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## River Use

Background: Jasper National Park

### ***A Need for Change***

Parks Canada will review the *Jasper National Park Guidelines for River Use Management* this spring (2009) to assess progress in achieving results and to incorporate new information. Parks Canada last reviewed the guidelines in 2003.

### ***Background***

- The *Jasper National Park Guidelines for River Use Management* are intended to allow visitors to enjoy the park's rivers in a way that supports their critical ecological functions and resources.
- The guidelines apply to the Athabasca, Maligne, Miette, Sunwapta and Whirlpool rivers. The rivers and their valleys, key elements in the ecological health of the park, support a range of visitor experiences.
- These mountain rivers have a very important cultural and spiritual significance for Aboriginal people.
- Paddlers can enjoy more than 220 km of navigable rivers in a spectacular mountain setting, a Canadian Heritage River (the Athabasca), and two national historic sites (Yellowhead Pass and Jasper House).
- The Maligne River and its tributaries support one of the three highest concentrations of harlequin ducks in the Canadian Rockies. The harlequin duck is scarce, occupies a narrow ecological niche and has low reproductive rate.
- Scientific research and monitoring showed human use disturbed harlequin ducks on the Maligne River before and during the breeding season, through more frequent flushing and displacement, reduced feeding time, and increased energy consumption.
- Following extensive public consultation, an 18-km section of the mid-Maligne river was permanently closed to recreational paddling to protect the harlequin duck population. A challenge to this decision before the Federal Court was unsuccessful.

### ***Existing Management Plan Direction***

*Implement the Jasper National Park Guidelines for River Use Management (1998).*

- *close the mid-Maligne River to all in-stream use*
- *close the Maligne Lake outlet to all use during May and June to protect the harlequin duck "club site"*
- *rehabilitate the riparian willow and upland vegetation communities in the Maligne Lake outlet area*
- *restrict access to specific locations until restoration is complete*
- *improve interpretation*

*Zone the Maligne Lake outlet as an Environmentally Sensitive Site (ESS).*

### ***Considerations***

- Jasper has implemented the management plan direction.
- Scientific research continues to support the decision to protect Harlequin duck habitat on the mid-Maligne River.
- Parks Canada has not received any alternative management proposals for the mid-Maligne River that meet the established criteria. The criteria require proposals to:
  - respect national park legislation and policies

- demonstrate thorough scientific research
- enjoy broad-based public support

### ***Future Directions***

***Parks Canada welcomes public comments on the following proposed direction for the revised management plan.***

- Review the *Jasper National Park Guidelines for River Use Management* in the spring of 2009.
- Use the results of the review to identify policy adjustments required during the management planning process.

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