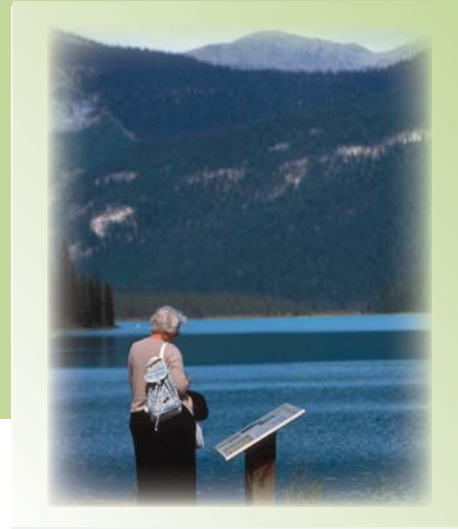




Yoho National Park Management Plan Review



Minister's Message

Yoho National Park was established in 1886, just one year after Banff became Canada's first national park. The idea of protected areas, which originated in 1885, 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.

Honorable Jim Prentice,
Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada

Superintendent's Message

In 2009, Yoho 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 Yoho 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 Yoho 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

Newsletter Content

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

- An overview of the management plan review process, new plan format, timelines and participation opportunities.
- A draft vision for Yoho National Park.
- A description of 3 key management strategies, and a brief summary of an additional 4 key strategies.
- A summary of 7 Area Concepts that have been developed for the park.





The 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 seven¹ 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 has been conducted jointly.

¹ 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 Yoho National Park

Yoho National Park embodies the essence of the Rocky Mountains in an accessible and authentic heritage destination. Massive mountains, crowned with icefields and glaciers along the spine of the continent, provide the stunning backdrop for some of the best alpine hiking, Nordic skiing and ski touring opportunities in North America. Iconic attractions, such as Takakkaw Falls, the Spiral Tunnels, and Emerald Lake allow Canadians and international visitors to experience the raw power and beauty of the landscape, and marvel at the way humans have interacted with it over time.

In Yoho, visitors will find the world famous fossils of the Burgess Shale, a showcase of protection, on-site experience and outreach. Rigorous protection, hands-on access, engaging exhibits at the bottom of fossil-bearing mountains and an exciting virtual museum are hallmarks of management of these exquisite treasures. Visitors learn that the Burgess Shale sites, along with other exceptional places such as Lake O’Hara, are of such outstanding universal value that they have also been included as part of one of Canada’s best known World Heritage Sites.

The human history that made this part of the Rockies an essential part of the history of Canada is protected and celebrated. Visitors feel the thunder of locomotives and are reminded of the history of the railway in Yoho; they smell the years of history in teahouses and huts; and they follow the trails and paths of a century of nation builders and visitors before them. Learning about places and people such as Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site, Sir James Hector and the Palliser Expedition, the Twin Falls Tea House and the community of Field is an important part of the experience of most visitors.

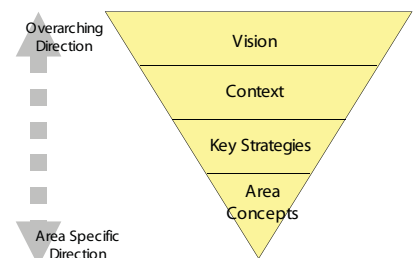
Fire is an obvious part of the park landscape. Visitors have opportunities through interpretive trails to witness the process of forest regeneration, and learn about the critical role that fire plays in ecosystem health and renewal. As a key link in the regional ecosystem, Yoho’s narrow river valleys continue to provide critical movement corridors for wildlife, linking habitat in British Columbia and Alberta.

Canadians and international visitors come to share a less crowded alternative and rediscover their own favourite spots. New visitors delight in engaging interpretation, welcoming them to key locations, and revealing the intriguing stories of the park. New and returning visitors participate in a wide range of activities – from sight-seeing on the Trans-Canada Highway to backpacking in a remote, wilderness valley – that engage them in learning and environmental stewardship. During the winter, Field is a destination of choice for cross country skiers, ice climbers and snowshoers seeking a natural area to pursue their passion. Partnerships with local business and tourism organisations help to ensure that Yoho in the winter becomes less of a “best-kept secret”.

A New Format

The updated park management plan looks quite different from the 2000 version. It begins with an updated vision for Yoho 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 seven key strategies and seven area concepts in the updated Yoho National Park Management Plan.





Key Strategy

Accessible Mountain Experiences – All Authentic, All the Time

An accessible, less crowded gem to some, a best kept secret to others – Yoho National Park combines a stunningly different landscape from its mountain park neighbours with inviting and luxurious visitor facilities. History, culture and nature are draped over a rugged landscape, much of which is easily accessible from the town of Field, the central visitor node in the park. Whether seeking adventure and physical challenge amid the lofty peaks of the Continental Divide, exploring the unique railway heritage of Kicking Horse Pass, or enjoying the breath-taking scenery and local culture, Yoho offers personal moments of inspiring discovery. All of this is found in a relatively compact and accessible, equally stunning, yet less crowded alternative to the better-known mountain parks.

Work to Date

During the spring and summer, we held stakeholder workshops and worked with consultants to better understand current trends and visitor needs and expectations, 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 park experiences.

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, extend the operating season for some areas of the park, enhance and promote the winter opportunities in the park, and consider new or modified opportunities that respond to the changing motivations, needs and expectations of visitors and potential park visitors.

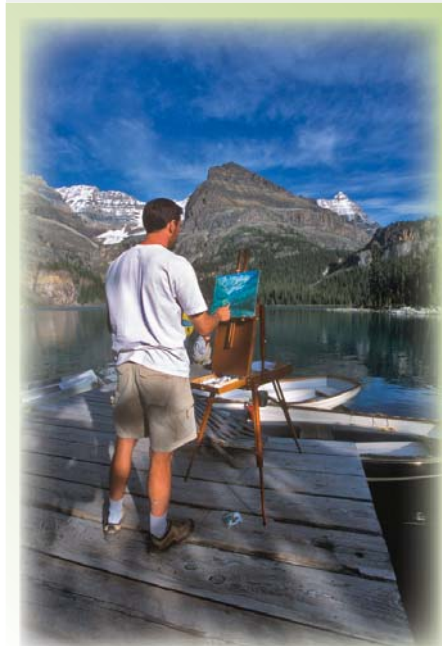
Highlights of Key Direction for Accessible Mountain Experiences

- Yoho National Park will 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.
- Position View from the Edge experiences at Emerald Lake, Takakkaw Falls, and Field as an introduction to the park and an invitation to explore further.
- Consider proposals for new recreational programs and activities that support Parks Canada’s mandate and encourage new audiences to connect with the park.
- Cluster and promote opportunities for multiple experience types in and around Takakkaw Falls, Emerald Lake and the west end of the park.
- By March 2012, increase the number of visitors to the park by 6% above 2008-09 levels.

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Key Strategies

This section of the newsletter provides a summary of three 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 success, and sharing the knowledge as widely as possible.

Sharing Leadership in Environmental Stewardship –

This outlines a strategy to actively engage stakeholders, community residents, park visitors and other volunteers in as many stewardship activities as possible, making the protection and management of the park an enriching source of meaningful experiences.

Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live –

This strategy is designed to extend the reach of Yoho National Park, through popular media, modern technology and outreach programming, to bring current, lively and engaging content into homes, schools and communities throughout the Columbia Valley, and through the internet, to Canadians anywhere.

Managing Development – This strategy focuses on managing development carefully, in order to ensure that well-designed infrastructure and facilities continue to provide important staging areas that allow visitors to experience the unique areas of the park, while minimizing potential negative effects on the natural and cultural attributes of the park.

Key Strategy

Celebrating the History and Culture of Yoho National Park

Yoho National Park protects a unique, and rich cultural legacy. Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site tells the stories of connection - of Aboriginal travels across the continental divide and of a transcontinental railroad. The first Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) mountaineering camp, as well as other ACC huts, teahouses and backcountry lodges, continue to play strong roles today. The stories that pervade this mountain landscape tell of early Aboriginal travels, European exploration and fur trading, the creation of a transcontinental railroad that helped give birth to our great nation, the emergence of modern philosophies of nature conservation, and the unique communities of people who have come to call this area home. The rich cultural heritage of the park allows visitors to experience a vivid sense of the past and to personally connect with, and contribute to, this continuing human legacy.

Work to Date

In 2006, Parks Canada produced a management plan for 15 national historic sites in the mountain parks, including Kicking Horse Pass, Twin Falls Tea House, and Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin national historic sites located in Yoho National Park. In 2008, Parks Canada produced a state of the park report for Yoho National Park, which evaluated the condition of these sites and other cultural resources in the park.

What We Heard

During this plan review, Canadians have expressed strong support for the protection of cultural heritage within Yoho National Park. There is more work required to communicate the 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.
- Work with Glacier National Park and the communities of Field, Golden and Revelstoke to advance the concept of a heritage railway corridor linking Kicking Horse Pass and Rogers Pass National Historic Sites.
- Work with partners to raise awareness, and increase visitation to Twin Falls Tea House and Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Sites.
- Develop new interpretive and outreach materials to broaden the scope of cultural heritage education related to Yoho National Park.





Key Strategy Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Yoho provides an important link between the Columbia Valley in British Columbia and Banff National Park. River valleys provide the main movement corridors, including the Kicking Horse valley, which also contains the Trans Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific Railway. In Yoho National Park visitors can experience a range of intact ecosystems representing the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. 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 aquatic connectivity, forest health, grizzly bears and native species conservation. 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 Yoho 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 the highway and railway.

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. Some participants called for increased research funding, and more interpretation and education on the park's wildlife.

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 reduce wildlife mortality on the Trans Canada Highway and CPR main line.
- 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, with an aim to achieve 50% of the long-term natural fire cycle, 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.





Area Concepts

Lake O’Hara

Visitors come from near and far to experience the sensational alpine environment of Lake O’Hara. Glacier-crowned peaks of the Continental Divide, azure blue glacial lakes, an inspired and accessible trail network, and a long tradition of trail stewardship make this area a favourite with new and returning visitors. The absence of private motor vehicles, and a daily quota system ensure that the Lake O’Hara experience remains a peaceful and uncrowded interaction with nature, winter or summer.

Priority Actions

- “Stay the Course” by maintaining existing controlled vehicle access, with shuttle bus and daily quota, and ski access in winter.
- Enhance visitor opportunities by increasing the availability of Parks Canada interpretive information and staff presence in the Lake O’Hara area.
- Maintain effectiveness of wildlife corridors by using seasonal closures in the McArthur Valley and voluntary restrictions on Mount Odaray.
- Maintain current trail network, consistent with traditional trail standards and aesthetics.

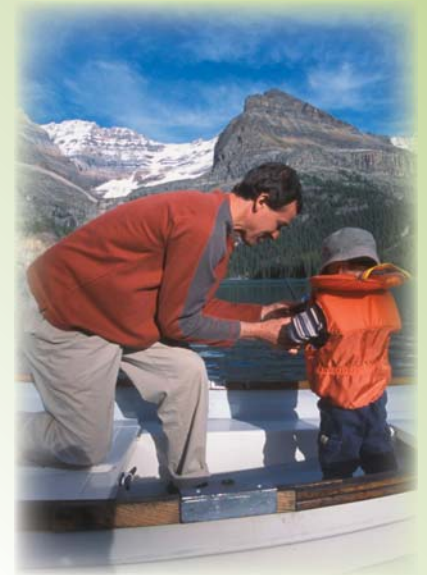
Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley

With numerous dramatic, thundering waterfalls, including one of Canada’s highest, a fine network of trails and backcountry campgrounds, and the Twin Falls Tea House National Historic Site, the Yoho valley is a classic destination for thousands of visitors each year. Whether on a short excursion to marvel at the power of Takakkaw Falls, a full day hike to the glacier-scoured Iceline, or on a multi-day backpacking trip, visitors exploring the Yoho Valley find many opportunities to connect to the spectacular heritage of the park.

Priority Actions

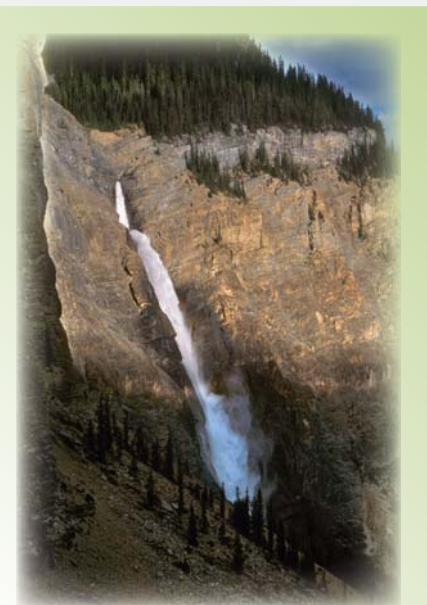
- Upgrade trailhead information at the Takakkaw Falls day use area, in order to increase awareness of the breadth of opportunity in the Yoho Valley and encourage visitors to explore beyond the end of the road.
- Set expectations for the nature and topography of the Yoho Valley road and enhance day use areas along the road by improving views through vegetation management.
- Provide enhanced interpretive information on Twin Falls Tea House National Historic Site.

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Area Concepts

Lake O’Hara
 Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley
 Emerald Lake
 Burgess Shale
 The Kicking Horse Corridor
 Yoho Backcountry Valleys
 The Community of Field





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Emerald Lake

The Emerald Lake area offers activities for an hour or a day or more. The slow scenic drive from the Trans Canada Highway passes the remarkable Natural Bridge, and continues on to an iconic alpine glacial lake. The busiest day use area in the park, this area attracts large numbers of independent and group tour visitors to stroll the flat shoreline trail, paddle a canoe, or ski and snowshoe during the long and reliable winter season. Amenities include canoe and cross country ski rentals and the luxurious Emerald Lake Lodge. It also serves as a breathtaking introduction to more challenging day hikes or backcountry trips amidst the mountains of the President Range. Local and regional visitors enjoy a special relationship with this area, returning frequently to reconnect with this important part of their community.

Priority Actions

- Explore opportunities to reduce the impact of vehicle use on the lakeshore experience.
- Improve the trail connections between Emerald Lake and the community of Field.
- Enhance promotion of the winter recreational opportunities in this part of the park.

Burgess Shale

The Burgess Shale is one of the most important fossil localities in the world. Amid spectacular mountain scenery, visitors to one of the main sites in Yoho National Park will learn from knowledgeable guides about the importance of these exquisitely preserved fossils from the middle Cambrian period, and will understand the important role Parks Canada has in ensuring these globally significant fossils are protected for all time. Off-site interpretive exhibits and a virtual museum provide engaging learning opportunities for those not able to hike to the sites.

Priority Actions

- With the Royal Ontario Museum, the Department of Canadian Heritage and others, develop digital media products that convey the wonder and importance of the Burgess Shale fossils to off-site audiences.
- Continue the popular program of guided hikes to the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds, and monitor visitor satisfaction.
- Maintain a program of strong site protection, including the application of restricted and closed areas for the main Burgess Shale fossil sites.
- Encourage and promote peer-reviewed scientific research that furthers the understanding of the lesser-studied fossil sites, the Burgess Shale fauna, the geological setting of the fossil sites, and middle Cambrian palaeoecology.





The Kicking Horse Corridor

The Kicking Horse Corridor is a key link in a continuous east-west journey through the mountain parks, featuring opportunities to explore and learn about Canada's history in transportation and mountaineering. From Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site at the BC-Alberta border, travelers journey through the west slope of the Rockies, along the valley of the Kicking Horse Canadian Heritage River. On the riverbank, near the base of the pass, the community of Field provides an ideal staging area from which to explore the many spectacular sights and cultural treasures located throughout this historic valley.

Priority Actions

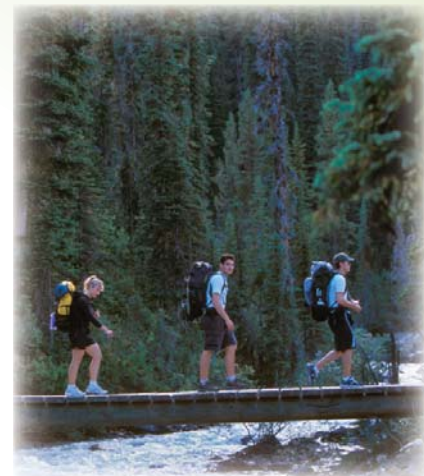
- Improve the sense of arrival and welcome to the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site at the west end of the park. Enhance awareness of Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site at the east end of the park as part of a collaborative effort with Glacier National Park and Rogers Pass National Historic Site to promote the concept of a railway heritage corridor.
- Consolidate facilities along the corridor to provide a range of experience options.
- Review front-country campgrounds and make modifications to respond to camper demands and expectations, and to improve ecological conditions.
- Create visitor experience opportunities to observe and learn about prescribed fires in conjunction with burns planned in the valley.

Yoho Backcountry Valleys

The long, forested valleys of western Yoho provide unique opportunities for remote wilderness adventures. Hikers, mountain bikers, snowshoers and skiers can experience a sense of solitude, and remoteness in valleys where crowds are seldom seen. Wilderness travellers seek out these areas in pursuit of physical challenge, solitude, or simply to experience natural landscapes off the beaten path. The natural sounds of wind in the trees, running water, or profound silence, provide a refreshing contrast to the busy highway through the main corridor in the park. Visitors to these places must be self-reliant and well-equipped to travel in wilderness environments with minimal infrastructure or human presence.

Priority Actions

- Maintain existing trails to a basic standard, providing only periodic clearing of fallen timber and encroaching vegetation.
- Maintain backcountry campgrounds at McArthur Creek, and permit random camping within the Ice River, Otterhead, Amiskwi, and Porcupine valleys.
- Allow private and commercial horse use, while ensuring a high level of habitat security for bears.





The Community of Field

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Photo by Gordon Fulton

The Community of Field is a model of a safe, self-sustaining mountain village that respects the ecological and cultural importance of its national park setting. Residents and visitors can enjoy a mix of small commercial operations providing high quality, personalized service that meets their basic needs. An eclectic mix of small-scale homes and buildings define the village's unique architecture. Interactions with locals and engaging interpretive opportunities inspire visitors to explore the natural and cultural heritage of the village and surroundings.

Priority Actions

- Expand the range of natural and cultural heritage interpretation.
- Use planning and architectural guidelines to ensure the style and scale of the community is maintained.
- Adjust zoning in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act* to reflect direction in the approved Field Community Plan, and release available residential and commercial lots for development.

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. This updated plan includes two minor changes to the zoning plan – the boundary of the Ice River Zone I area, which protects an unusual body of igneous rock, has been adjusted to more accurately reflect the boundary of this geological feature; and the Ottertail wetlands and Leanchoil marsh areas have been converted from Environmentally Sensitive Sites to Zone I areas.



Since the 2000 plan was approved, a large area of Yoho 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 Yoho 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.





Plan Review 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 early 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/yoho

Attend our open house in Golden on November 19, 3-8 pm, Golden Civic Centre, or the regular meeting of the Field Community Council in November.

Obtain a copy of the full draft plan, by contacting Todd Keith, Land Use Specialist for Yoho National Park, at 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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