
Summary of Public and Aboriginal Comments and Parks Canada's Response

Jasper National Park
Management Plan Review
2009-2010

June 2010



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Table of Contents

1.0 Context.....	3
1.1 Park Management Plan Reviews.....	3
1.2 Purpose of the Plan Review	3
1.3 Shaping the Park Management Plans.....	4
2.0 Plan Review Process.....	4
2.1 Phase 1: Developing the Draft Plan	4
2.2 Phase 2: Draft Plan Review	5
3.0 Response to the Management Plan Review	6
3.1 The Mountain National Parks	6
3.2 Jasper National Park.....	7
4.0 Summary of Public Comments	7
4.1 Ecological Integrity and Visitor Experience	8
4.2 Managing Growth and Development	10
4.3 New Visitor Activities and Events	11
4.4 Established Visitor Activities and Associated Infrastructure.....	13
4.5 Woodland Caribou	14
4.6 Jasper Airstrip	16
5.0 Summary of Aboriginal Comments	16
6.0 Conclusion.....	19



1.0 Context

1.1 Park Management Plan Reviews

By legislation, every national park must have a plan that guides management of the park for public enjoyment and appreciation in ways that leave it unimpaired for future generations. Each park management plan reflects Parks Canada's national direction and provides a road map for delivering on the core elements of Parks Canada's mandate—heritage resource protection, visitor experience, and public appreciation and understanding.

Park management plans have a 15-year lifespan and are reviewed every five years. Each new or amended park management plan must be approved by the federal minister responsible for national parks and tabled in parliament.

1.2 Purpose of the Plan Review

In 2009/10, the management plans for the seven southern mountain national parks (Banff, Glacier, Jasper, Kootenay, Mount Revelstoke, Waterton Lakes, and Yoho) were reviewed at the same time, as they have many common issues that often require coordinated responses and are enjoyed by many of the same visitors. Through an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and the monitoring of key indicators, Parks Canada determined that the previous management plans contained strong and relevant direction, particularly with respect to heritage resource protection, however some areas such as visitor experience needed further development. Accordingly, the review focused on building on existing strengths and refining direction to meet existing and new challenges by:

- Reflecting new Parks Canada Agency direction (e.g. new indicators and measures) and legislative changes (e.g. requirements for recovery plans for Species at Risk).
- Providing more clarity and context (e.g. updated vision for each park, common vision for the mountain parks).
- Improving the way all strategies are integrated and mutually supportive for visitor experience, heritage resource protection and learning opportunities.
- Incorporating new knowledge (e.g. revised grizzly bear mortality targets, results of social science research into visitor trends).
- Elevating the content and updating approaches for visitor experience and external relations and incorporating direction for new events and visitor activities.
- Adding area strategies for distinctive areas of the park that highlight their unique character and opportunities.



- Reflecting decisions that have been made or advice developed through other public participation processes since the previous plan reviews (e.g. airstrips, Icefields Parkway Strategy).

1.3 Shaping the Park Management Plans

Ultimately the care, maintenance and future of all national parks rests in the hands of Canadians; consequently their views and values play an important role in shaping each park's management plan. The *Canada National Parks Act* directs Parks Canada to provide opportunities for Canadians and Aboriginal people to participate in management planning and influence decision-making. The exchange of ideas and information among Parks Canada, the public and Aboriginal people results in stronger plans and more effective implementation.

In March 2009, Parks Canada launched a program of public participation for the plan reviews. This program was divided into two phases: spring and summer events that contributed to plan development, and a public review period following the release of draft plans in late fall 2009.

Parks Canada provided a parallel process of dialogue and opportunities to be involved with members of more than 20 First Nations, Métis and non-treaty groups having historic associations with Jasper National Park. The previous management plan contained little direction for working with these groups. The perspectives, cultural ties, and stories of Aboriginal people are an important part of the historic fabric and future of Jasper National Park. Since 2004, Jasper National Park has been working more actively with these groups, primarily through the Jasper Aboriginal Forum and Council of the Elders of Descendants of Jasper National Park.

This document describes:

- The public and Aboriginal participation programs that shaped the development of the draft plan and its subsequent revision.
- The nature of public and Aboriginal comments received during the planning process.
- Parks Canada's response to comments.

2.0 Plan Review Process

2.1 Phase 1: Developing the Draft Plan

The first phase of public and Aboriginal participation lasted from March to September 2009 and focused on:

- raising awareness of the review process and amendments contemplated by Parks Canada



- gathering raw ideas to develop plan contents such as a new vision statement for the park
- discussing specific topics in more depth

During this phase, Parks Canada facilitated many opportunities for public participation. Local and regional advertisements, information on the Jasper National Park web-site, presentations, and displays at events were used to inform the public of opportunities to participate and ways to obtain more information about the plan review. A management planning web-site allowed members of the public to find information about the plan review and post their thoughts about proposed amendments, no matter where they were located. Feedback was gathered at the annual public planning forum held in Jasper in March 2009; workshops on visitor experience and area planning; and meetings with individual stakeholders.

Parks Canada kept Aboriginal communities informed about the progress of the park management plan review through presentations and discussion at the Aboriginal Forum and Elders' Council, and correspondence to engage the communities.

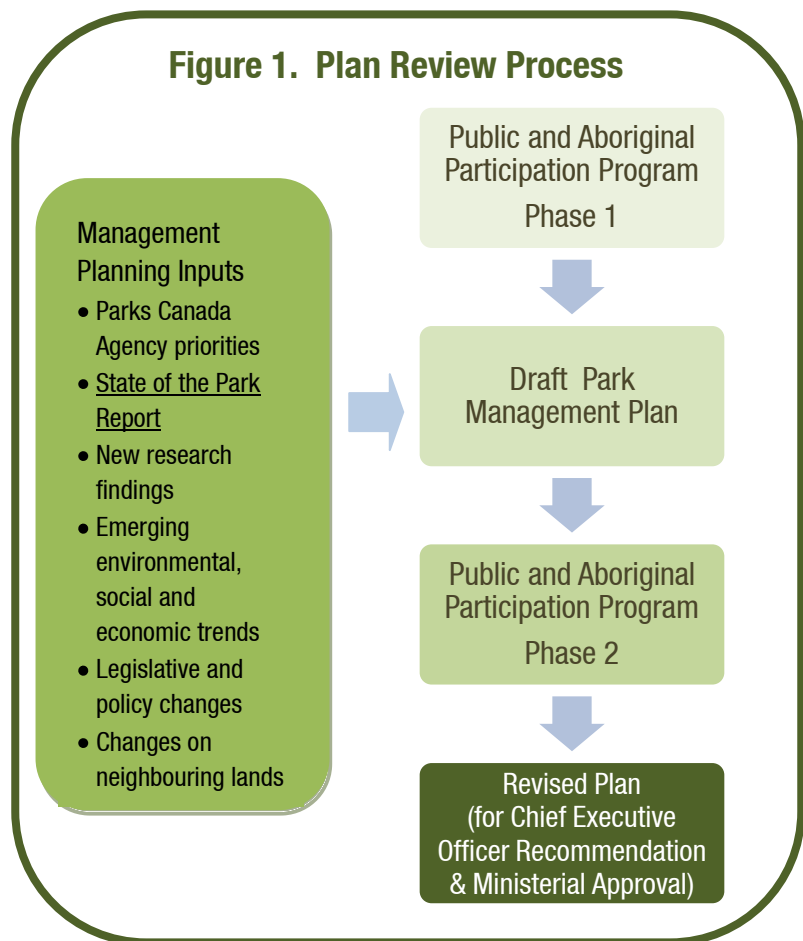
At the request of Aboriginal Forum representatives, Parks Canada visited five Aboriginal communities to obtain the direct input of community members. Participants engaged in discussing the vision for the park, interests identified through the work of the Forum, and related matters.

2.2 Phase 2: Draft Plan Review

Parks Canada released a draft park management plan for public review in late November 2009. The public review period for the plan closed on January 8, 2010.

Two public open houses were held in November—one in Jasper and the other in Edmonton—to introduce the draft plan and encourage discussion directly with Parks Canada representatives.

Figure 1. Plan Review Process





Advance and follow-up media coverage of topics such as caribou recovery, mountain biking and visitor experience stimulated public interest and dialogue. Parks Canada followed up on the invitation of several community organizations to present information about the draft plan to their members.

Draft management plans were mailed out to Aboriginal communities. The content from the draft plan was presented at fall meetings of the Jasper Aboriginal Forum and the Council of the Elders of Descendants of Jasper.

2.3 Other Analysis and Data that Contributed to Plan Development

The *Canada National Parks Act* directs Parks Canada to prepare park management plans that contain a long-term vision for a park, a set of ecological integrity objectives and indicators and provision for resource protection and restoration, zoning, visitor use, public awareness and performance evaluation. The plan must be consistent with other federal legislation that provides the legal framework governing Parks Canada. Figure 1 depicts other considerations that inform the development of a management plan, from national priorities to emerging trends and changes on neighbouring lands.

Parks Canada conducts regular ecological monitoring and social science research to assist in the management of the park. Several other analytical pieces that laid the groundwork for the management plan review include:

- the State of the Park Report, released in 2008
- analysis by a marketing consultant to refine strategies for visitor experience
- visitor experience assessments for the Icefields Parkway, Miette Hot Springs, community of Jasper and Jasper National Park
- focus groups and surveys on a variety of topics (e.g. camping, backcountry/wilderness trail use, winter use)

3.0 Response to the Management Plan Review

3.1 The Mountain National Parks

Interest in the management plan review was strong and came from across the country and around the world. By the end of the participation program, planning teams had read and considered comments from dozens of organizations and thousands of individuals.

The feedback led to revised plans that set the direction for each park to fulfill its potential within Canada's system of protected areas, and continue to be a place where generations of Canadians can connect with each other and with the landscape.



3.2 Jasper National Park

The next two sections provide a summary of the major themes that emerged from public and Aboriginal involvement during both phases of the participation program and Parks Canada's response to those comments.

Hundreds of people spent time writing to us, attending open houses and meetings, and talking to us at events and following presentations. We appreciate the time that respondents took to learn more about the plan review, and provide us with thoughtful and thought-provoking comments.

Workshop proceedings, meeting minutes, written submissions and on-line postings were reviewed and considered as the plan was drafted in fall 2009. Following the release of the draft management plan, the planning team in Jasper National Park received approximately 60 written submissions. Parks Canada and the Minister of the Environment received more than 200 individual submissions about the Jasper plan, the majority of which were prompted by a letter writing campaign. The approximately 500 discrete ideas contained in these submissions were considered as the plan was revised in February 2010.

Virtually every section of the draft plan benefitted from public and Aboriginal comments, contributing to a final plan that:

- Has a compelling, inclusive vision of Jasper's future.
- Captures the unique role and potential of Jasper within the national parks system and regional landscape.
- Integrates the protection of heritage resources with visitor experience, and public appreciation and understanding.
- Describes a clear path to success and improves accountability for progress with clear indicators, measures and actions.

4.0 Summary of Public Comments

The majority of the comments Parks Canada received from the public fell into one of six categories:

- ecological integrity and visitor experience
- managing growth and development
- new visitor activities and events
- established visitor activities and supporting infrastructure
- woodland caribou
- Jasper airstrip



4.1 Ecological Integrity and Visitor Experience

4.1.1 What's in the plan

The new management plan for Jasper National Park sets out a vision for the future that involves Canadians in safeguarding the unique natural and cultural heritage of Jasper National Park for all time, and for facilitating memorable experiences that allow Canadians to make deep connections with their heritage. It builds on the strengths of the previous park management plan and recent successes, and identifies the conservation priorities for the next 15 years. Key directions of the strategy to ensure park ecosystems remain healthy include:

- Raising awareness and understanding of ecological integrity and ecosystem management through communication and hands-on learning.
- Participating in or leading recovery planning for species at risk.
- Restoring impaired ecosystems with the involvement of Canadians and Aboriginal people.

Ecological integrity has been reaffirmed as the first priority in all aspects of park management. The protection of national parks is linked closely to Parks Canada's mandate to help the public connect with these places of discovery and enjoy countless opportunities to experience them, whether alone or with family and friends. This reflects the fact that public awareness, understanding and support for national parks are critical to achieving Parks Canada's conservation goals. Awareness and support are most effectively fostered when Canadians visit national parks and form personal connections with them. Key directions of the strategy to enhance visitor experience are:

- Using social science and other tools to connect visitors to inspiring experiences that are grounded in Jasper National Park's distinctive natural and cultural characteristics.
- Undertaking pilot programs to attract new Canadians, urban youth, families and less experienced park visitors.
- Providing new recreational opportunities and events and redeveloping existing opportunities that broaden the appeal of the park for priority visitor groups.

The plan contains a target to increase visitation by 2% annually over the next five years.

4.1.2 What we heard

- Concern that the draft plan represented a shift away from Parks Canada's legislated first priority, ecological integrity, in favour of increased visitation and commercial development. Parks Canada was encouraged to:
 - confirm ecological integrity as the first priority in all aspects of park management
 - make a stronger commitment to conserving and restoring native ecosystems
 - maintain Jasper National Park's wilderness values
 - set clear, measurable objectives and indicators related to ecological integrity
- Desire for a concrete action plan that would spell out how Parks Canada will improve Jasper National Park's ecological integrity
- Support for the new focus and fresh approaches to visitor experience



- Comments on the potential effects of aiming to increase visitation pertained to:
 - Concerns for potential damage to park environments, especially during sensitive times for wildlife such as calving and rutting seasons, or in sensitive places such as critical habitat for caribou, and potential to reduce other visitors' enjoyment of the park by experiencing (for example) more congestion at popular sites.
 - Support for the benefits of increased visitation in terms of economic sustainability and the opportunity to connect more Canadians with their national parks.

4.1.3 Parks Canada's response

A primary concern for Parks Canada is to ensure national parks have continued relevance in a changing, more urban Canada. Jasper National Park can contribute to resolving this concern by renewing and reinventing visitor experience in ways that respond to the motivations and interests of the full range of Canadians. Increasing visitation provides the opportunity for more Canadians to establish the deep personal connections that arise through personal experience of authentic, inspiring places. Those connections are the basis for maintaining the enduring support for heritage conservation that is essential to sustain Canada's protected areas legacy into the future.

An increase in visitation does not automatically mean greater environmental impacts or a reduction in the quality of visitor experience. New approaches, such as green transit systems, have the potential to enhance ecological integrity while improving the quality of visitor opportunities. Parks Canada has made significant advances in maintaining and restoring ecological integrity in Jasper National Park in the recent past through, for example:

- relocation or modification of several Parks Canada operational facilities (warden office, Miette woodlot, Maligne horse range) to restore habitat and improve wildlife movement
- limits to growth and the development of guidelines for outlying commercial accommodations and the Marmot Basin ski area
- the Jasper Trails Project and other initiatives to improve wildlife movement
- an active fire management and vegetation restoration program
- aquatic restoration efforts
- numerous environmental stewardship initiatives

Parks Canada will continue to build on this work.

The target for visitation will be reassessed at the five-year review of the plan. Direction in the plan reflects the intent to manage visitation to ensure that it contributes to ecological integrity and fosters stewardship and support for the park. Promotion of the park is targeted to specific visitor groups like youth and new Canadians, and toward increasing visitation at times of the year and in places where it can be supported ecologically.



4.2 Managing Growth and Development

4.2.1 What's in the plan

The revised park management plan will carry forward the limits to growth and development contained in the 2000 park management plan and policy direction developed in the intervening years, such as:

- the Land Use Plan for the Community of Jasper (2001, currently under review)
- the Marmot Basin Ski Area Site Guidelines for Development and Use (2008)
- the Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks (2007)

The community of Jasper, outlying lodges, hostels, bungalow camps, and day-use areas like Marmot Basin ski area are important staging areas from which visitors experience and learn about the park. The implementation of sensitive design criteria and promotion of exceptional stewardship practices will nurture a sense of place and minimize impacts on the parks environmental and cultural heritage.

The new plan also reflects regulatory changes. Declared Wilderness Areas (DWA) for Jasper National Park were established under regulation in 2000. The vast majority of the park (over 97%) is now declared wilderness, providing a greater degree of certainty that their wilderness character will be maintained in perpetuity.

Adjustments to DWA can only take place through a regulatory process that includes public consultation. DWA adjustments will only be considered in cases where they will improve the protection of sensitive areas or facilitate important park management initiatives in a manner that does not compromise ecological integrity and the wilderness character of the area. Potential adjustments to Marmot Basin's leasehold boundary are contemplated within the recently developed site guidelines, which if implemented, will result in a small net increase in DWA.

Wilderness areas of the park contain some of the most dramatic landscapes and unique ecosystems in the parks. The plan commits to explore opportunities to improve wilderness facilities and services for novice wilderness visitors, families and other priority groups.

4.2.2 What we heard

- General support for maintaining the existing limits to growth and development, particularly outside the community of Jasper.
- Mixed comments concerning Marmot Basin Ski Area; some respondents suggested Parks Canada should do more to ensure the long-term economic sustainability of ski areas, while others were opposed to new development, summer use, and some provisions of the Marmot Basin Site Guidelines.



- Concern for the potential adjustment of DWA boundaries:
 - Changing DWA to accommodate new development was viewed as inconsistent with the original intent to preserve the wilderness character of these areas.
 - Very limited adjustments were acceptable to some respondents—for gravel extraction adjacent to highways and small-scale renewable energy projects for existing buildings, but new communications towers were not.
- Concern over wording in the draft park management plan to “consider limits to commercial activities” in ecologically sensitive areas and remote wilderness settings.
- Concern over a proposal to explore the feasibility of a hut-to-hut experience in Jasper National Park’s wilderness and effects on grizzly bear and caribou habitat security.

4.2.3 Parks Canada’s response

Previous policy decisions on limits to the developed footprint in Jasper National Park were the result of extensive analysis and public review. The revised plan contains a target to maintain or reduce the aerial extent of the human footprint at the park scale by 2014.

To date, Parks Canada has not identified any proposals that would necessitate adjustments to DWA, other than the change related to leasehold boundaries that is provided for in the Marmot Basin Site Guidelines. Section 14 of the *Canada National Parks Act* allows the Minister to carry out activities in wilderness areas for the purpose of park administration. Potential projects like gravel extraction or communications infrastructure could be considered under these provisions and would not require boundary adjustments. The existing gravel pits in Jasper National Park are sufficient for park needs as forecast for the next 10-15 years without affecting DWA.

The direction regarding commercial activities in ecologically sensitive areas was removed, as zoning and area concepts provide sufficient direction regarding the nature of and character of activities and supporting facilities that may be considered in different areas of the park.

The proposed direction to explore the feasibility of a hut-to-hut-experience was removed, as the lack of specificity raised concerns, and the plan provides sufficient direction to explore options for exceptional wilderness experiences while achieving ecological goals including habitat security for grizzly bears and caribou.

4.3 New Visitor Activities and Events

4.3.1 What’s in the plan

The plan contains a new framework for considering new events and visitor activities. Parks Canada will develop, support, and promote new events and activities that:

- promote public understanding and appreciation of Rocky Mountain ecosystems and history, and Parks Canada’s mandate



- involve a diverse range of the park's partners and stakeholders in their development and delivery
- support outstanding visitor experiences
- respect the park's character and area concepts
- support relevant ecological and cultural resource protection goals

Proposals may be evaluated through a structured public review process.

4.3.2 What we heard

- Concern about the potential effects of new recreational activities and events on the park environment and other visitors.
 - Parks Canada was urged to better define "non-traditional uses" and set clear boundaries in terms of the types of activities and associated development that would be considered.
 - Concern about the appropriateness of activities that are already being assessed nationally, like ziplining and canopy tours. Some respondents would prefer to see low impact, non-mechanized, nature-oriented activities and events that emphasize quiet enjoyment of nature.
- General support from a number of respondents for the proposed new framework. New activities exist that would not impact ecological integrity or that would introduce new visitor groups to the park, respond to the changing needs of society and ensure that businesses remain economically viable.
- Suggestions for activities that respondents would like to see available in the park (e.g. hang-gliding, paragliding, slalom paddling).
- General interest in the process that will be used to consider new activities.

4.3.3 Parks Canada's response

There are diverse views on the types of visitor activities and events that should occur in a national park. However, the Canadian population is changing. Young urban Canadians and new Canadians represent growing segments of the population; they also may be less familiar with national parks and national historic sites than previous generations. Reaching youth and new Canadians and building support for heritage protection is essential to ensuring the future of our national parks.

Participating for the first time in a new activity or a special event located in the park provides a window to the many other possibilities the park offers. For many, this window may act as a bridge to developing a life-long connection.

Canadians are assured that Parks Canada will be receptive and proactive in considering new activities and events, while the bulk of our efforts will be focused on enhancing existing services and opportunities for visitors.



4.4 Established Visitor Activities and Associated Infrastructure

4.4.1 What's in the plan

The plan provides a framework for high quality visitor opportunities that will allow visitors to experience Jasper's unique mountain heritage. Parks Canada will deliver on this commitment through directions and key actions, such as:

- Strengthening relationships with partners to offer authentic, world-class visitor opportunities.
- Maintaining high levels of visitor satisfaction by redeveloping existing opportunities.
- Reviewing and updating camping facilities (e.g. investing in infrastructure for first-time campers and recreational vehicle users; increasing the range of services, programs and activities like short trails, playgrounds, family areas, etc.).
- Implementing sustainable trail strategies for high use and wilderness areas that meet user needs and support ecological objectives.

4.4.2 Review of the River Use Guidelines

Parks Canada reviewed the [Guidelines for River Use Management in Jasper National Park](#) as part of the management plan review. Parks Canada incorporated into the draft management plan the criteria under which a proposal for use of the mid-Maligne River would be considered. The policy direction for the mid-Maligne River in the 2000 park management plan restricting in-stream use was brought forward and remains in force in the interim.

4.4.3 What we heard

- Diverse suggestions for managing established visitor activities.
 - Comments about trail use management to improve ecological integrity and reduce user conflicts.
 - Mountain biking and horse use were most often recommended for more intensive management.
- Strong support for expanding educational programs for visitors.
- Suggestions for improving and promoting park facilities, services and programs, such as enhancing winter activities and visitor opportunities, waiving entry fees for school/youth groups, programs for new Canadians at popular day use areas, a front-country equestrian campground, more backcountry campsites for paddlers and new alpine trails.
- Mixed views about the management approach to the mid-Maligne River, which was closed to in-stream use in 1999 to protect an important harlequin duck population from disturbance:
 - Some respondents advocate for opening the river to use (or reviewing the decision), citing the potential for exceptional visitor experiences and/or questioning the validity of the 1999 decision. Concern was raised that Parks Canada discontinued the monitoring of harlequin ducks in 2005.



- Other respondents support the 1999 decision, and urged Parks Canada to maintain the closure in favor of protecting harlequin duck habitat and other ecological values.
- General support for the proposed approach, that provides flexibility and a willingness to consider new evidence, supports the original intent to protect ducks and habitat, and establishes clear criteria and a scientific basis for considering alternative management approaches.
- Some concern that the wording opens the door to reduced protection for harlequin ducks and increased recreational use.

4.4.4 Parks Canada's response

There is strong interest in, and a range of opinions about, how Parks Canada manages established visitor activities in the park. Parks Canada will continue to use a suite of tools to manage existing activities, including communications, facility or trail adjustments and improvements, access management tools, etc. Future emphasis will be placed on innovative approaches that enhance visitor experience and provide new learning opportunities, while resolving conservation challenges and improving ecological integrity. Parks Canada will inform and involve Canadians in decisions that are likely to affect their access to and enjoyment of the park.

As the large number of comments on this topic suggests, there are many areas where Parks Canada can improve facilities, services and programs. The comments received during the management plan review will be considered when Parks Canada makes decisions during annual business planning about where to invest funds. Improved social science research, new technology and increased partnering will play key roles in the development and delivery of new programs and services.

Parks Canada will manage the mid-Maligne River as proposed in the draft plan and will continue to implement the River Use Guidelines. We involved the public in reviewing implementation of the guidelines and completed a scientific literature review to ensure that any new information concerning harlequin ducks was considered. No new scientific research has been published since 1998 concerning harlequin duck ecology and vulnerability to disturbance that contradicts the basis for the decision restricting use of the mid-Maligne River. The review of the River Use Guidelines review identified a number of opportunities to work with river users to strengthen visitor experiences and review monitoring programs and social science needs. Copies of the reports are available on request from Jasper National Park.

4.5 Woodland Caribou

4.5.1 What's in the plan

Canada's *Species at Risk Act* identifies the southern mountain population of woodland caribou as a threatened species. Long-term monitoring of the three herds in the southern part of the park indicates they are in decline. Reversing the current trend is a priority for Parks Canada.



Environment Canada is the lead agency for species-at-risk recovery planning for the southern mountain population of woodland caribou. Parks Canada is preparing a conservation strategy for woodland caribou on national parks lands in Jasper, Banff, Mt. Revelstoke and Glacier national parks. This conservation strategy will:

- identify important caribou habitat
- set conservation goals and objectives
- identify management actions
- support the broader recovery plan led by Environment Canada

The conservation strategy for Jasper National Park will be developed with the involvement of the public and Aboriginal people.

4.5.2 What we heard

- Woodland caribou garnered more comments than any other species that occurs in the park.
- There is strong support for caribou conservation.
- Diverse suggestions for specific actions that may hasten caribou recovery, such as:
 - closing the Maligne Valley Road in winter
 - creating “no go” zones where human access is not permitted
 - working with adjacent land managers to ensure that the effects of regional development on transboundary caribou are minimized
 - carefully managing access in the Tonquin, Whistler Creek, Maligne and Trident (i.e. Marmot Basin area) caribou ranges, and extending the Edith Cavell winter closure
- Parks Canada was urged to present a clearer recovery plan with concrete objectives and actions, and act more quickly to reverse the decline in caribou numbers.
- Better or additional performance measures related to caribou are needed.
- Concern that policy changes documented in the draft plan, such as recreational use of the Jasper airstrip [increased overflight of caribou habitat] and new site guidelines for Marmot Basin Ski Area would negatively affect caribou once implemented.
- Parks Canada was urged to define critical habitat before future proposals such as additional huts in the backcountry or improvements to winter facilities or services along Highway 93A are considered.

4.5.3 Parks Canada’s response

The revised plan contains:

- more background about woodland caribou in Jasper National Park
- more information on the scope of the conservation strategy
- targets for caribou-related performance measures



Parks Canada will continue to implement a suite of interim measures until the conservation strategy has been finalized.

4.6 Jasper Airstrip

4.6.1 What's in the plan

The management plan reflects the Government of Canada's decision, announced in March 2008, to relist the Jasper airstrip for use for emergency and diversionary purposes on the basis of a risk assessment for aviation safety, and to allow for private recreational aircraft use. Parks Canada was not consulting on the decision, rather on the proposed parameters for implementation.

4.6.2 What we heard

- Comments were received in favour of and against relisting the Jasper airstrip.
- Some respondents urged Parks Canada to close the airstrip to recreational use by aircraft due to concerns about the effect of aircraft noise on visitors and wildlife.
- Support for rehabilitation of the airstrip to native grassland.
- A concern was raised that not allowing commercial or charter use may restrict the use of the airstrip for medevacs or as a staging area for community emergencies.

Parks Canada's response

Non-emergency access for private aircraft will be managed under the authority of a permit issued by the Park Superintendent. Commercial use is prohibited. Parks Canada will implement user fees to cover administrative costs. The airstrip will be managed as a grass runway within its current footprint, with limited maintenance and updating of facilities. Prohibiting commercial air access to the airstrip does not preclude its use for medevacs or other emergency situations.

5.0 Summary of Aboriginal Comments

Through previous work with the Jasper Aboriginal Forum and the Council of the Elders of Descendants of Jasper, Aboriginal people and Parks Canada identified six main areas of common interests and opportunities for collaborative work:

- formalizing working relationships
- improving access to the park
- gathering and using traditional knowledge
- increasing cultural programming
- participating in park management activities
- economic opportunities within the park

This section summarizes what Parks Canada heard through the Forum, Elders' Council, community visits, and in response to the release of the draft management plan.



5.1 What's in the plan

Priorities and directions for work with Aboriginal groups are woven throughout the plan, although the bulk of the new direction is contained in the key strategy, Strengthening Aboriginal Relationships. Key directions from the plan include:

- Facilitating the gathering of traditional indigenous knowledge about park ecosystems, relationships with park landscapes and cultural resources.
- Identifying and facilitating opportunities for Aboriginal people to present their culture, history and perspectives to park visitors, and to participate in the economic activity of the park.
- Supporting Aboriginal access to the park for spiritual and ceremonial purposes (e.g. developing an Aboriginal pass, working with interested groups to identify a place or places in the park for ceremonies and cultural learning).
- Fostering cultural awareness among Parks Canada and its partners.
- Investigating the feasibility of reintroducing bison to the park.

5.2 What we heard

Reconciliation:

- Many Aboriginal people feel that they have been excluded from, and are not welcome in, Jasper National Park.
- A process of reconciliation is needed to redress the legacy of past park management decisions, rules and regulations that were incompatible with a traditional way of life.
- Parks Canada needs to work diligently to understand the cultures of the diverse communities it is working with and ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are properly represented in the park management plan.

Sharing knowledge:

- Several communities are interested in sharing with Parks Canada what they know about past use of the park and places that hold special cultural significance, while retaining ownership of the information.
- Some communities are also interested in any information that Parks Canada may have about their community's historic associations with the park.
- Several areas of the park were identified that should be carefully managed due to their cultural significance.

Access to the park and cultural sites:

- Strong interest in carrying out traditional practices in the park, such as collecting medicinal plants and conducting ceremonies.
- There is also interest in hunting and fishing, and participating in initiatives to reduce hyper-abundant wildlife populations.
- Access to a site or sites in the park where Aboriginal people can carry out ceremonies, pass on teachings from elders to youth and reconnect with the park through traditional activities, is a priority.



- The opportunity to observe traditional activities occurring in the park should be part of the visitor experience.

Cultural programming:

- General support for creating more opportunities for visitors to learn about the culture and history of Aboriginal groups, as long as this is done in a way that respects the traditions of these groups and ensures that they can tell their stories in their own voices.
- Diverse ideas for improving cultural programming, from an Aboriginal cultural centre or museum in the town of Jasper, to a culture camp or village elsewhere in the park, to interpretive media in popular areas of the park.

Economic opportunities:

- Strong interest in pursuing the economic benefits associated with increased involvement in the provision of visitor opportunities.
- Diverse opinions on Parks Canada's role in assisting communities to participate in the economic benefits associated with the park (e.g. assisting Aboriginal people in locating venues where they can sell authentic crafts and artworks, providing land and infrastructure to facilitate the development of tourism products and programs).

Park management and land use:

- Broad interest in the future of the park; several groups would like to participate in all aspects of park management.
- Some concern that industrial development might be allowed in the park.
- Strong support for the reintroduction of bison into the park.

5.3 Parks Canada's response

The comments of elders, community representatives and individual community members were welcomed and carefully considered as the draft plan content was developed. The directions closely reflect the priorities identified through the Aboriginal Forum.

Parks Canada will continue to work with the Aboriginal Forum to implement the broad directions identified in the plan. We will also work bilaterally with communities and other Aboriginal organizations as they come forward with concrete proposals for initiatives like traditional land use studies and new tourism products.

Parks Canada would like to continue visiting interested Aboriginal communities to raise awareness of the role of the park management plan, explore the interests of different communities, establish how best to work with them and lay the groundwork for implementing initiatives under the framework set out in the park management plan.



6.0 Conclusion

Jasper National Park has an updated and relevant management plan, made stronger through the involvement of hundreds of people who take an interest in the park. And, public participation in park management does not end with the approval of a new management plan. Management planning is a continuous cycle of consultation, decision-making, monitoring, and reporting. An ongoing dialogue with Canadians is critical to Parks Canada's success in refining and implementing strategies and actions to maintain or restore ecological integrity, connect Canadians to their national parks and provide unparalleled opportunities to experience these places firsthand.

The first five-year review of the new park management plan is scheduled for 2015. Between now and then, there will be many opportunities to participate in planning initiatives, from the development of a caribou conservation strategy to annual public forums to review management plan implementation. Please join our mailing list if you would like us to keep you informed about:

- Milestones in the management planning process for Jasper National Park (e.g. release of State of the Park reports, the five-year review of the management plan).
- Parks Canada's progress in implementing the park management plan.
- Public events (e.g. open houses, annual planning forums) and other upcoming opportunities for public participation in management planning.
- Other land use planning and regulatory initiatives (e.g. updating day use areas and visitor facilities, new activities, ski area planning).

Copies of the Jasper National Park Management Plan (2010) are available on-line (at www.pc.gc.ca/jasper) or by contacting:

Office of the Superintendent
Jasper Field Unit
P.O. Box 10
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