outstanding or rare ecological or cultural features. This zone may also be used to protect areas that are too sensitive to accommodate facility development or large numbers of visitors. Preservation is the primary objective. Motorized access is not permitted.

Zone I areas in Kootenay National Park include the Mount Wardle wildlife area, the Ice River Igneous Complex, Burgess Shale fossil sites, and the Dry Gulch-Stoddart Creek area.

The Mount Wardle Zone I area encompasses the summer and winter range of the largest mountain goat population in the park. It is the only area in the four contiguous Rocky Mountain parks where goats winter at montane elevations. It also provides important habitat for grizzly bears and cougars. There are no developed trails or facilities.

The Ice River Igneous Complex is the largest igneous intrusion in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. This igneous rock unit contrasts sharply with the typical sedimentary rocks that comprise the vast majority of the Rockies. Even compared to other igneous rocks,

the Ice River complex is of relatively unusual composition, consisting of alkaline rocks such as nepheline syenite, pyroxinite and carbonatite. Blue sodalite, an uncommon mineral often sought by collectors, has been quarried from the complex just outside the park boundaries.

The Burgess Shale fossils sites are recognised as one of the most significant palaeontological localities in the world. Protection of these sites in Kootenay and in neighbouring Yoho National Park is an international obligation. All known Burgess Shale fossil sites within the Stephen Formation in Kootenay National Park are designated as Zone I areas. Visitor access to these areas is not encouraged.

The Dry Gulch – Stoddart Creek Zone I area contains the only dry Douglas fir-ponderosa pine-wheatgrass vegetation community in the entire Canadian national park system. The warm, dry climate of this area also supports prickly pear cactus. It includes significant winter and summer range for bighorn sheep, mountain goat, and mule deer, and is also important cougar habitat.

7.1.2 Zone II – Wilderness

Zone II wilderness includes large areas of natural landscape preserved in a wilderness state. These areas provide visitors an opportunity to experience nature with minimal human intrusion or built facilities. Public motorised access is not permitted.

The majority of Kootenay National Park is designated Zone II, to ensure that large representative landscapes are maintained. Visitor facilities may include trails, bridges, backcountry campgrounds, alpine huts and backcountry patrol cabins.

7.1.3 Zone III – Natural Environment

There are no Zone III areas within Kootenay National Park.

7.1.4 Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

The Zone IV designation is applied to areas that support a wide range of visitor activities, supported by front-country facilities and park roads. Public motorised access is one of the primary characteristics of these zones. Zone IV areas in the park include the Highway 93S corridor, the Settlers Road corridor, park campgrounds, and park day use areas along the highway, including the Radium Hot Springs.

7.1.5 Zone V – Park Services

Zone V includes those areas of a park where there is a concentration of services and built facilities. The McKay Creek Operations Compound in Sinclair Canyon is the only Zone V area in the park.

7.1.6 Environmentally Sensitive Sites

This designation applies to areas that are sensitive to development, and which require special protection. Six localities within Kootenay National Park are designated as environmentally sensitive sites:

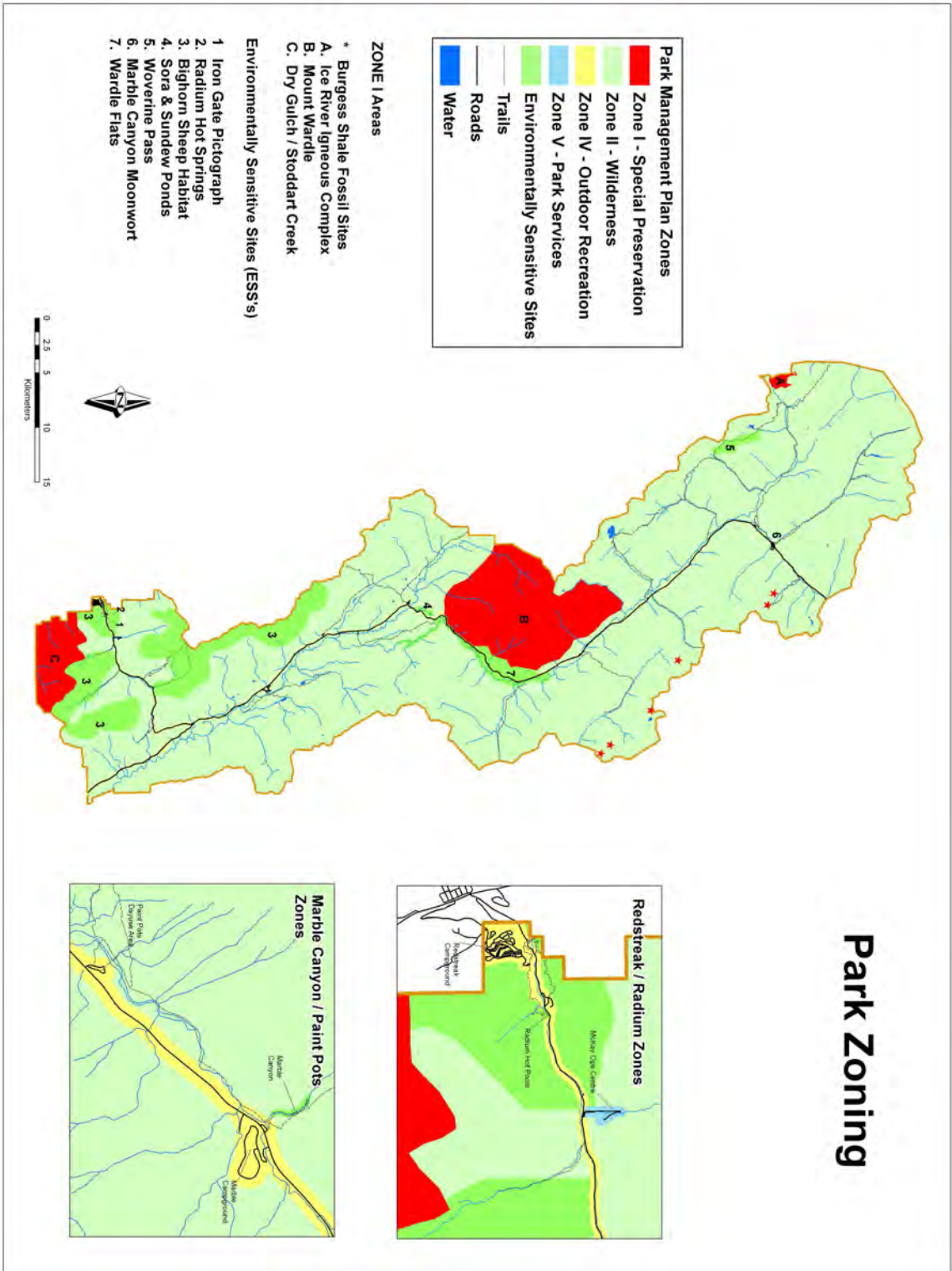
1. Iron Gates Pictographs in Sinclair Canyon – this site contains a significant and sensitive cultural resource.
2. Radium Hot Springs – this area around the original hot springs includes unique geology, and rare flora and fauna including the rubber boa (*Charina bottae*), listed as a species of Special Concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.
3. Bighorn Sheep Habitat – these sites provide important habitat for bighorn sheep on the south and western margins of the park. It includes areas important for female sheep with young in the Kootenay Ranges north of Sinclair Canyon, as well as areas south of the canyon where ecosystem restoration work is ongoing.
4. Sora and Sundew Ponds – this site, near Kootenay Crossing, contains important amphibian and waterfowl breeding habitat, and also includes rare plants.
5. Wolverine Pass – this site is the only pass through the Vermilion Range, and thus is an important wildlife corridor connecting Kootenay to the Dainard and Moose creek watersheds on provincial Crown lands. It is particularly important for grizzly bears and goats. It is also one of the largest alpine meadows in the park.
6. Moonwort site near Marble Canyon – this small site encompasses occurrences of boreal moonwort (*Botrychium boreale*), a plant that is red-listed by the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre, meaning it is threatened or endangered.
7. Wardle Flats – this riparian area is a significant habitat for wolves, grizzly bears and black bears.

7.2 Declared Wilderness Areas

Lands within national parks may be legally declared as wilderness areas under section 14 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. Declared wilderness areas demonstrate Parks Canada's commitment to Canadians to protect these areas for the long-term.

Within a wilderness area, no activity that would alter the wilderness character of the place will be authorised. Infrastructure will be of a rudimentary nature, such as hiking trails and backcountry campsites. Motorised access is not permitted, except as may be required for park management purposes.

In October 2000 the majority of Kootenay National Park was declared to be wilderness areas within the national park under the *National Parks Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*. Some minor adjustments to the established wilderness area boundaries may be required in future years to accommodate gravel extraction needs for highway maintenance, and to support the establishment of mobile communications infrastructure.



Map 2: Park Zoning Plan

8. MONITORING AND REPORTING

8.1 Condition Monitoring

Condition monitoring aims to measure the general state of park ecosystems, cultural resources, visitor experience and education programming. A number of key measures are tracked and rolled up into broad indicators and trends, which are reported in State of the Park Reports.

The following indicators will be used in the next State of the Park Report, scheduled for completion in 2014.

Ecological Integrity:

- Native Biodiversity
- Climate and Atmosphere
- Terrestrial Ecosystems
- Aquatic Ecosystems
- Regional Landscapes

Cultural Resources:

- Resource Condition
- Selected Management Practices

Visitor Experience:

Note: Some of these national level indicators are still under development.

- Connection to Kootenay National Park
- Attendance
- Visitor Satisfaction
- Learning
- Activities and Services
- Visitor Safety

Public Education:

Note: These national level measures are still under development.

- Appreciation
- Understanding
- Outreach Education
- External Communications

8.2 Management Effectiveness Monitoring

Effectiveness monitoring attempts to measure the success of management actions by determining if planned actions achieve the intended results. The specific measures to be tracked during the initial 5 years of this management plan include:

Topic	Proposed Targets
Restoration of Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of long term fire cycle • maintain 5% meadow in the montane
Non-native plant control	TBD *
Water quality	TBD
Aquatic connectivity	TBD
Grizzly bear population	annual known, human-caused mortality of independent female grizzly bears shall not exceed 1.2% of the population, based on a 4-year running average
Wildlife mortality on highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction of 25% (preliminary)
Redstreak Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • area of grassland ecosystem • area of open forest ecosystem
Restoration of disturbed areas	TBD
Visitor facility renewal	TBD
Outreach	New products developed, and understanding increases.

* To be determined.

9. SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- to be completed with final draft –

10. SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

Key Strategy or Area Concept	First 5 Year Actions
Key Strategy	
Showcases of Conservation Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage stakeholders, visitors and other Canadians in designing and implementing solutions to reduce the effects of highway 93S on native biodiversity. • Build visitor experience and learning opportunities into the highway mitigation efforts. • Develop communication products to share knowledge of conservation success, such as the Redstreak Restoration and Bighorn Sheep monitoring projects.
Experiencing the Dramatic Effects of Fire and Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new virtual and drive-through experience products. • Consider proposals for new visitor experience opportunities that support Parks Canada’s mandate. • Improve on-line pre-trip information. • Target priority market segments. • Invest strategically and sufficiently in front-line services and facilities, including campgrounds, trailheads, and trails.
Celebrating the History and Culture of Kootenay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and restore significant cultural resources, as resources permit. • Strengthen involvement of Aboriginal people in documenting and sharing their stories, and renewing traditional associations with the land. • Enhance the profile and interpretation of significant cultural resources in the park.
Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to engage residents of Calgary who regularly travel to recreational properties in the Columbia Valley, in order to increase their connection to the park. • Refresh and renew web content on key themes, such as the Redstreak Restoration project. • Support <i>Wild Voices for Kids</i> program and increase mountain park content.
Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore connectivity of streams and wetlands. • Work with partners to reduce wildlife mortality. • Use prescribed fires to restore fire to the landscape. • Develop and implement an ecological restoration plan for disturbed sites. • Control or eliminate non-native, invasive species.
Area Concepts	
Kootenay Corridor (93S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement measures to minimise the effects of the highway on native biodiversity, with an emphasis on preventing wildlife mortality, and

	<p>controlling non-native plants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop on-site media at high profile locations to create learning opportunities on road ecology. • Review facilities and identify opportunities to cluster and upgrade front-country experiences at key nodes. • Work with partners to identify opportunities to facilitate paddling on the Vermilion and Kootenay rivers. • Improve trailheads and biking opportunities around Hector – Dolly Varden.
Rockwall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve trail conditions where deterioration has occurred. • Conduct social science research to determine whether there is a need to consider potential improvements to the backcountry camping experience.
Radium – Sinclair Canyon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the sense of arrival at the south/west entrance. • Explore feasibility of relocating entry facility to a location above the hot springs. • Complete Redstreak Restoration project, including removal of remaining infrastructure. • Explore options for improving pedestrian and bicycle trail connections between the Village of Radium Hot Springs and the hot springs area within the park.

APPENDIX 1 – GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT SECURITY ESTIMATES BY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT UNITS

Landscape Management Unit	% < 2500m elevation not secure due to human use	% < 2500m elevation not secure due to small patch size	Secure habitat below 2500m elevation (%)
Tokumm	17	0	83
Hawk	16	0	84
Rockwall	35	0	65
Wardle	8	0	92
West Kootenay	20	0	80
Mitchell	30	2	68
Sinclair	26	1	73

Note: areas > 2500m elevation are mainly rock and ice, and therefore do not provide secure habitat.



Map 3: Landscape Management Units in Kootenay National Park