
Introduction

The *Conservation Program Policies* document is a synopsis of policies that direct the day-to-day and long-term actions under which BC Parks manages natural and cultural values within British Columbia's park¹ and ecological reserve system. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive guide for BC Parks' managers, and further, a public measure that ensures provincially consistent standards are followed and that field activities reflect the overall goals and objectives of BC Parks and the province. Information is provided to guide conservation management efforts at the provincial, district, and protected area levels.

Policy direction is provided for management of vegetation, wildlife, geologic, marine system, and cultural heritage. In addition, guidance is presented on conservation management activities, which include research, inventory, monitoring, and data management. BC Parks' impact assessment policy is a separate document since it applies to all impact assessment in parks and ecological reserves and includes environmental, social, and economic impacts. However, it is referenced in this policy document for consistency and as it applies to conservation management.

Global and National Perspectives

The *World Conservation Strategy* (International Union for the Conservation of Nature 1980) represented the beginning of evolving international conservation programs. At the 1992 World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, the Caracas Declaration, the *Global Biodiversity Strategy* (released at the Congress) accompanied with *Parks for Life*, the Congress' action plan, provided clear conservation actions required at international, national, and local levels. The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, (ratified in Canada, December 1992) was the first comprehensive agreement to protect and conserve the Earth's biological resources. It recognizes that the conservation of biological diversity requires the development of national strategies and action plans and requires the development of improved mechanisms for information collection and management.

The *Canadian Biodiversity Strategy* (Environment Canada 1995) is Canada's response to the international United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The strategy recognizes that there is a shared responsibility for conserving biodiversity among the provincial, territorial, and federal governments.

¹ Throughout this document, provincial parks and recreation areas under the *Park Act*; and protected areas under the *Environment and Land Use Act* are referred to collectively as parks.

Provincial Perspective

Since the 1980s, conservation initiatives have been diverse and varied in British Columbia. These initiatives culminated in 1994 with the release of the draft Provincial Land Use Goals (Commission on Resources and Environment 1995) (a component of the Provincial Land Use Strategy) which propose the government's desired state of land use and management for provincial-controlled resources. The goals established a context for specific strategic policies and plans (such as the *Protected Areas Strategy* and land and resource management planning) and provided details on how provincial land use goals might be achieved.

The Provincial Land Use Strategy is designed to create a sustainable future in British Columbia by providing a framework through the dynamic interaction of five primary components: provincial direction, participating planning, interagency and intergovernmental coordination, independent oversight, and dispute resolution (Commission on Resources and Environment 1994).

In British Columbia, the protected areas system is currently comprised of national parks, provincial parks, protected areas, and ecological reserves, and protects areas of land and water throughout coastal and mainland British Columbia, offering ecological, scientific, social, cultural, and economic benefits.

In 1993, the BC government released the *Protected Areas Strategy* which presents government policy on protected areas. It established two goals for protected areas, representativeness and special features (Appendix 1). Several succinct principles regarding protected areas and their management were also provided. These are fundamental principles under which BC Parks manages all parks and ecological reserves (Appendix 2).

The *Resource and Recreation Use Guidelines for Protected Areas* (British Columbia 1995) was released by the provincial government in August 1995. The document outlines protected area management principles to provide overall management guidance and to serve as a framework for determining appropriate uses in protected areas (Appendix 3).

Agency Perspective

Like all provincial ministries, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, derives its management direction from provincial goal statements. These statements form a cornerstone for the BC Parks' conservation management policies presented in this document. In addition, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks has outlined goals and objectives for strategic planning for the ministry.

Striking the Balance is the 1991 policy document that provides the broad policy statements for BC Parks. This document states that protection and management of all protected area values is BC Parks' primary concern.

BC Parks has also formulated a distinctive set of *Conservation Principles* (page CP-3) as a result of staff contributions from throughout the province. These principles form another cornerstone for park and ecological reserve management policies.