

Skeena Region

**MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
STATEMENT**

March 2003



**for Iskut River Hot Springs
Provincial Park**



**Ministry of Water, Land
and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship
Division**

Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park Approvals Page

Forward

This management direction statement for Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park provides management direction until such time as the plan is revised. Ongoing consultation between Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may require changes to this management direction statement. Aboriginal rights are honoured and respected within the park.

Implementation of strategies identified in the MDS will be dependent on available funding and Environmental Stewardship Division priorities.

Approvals



Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division



Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

**This management direction statement was developed through direction received from the
Cassiar Iskut-Stikine Land and Resource Management Plan**

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Iskut River Provincial Park

Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and direction from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of all these strategies is dependent on funding and funding procedures. All development associated with these strategies is subject to the the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

The provincial government established Iskut River Hot Springs as a Class A park by Order in Council under the *Park Act* on January 25, 2001. The park is presently named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*. Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park has been identified as a Goal 2, special feature, protected area in recognition of its hot springs and associated rare plants. Designation followed the recommendations of the Cassiar Iskut-Stikine Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park covers six hectares on the west bank of the Iskut River about 100 kilometres south of the community of Iskut, 15 kilometres north north-east of Bob Quinn and six kilometres west of Highway 37. Visitors to the park gain access on foot from a logging road about one kilometre away. This small provincial park lies within the asserted traditional territory of the Tahltan First Nation.

Extremely hot water weeps out of a rocky embankment and flows into the Iskut River. Most springs emerge within three to five metres of the river during low flows and are under water during high flows, although one spring emerges near the tree line. No hot springs pools exist in the park.

About 25 kilometres to the north, begins a series of large protected areas. These protected areas include Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park, Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve, Mount Edziza Provincial Park and Stikine River Provincial Park. These protected areas conserve entire ecosystems and offer a wide variety of outstanding backcountry outdoor recreation opportunities. Within the Iskut-Stikine region, other thermal springs include Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park on the east bank of the lower Stikine River about 120 kilometres south of the community of Telegraph Creek and Mess Creek warm springs on the west side of Mount Edziza Provincial Park.

Provincial Park Attributes

Conservation

- Lies within the Northern Skeena Mountains Ecosection; ICHwv (wet very cold interior cedar hemlock) biogeoclimatic subzone. The extremely small size of this provincial park precludes any ecosection and biogeoclimatic subzone representation.
- Hot springs with associated uncommon vascular plant, algae and Archaeobacteria¹ species.

Recreation and Tourism

- Potential hot springs recreation opportunities; no pools in the park.

Commercial Business Opportunities

- Provides potential commercial business opportunities for guided tour groups interested in hot springs and their special associated vegetation and aquatic plant ecosystems. This business opportunity is best developed as part of a systems approach where several provincial parks, protected areas and Crown land areas along Highway 37 are included in the tour to give clients a broad and interesting program.
- Provides potential for adjacent/nearby development using water from hot springs.

Cultural Heritage

- Cultural heritage values remain undocumented at this time. Environmental Stewardship Division is seeking Tahltan First Nations' contributions to resolve this lack of knowledge.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- Conserves provincially significant undeveloped hot springs and associated biota.

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park is not easily accessible. From Highway 37, visitors face a difficult six kilometre hike through dense vegetation over rough terrain to reach the Iskut River. The Devil Lake Forestry Road shortens the hike to two kilometres. Visitors must then ford the Iskut River, possible at low flows, but dangerous during high flows. Access is also possible from the Iskut River, but the lack of nearby pullouts prevents day use. Access may become easier as forest harvesting continues in the area.

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

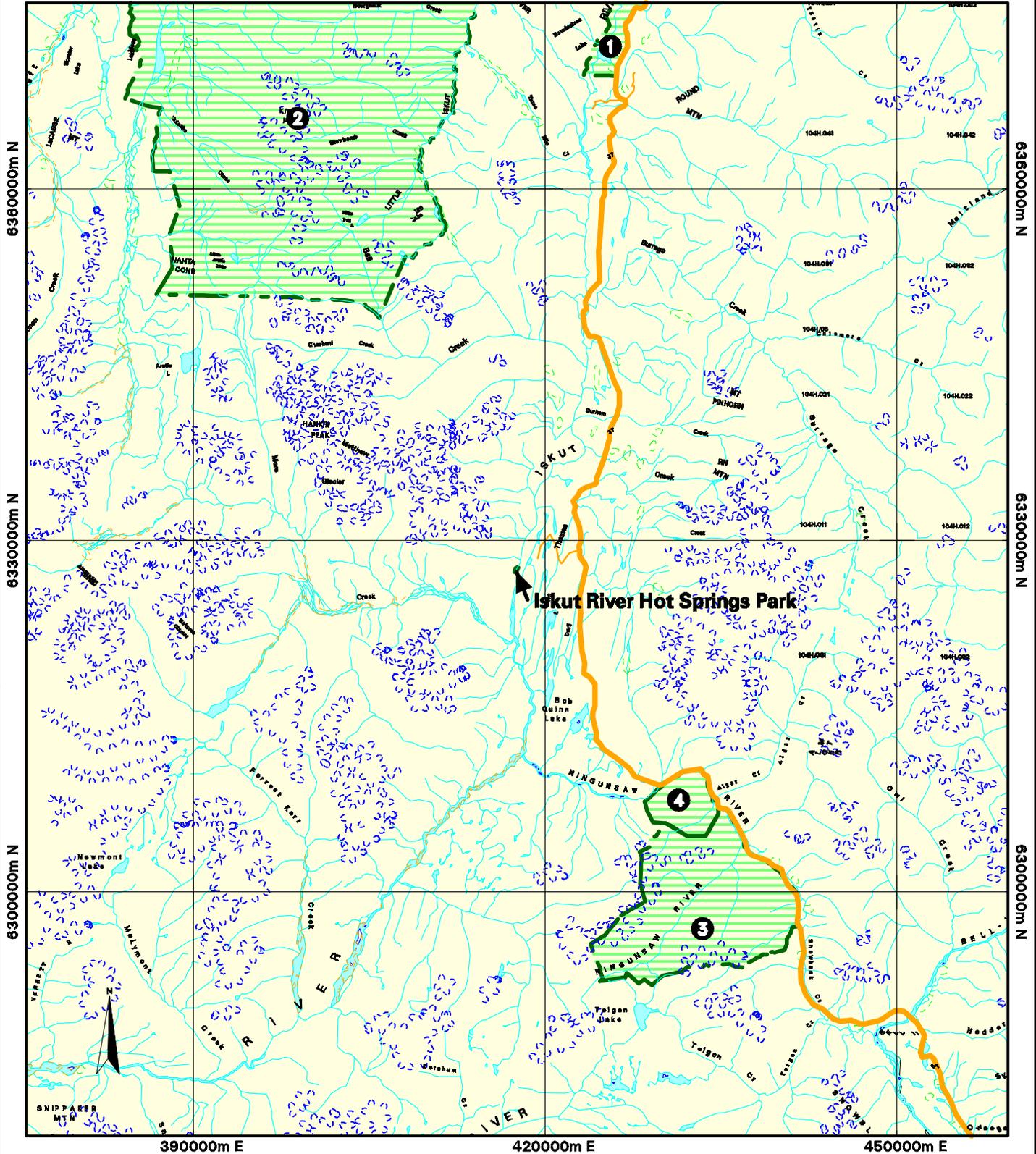
- Trapping license 620T001 includes the park but this resource use activity is not authorized under a valid park use permit.
- Guide outfitter (surrounding area) 621G002 includes the park.

¹ One of the three main clades of life to originate on Earth, the Archaeobacteria are distinguished by cell walls with pseudopeptidoglycan or protein components, and cell membranes composed of branched hydrocarbons linked to glycerol molecules.

Modern-day Archaeobacteria are found in extreme environments, such as areas of intense heat or high salt concentration – source Internet - College of Sciences

Figure 1: Context

Iskut River Hot Springs Park



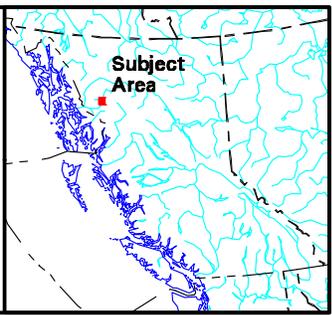
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	Subject Area		Other Provincial Protected Areas
	Other Protected Areas		1 Kinaskan Lake
	Highway		2 Mount Edziza
	Road		3 Ningunsaw
			4 Ningunsaw River - (ER)

0 10
km



Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- No facilities exist in the park.
- Visitor use is extremely low.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Lies within the Middle Iskut Resource Management Zone which entails special management to maintain the integrity of riparian habitat and recreational values along the Iskut River while allowing resource extraction. The zone includes a 100 metre reserve from forest harvesting beyond the Iskut River's inner gorge.

First Nations Interests

- Within the asserted traditional territory of the Tahltan First Nation.
- Tahltan First Nation has an interest in maintaining their aboriginal traditional uses and activities in the park.
- Tahltan First Nation is interested in developing pools for commercial business recreation opportunities.

Other Agency Interests

- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC) has an interest in any rare and endangered plants, animals and plant communities within the park.
- Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section, has an interest in the fauna at risk, including species known to occur or potentially occurring at the hot springs.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Naturalists have an interest in this park because of the hot springs and the diversity of the rare plant and aquatic species associated with the hot springs ecosystem.
- Local residents have an interest in this park because of the outdoor recreation opportunities the park provides.
- Public and commercial river recreationists are interested in the park because of its location close to the Iskut River as a feature of interest along this river corridor.
- The trapline holder is interested in the park because park regulations may place limits on the trapping of fur-bearing animal species.

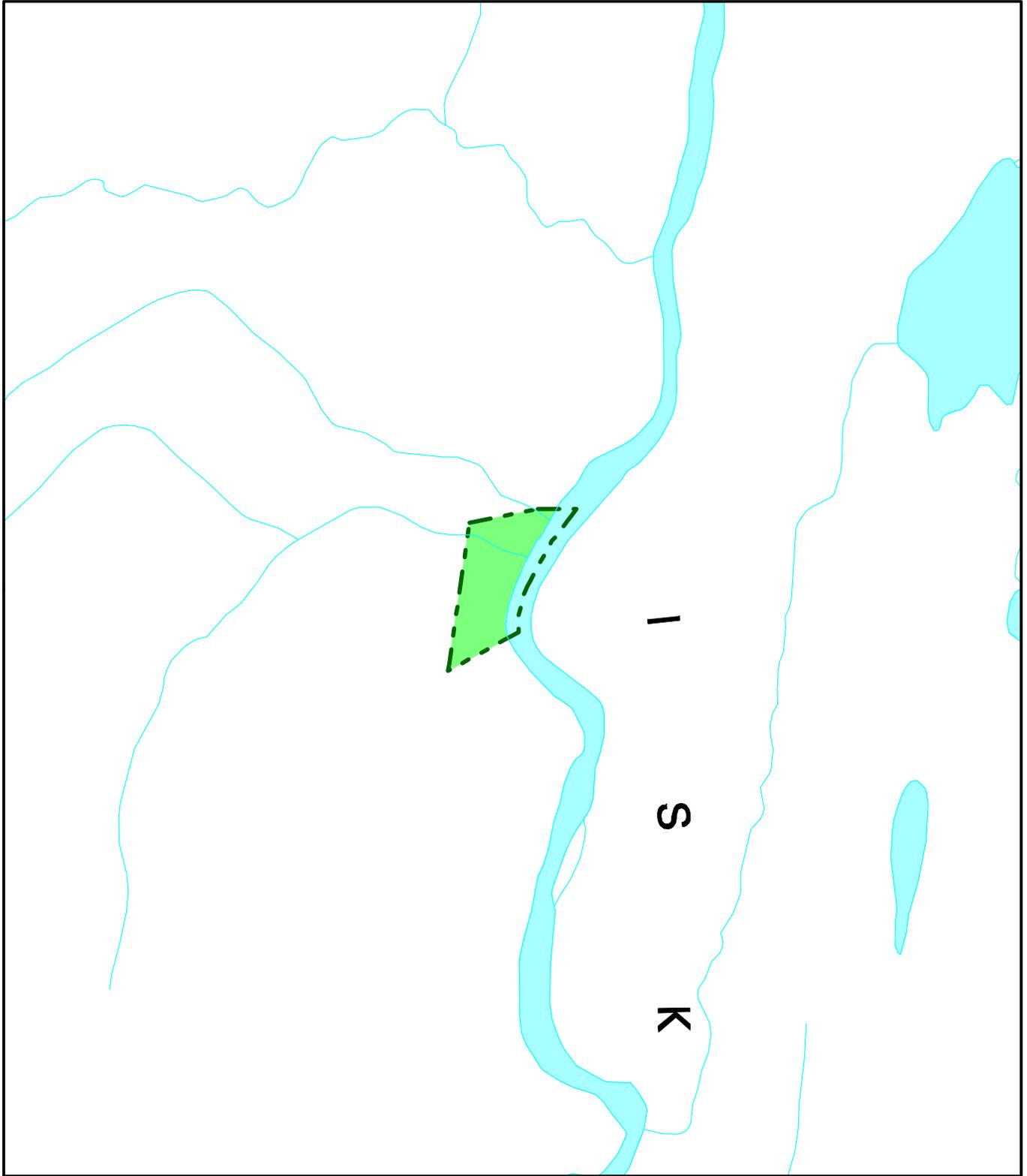
Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park Role Statement

The primary role for Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park is to protect, as a special feature, the hot springs near the Iskut River. The vascular plant, invertebrate, algae and Archaeobacteria communities dependent on these hot springs are uncommon and merit a high level of protection. A scientific research role is also important to understand and document this special hot springs feature.

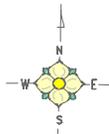
A secondary role for Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park is the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities. The park provides good potential for visitor appreciation of a rare and vulnerable special feature. The park also has potential to support adjacent commercial development.

Figure 2: Tenure

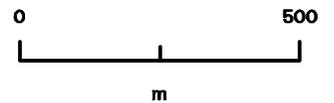
Iskut River Hot Springs Park



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Subject Area
Cadastral Boundary
(from CDMS)



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Management Commitments and Issues

Direction from Previous Planning

The Cassiar Iskut-Stikine LRMP recommended Iskut River Hot Springs for protection in 2000 and gave management direction to:

- Protect the natural character of the springs and wetlands;
- Not allow hunting;
- Maintain opportunities for public use; and,
- Maintain opportunities for commercial development compatible with the area's values.

Management Issues

The following management issues require attention and resolution:

Theme	Issue
Protecting park ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park's special natural features remain relatively unknown because an accurate inventory is incomplete. • The park's hot springs will be altered and likely damaged by commercial development for moderate to intense recreational use. • The trapline owner does not have a valid park use permit authorizing operation within the park.
Presenting compatible outdoor recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot springs development will increase visitor use and this higher use may damage the special features in the park.
Protecting park cultural heritage values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park's cultural heritage features may be at risk because an inventory of such values is incomplete.
Ensuring park visitor safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park visitors may be at risk because of the difficult access conditions, in particular, the high water regime of the Iskut River in spring and autumn. • Visitors may be at risk if they drink the hot springs water. • Visitors to the park may be at risk because the park remains on the list of provincial parks, recreation areas and protected areas open to hunting and the discharge of firearms.

Management Direction

The vision for Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park includes maintaining the ecological integrity of the park's sensitive hot springs and associated plant and animal species and their habitats while providing compatible outdoor recreation use and appreciation by visitors travelling along the Highway 37 and the Iskut River.

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

The following table describes management strategies to deal with the identified issues. In addition, Appendix 1 contains a list of acceptable activities, uses and facilities for this provincial park.

Management Objectives	Strategies
To protect the park's special hot springs and natural features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement an inventory of the park's fauna and flora: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Place highest priority on documenting the extent and characteristics of the hot springs; ➤ Second priority should focus on documenting the rare plants and animal species dependent on the hot springs environment for their survival;

Management Objectives	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Complete this inventory before any long term recreation facility development is considered. • Manage recreational visitor use to ensure with the park's ecological values are sustained, particularly the hot springs and vulnerable plant and animal communities • Monitor the park to prevent unauthorised construction of soaking pools. • Contact the trapline owner to place this resource use under a valid park use permit if the owner is operating in the park.
To enhance the park's outdoor recreation opportunities and protect outdoor recreation features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain opportunities for public use and commercial business opportunities that are compatible with achieving the park's roles in the protected areas system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Determine "compatible" opportunities through the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy procedures. ➤ Consider rustic facilities should access to the park improve and demand warrant.
To protect the park's cultural heritage values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and collate, in cooperation with the Tahltan First Nation, existing information on cultural heritage values within Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park. • Meet with the Tahltan First Nation to discuss issues that affect the protection and management of Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park
To provide information to the public about the park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information about Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park on the official Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection web site is accurate and current.
To ensure visitor safety in the park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the safety issues and develop a program to resolve safety conditions where solutions are practical. • Post warning signs to advise the public about the dangerous conditions on Iskut River during periods of high water. • Request the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section to remove Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park from the Region 6 Hunting and Fishing Regulations Synopsis list of provincial parks, recreation areas and protected areas open for hunting for the 2003/2004 hunting season.

Consultation and Future Planning

Environmental Stewardship Division will continue to consult with the Tahltan First Nation through the Tahltan – Environmental Stewardship Division Protected Areas Committee, and will meet with local stakeholders and resource users as issues arise.

The priority for preparing a management plan for Iskut River Provincial Park is ranked as low.

Zoning Plan

All of Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park is placed within a Special Feature Zone which entails the following:

Objective: To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

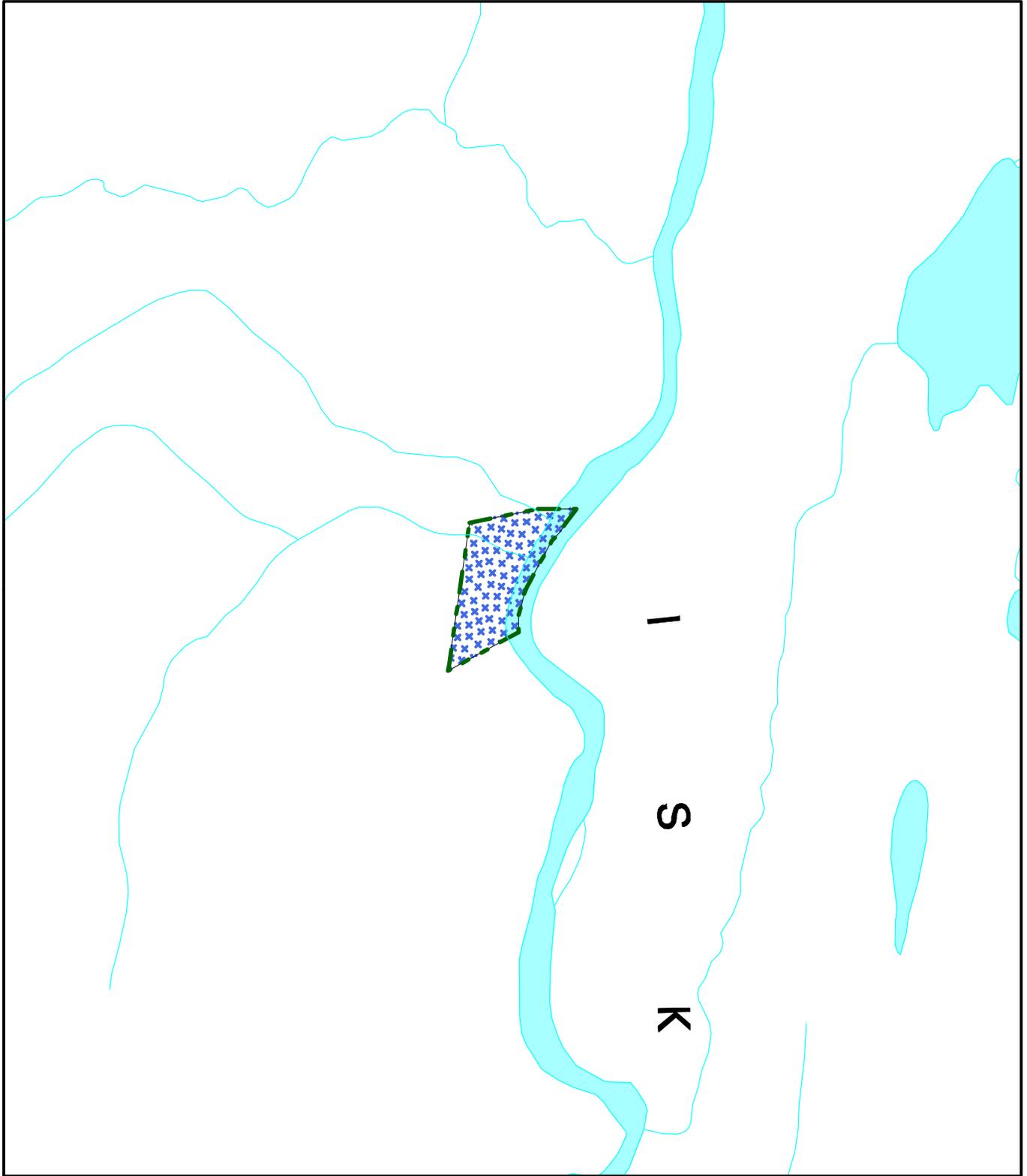
Zone Description: Covers the entire park (six hectares).

Management Guidelines: High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate, a high quality recreational and interpretative experience. Active or passive management depending on the size, location, and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.

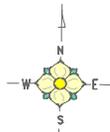
- Note: Hunting is prohibited in the park as directed by the Cassiar Iskut-Stikine LRMP.

Figure 3: Zoning

Iskut River Hot Springs Park



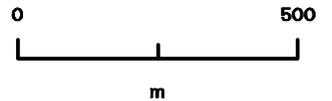
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Special Feature



Protected Area Boundary



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**Appendix 1. Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park
Table of Acceptable Activities Uses and Facilities**

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	N
Fishing	Y
Trapping	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational gold panning/rock hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication sites	N
Horse use/pack animals	N
Guide outfitting (hunting)	N
Guide outfitting (fishing)	Y
Guide outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide outfitting (river rafting)	Y
Cat-assisted skiing	N
Ski hills	N
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	M
Commercial recreation (non-facility-based)	Y
Backcountry huts	M
Water control structures – soaking pools or piping of water.	M
Fish stocking and enhancement	N
Road access	N
Off-road access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road access (motorised)	N
Off-road access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorised water access	N
Aircraft access	Y
Fire management (suppression)	Y (subject to initial attack plan)
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	N
Fire management (prevention)	N
Forest insect/disease control	N1
Noxious weed control	N1
Exotic insect/disease control	N1
Commercial filming	M
Scientific research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific research (manipulative activities)	M

Y = allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M = may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N = not allowed

N1 = allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2 = present and allowed to continue, but not normally allowed