



World Heritage Sites

Backgrounder: Mountain National Parks

A Need for Change

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated five of the seven mountain national parks as World Heritage Sites. UNESCO gives this designation only to “cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity” and it is appropriate to provide more guidance regarding its benefits and obligations.

Existing Management Plan Direction

Apart from mentioning the parks’ world heritage status, none of the management plans provides specific direction.

Considerations

- Of 106,000 protected areas in the world, fewer than 900 are recognized as World Heritage Sites.
- Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay national parks, along with Humber, Mt. Assiniboine and Mt. Robson Provincial Parks in British Columbia, make up the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.
- Waterton Lakes National Park and Glacier National Park in the United States make up the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site.
- Plans are underway to enlarge the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site by adding adjacent provincial parks in Alberta and BC.
- Educational and promotional activities do not provide much information about the parks’ World Heritage Site status.
- The World Heritage Site designation brings both opportunities and obligations; obligations to protect the sites for all citizens no matter where in the world they live, and opportunities for marketing and education.

Future Directions

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

Highlight the outstanding universal values for which the park was included in a World Heritage Site.

Commit to conserve the outstanding universal values on behalf of the global community; identify appropriate actions to fulfill this commitment.

Work co-operatively with other World Heritage Site managers (US National Park Service, BC Parks and, potentially, Alberta Parks) on an integrated approach to managing the World Heritage Sites.

Identify opportunities to use the parks’ World Heritage Site status to enhance visitor experiences.

Provide information for visitors about the sites’ outstanding universal values, the significance of becoming a World Heritage Site and the global community of World Heritage Sites.

Support the nomination to expand the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.