

Skeena District

# MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

September 2000

for Babine River Corridor  
Provincial Park



Ministry of Environment  
Lands and Parks  
BC Parks Division

# Babine River Corridor Park

## Approvals Page

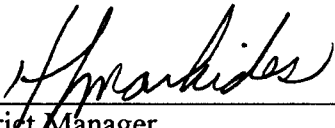
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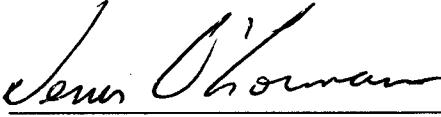
Babine River Corridor Park was recommended for protection by the Bulkley and Kispiox Land and Resource Management Plans and by a Local Resource Use Plan because of its exceptional value as a wilderness river corridor. In 1999, the Provincial Government established the river corridor as a Class A Provincial Park. This Management Direction Statement provides strategic management direction for the area prior to completion of a detailed management plan. Immediate management action is essential to protect the grizzly bears, fish and wilderness experience within the new park, and to initiate public involvement in the management plan. Current levels of use are high. Thus, it will be necessary to determine the capacity of the park for various types of use and to ensure that the park's conservation values are protected.

Further consultation with the Gitksan and Lake Babine First Nations may result in the need to amend this plan.

Implementation will be dependent on available funding and agency priorities.

### Approvals

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
District Manager  
Skeena District

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Parks Division

**This management direction statement was developed through direction received from the Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plan, the Kispiox Land and Resource Management Plan and the Babine River Local Resource Use Plan.**

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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose**

This management direction statement (MDS) provides management direction for newly designated Babine River Corridor Park. It identifies key strategies that will be ranked according to priority and completed as funding permits. All development associated with these strategies is subject BC Parks' Impact Assessment Policy.

### **Setting and Context**

Babine River Corridor Park hugs the Babine River for 85 km as it flows from the bridge crossing, two km downstream of Nilkitkwa Lake, northwest to Kisgegas Reserve, 10 km from the confluence with the Skeena River. Roads, running north from Hwy 16 near Smithers (~130 km from the southeast end, area population ~ 12,000) and the Hazeltons (~ 65 km from the northwest end, area population ~6,000), meet each end of the long, narrow park. The park includes asserted traditional territory of both the Ned'u'ten (Lake Babine Nation) and Gitx̱san peoples. The Ned'u'ten community of Wud'at (Fort Babine, population 135) lies at the head of Babine Lake, ~20 km before the park entrance. On the downstream boundary, the Gitx̱san community of Kisgegas is occupied seasonally.

The 14,523 ha park protects the heart of the Babine watershed—a wild river—home to steelhead and salmon and to the bears that feed on them (Figure 1). The river originates in Babine Lake, the largest natural lake entirely within British Columbia, and flows into the Skeena River, one of the most productive salmon river systems in the world. The river-based recreational opportunities offered by Babine River Corridor Park complement the upland forest and alpine recreation opportunities in Babine Mountain Park. Nearby Rainbow Alley Park draws trout anglers to the river connecting Babine Lake with Nilkitkwa Lake, and several small sites on Nilkitkwa (Nilkitkwa sites) and Babine (Red Bluff, Smithers Landing, Pendleton Bay) lakes form a recreational boating system.

## **Protected Area Attributes**

### **Conservation**

- Southern Skeena Mountains and Babine Upland Ecoregions; SBSmc2 (moist cold sub-boreal spruce subzone, Babine variant)
- internationally significant wild steelhead population
- provincially significant sockeye salmon run (largest producer in the Skeena drainage), supporting important commercial and food fisheries as well as a sport fishery
- populations of chinook, coho and pink salmon, dolly varden, rainbow and bull trout
- critical seasonal feeding location for provincially significant grizzly bear population (estimated population using river > 100 bears or about one bear per km)
- deep pools where bears fish
- high seasonal eagle population

Figure 1 - Park Location

Figure 2 - Park Map

- important habitat for many mammals (including bats, black bear, wolf, coyote, otter, mink, wolverine, fisher, marten, beaver, muskrat, moose), birds (including geese, osprey, shorebirds, owls) and amphibians

## **Recreation and Tourism**

- outstanding wilderness river recreation opportunities (BC Heritage River)
- internationally significant rafting and kayaking (4-5 day drift; 30 km of Class III and IV rapids)
- world-class angling (classified river—trophy size steelhead in a wilderness setting; fly-fishing for sockeye)
- wildlife viewing (salmon, eagles, bears)
- guided angling, hunting and rafting operations with international clients
- potential for canoeing and camping in upper reach

## **Cultural Heritage**

- traditional hunting, fishing and gathering by Ned’u’ten (Lake Babine Nation) and Gitksan
- trails along river
- culturally modified trees
- Kisgegas is used as a training/rediscovery site and use is made of the surrounding park
- various cultural sites
- old village sites near Kisgegas
- totem poles at Kisgegas

## **Significance in the Protected Areas System**

- protects a major unregulated river corridor with riparian habitats and exceptional salmonid values
- protects underrepresented sub-boreal spruce forest (SBSmc2—moist cold sub-boreal spruce subzone—Babine variant) in Southern Skeena Mountains and Babine Upland ecosections (high priority ecosections; Regional Protected Areas Team)
- protects seasonal grizzly bear food sources (floodplain vegetation in spring, salmon in fall) supporting high grizzly bear population
- provides a variety of internationally outstanding recreational opportunities:
  - rafting and kayaking on challenging water in a wilderness setting
  - wildlife viewing—spawning salmon, eagles, grizzly bears
  - angling for salmon, trout, steelhead—big fish, clear water and a wilderness setting create a world-class steelhead fishing experience

## **Land Uses, Tenures and Interests**

### **Access**

Most visitors reach the park via Nilkitkwa Road (unpaved Forest Service Road # 4000), which crosses the river at the park’s eastern, upstream, boundary (the “park entrance”). People can drive to the western end of the park, but cannot travel upstream. As forest management spreads

along the edges of the park, access will increase, although there will be no permanent unrestricted road access within a Special Management Zone surrounding the park.

There are no roads within the park. Foot trails reach fishing pools along the uppermost 3 km of the river. Non-guided recreational anglers gather in this region. Travel further downstream is usually by raft or kayak. The river is barely navigable by canoe. Because there is no road access to the park below the bridge, most float trips run the entire river to the confluence with the Skeena; occasionally, people fly out from the furthest fishing lodge (~50 km downstream). Angling guides and their clients travel to lodges by jet boat or helicopter. Other than the angling guides, very few people travel by jet boat due to extreme navigational challenges. Jet boats cannot travel the lower portion of the river.

### **Existing Tenures**

- three angling guides run lodges and satellite camps within the park (upper two lodges in first 12 km, third lodge about 50 km downstream); a fourth guide has no lodge
- three guide-outfitters operate within the park
- many people hold traplines within the park (15-20 listed; some lines may be inactive)

### **Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities**

- angling guide lodges and satellite camps
- primitive campsites
- trails at uppermost reaches
- some small logged patches cleared to control mountain pine beetles in the portion within the Bulkley Forest District
- derelict trapper's cabin

### **Adjacent Patterns of Land Use**

- special management zone envelops park area; no permanent unrestricted roads will run through this zone; temporary roads will be at least 300 m from the park boundary
- park crosses two forest districts (Bulkley and Kispiox)
- roads will run on both sides of the river outside the special management area, as forest development expands into the Babine watershed; not all roads will be open for public access
- Kisgegas Reserve, seasonally occupied and used for fishing and Rediscovery Camps, lies at the downstream end of the park
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans counting weir slows fish just upstream of the eastern park boundary; during salmon runs, DFO staff live at the camp at the weir
- Nilkitkwa Road crosses Babine River at park entrance; many people park for the day or overnight to fish or watch grizzly bears; logging trucks travel the road frequently when there is active logging in the watershed

## **First Nations Interests**

- asserted Gitx̱san and Ned'u'ten (Lake Babine Nation) Traditional Territory - Gitx̱san Treaty Office identified houses include Tsa Buk, Nii Kyap, Djogaslee and Miluulak Houses
- Gitx̱san have expressed an interest in co-management and adequate funding to support co-management
- Ned'u'ten (Lake Babine Nation) have expressed concern on the process of designation and ongoing consultation

Babine River and its watershed are critically important to both the Ned'u'ten and Gitx̱san peoples. Both nations have used, and continue to use, the area for sustenance, spiritual and commercial activities. The Gitx̱san have documented many culturally important sites within the park. Marked trails along both sides of the river form part of their cultural infrastructure. Historically, cultural burns modified the landscape, creating habitat for wildlife and berries. People fish for salmon from Kisgegas every year. The Ned'u'ten view all land as sacred, and see the river as the start of life, providing sustenance to their people. They trap and hunt in the park, fish in the river and operate a fish hatchery and lodge at Wud'at.

## **Other Agency Interests**

- Department of Fisheries and Oceans manages salmon populations and fisheries—the counting weir just outside the park entrance is an important tool in their activities
- BC Environment has a significant interest in fish (particularly steelhead) and wildlife (particularly grizzly bear) management within the park
- Ministry of Forests has concerns about the impacts of beetle and fire management on adjacent forests

## **Private and Public Stakeholder Interests**

- members of the Babine River LRUP Monitoring Committee (representing several organizations)
- commercial users: angling guides, guide-outfitters, rafting guides
- non-commercial users: rafters, kayakers, elite canoeists, anglers (Steelhead Society, BC Wildlife Federation, Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club, BC Federation of Fly Fishers, Trout Unlimited Canada, BC Branch, BC Federation of Drift Fishers), hunters (BC Wildlife Federation, Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club)
- trappers
- naturalists (Sierra Club, Bulkley Valley Naturalists)
- forest industry licensees
- residents of Wud'at and Kisgegas
- Gitx̱san house chiefs and house members
- Ned'u'ten hereditary chiefs and house members

## **Role of Babine River Corridor Park**

Babine River Corridor Park serves both conservation and recreation roles. The park's chief

conservation role focuses on protecting the wilderness environment of a portion of the Babine River Corridor, a major unregulated tributary of the Skeena River. Although the park is too narrow to protect extensive stands of upland forested ecosystems, it does protect an important section of sub-boreal spruce (SBSmc2) forest, a riparian forest ecosystem under-represented in the protected areas system. The park also plays a major role in conserving exceptional salmonid habitats and grizzly bear seasonal food sources and habitats

The park's recreation role is equally important as that of conservation. The park's scenic corridor provides internationally important river oriented wilderness recreation and tourism opportunities. In addition, Babine River Corridor Park contains impressive steelhead angling opportunities for regional and international visitors and the river is widely recognised as providing a superlative fishing experience. The park also has an important role, recently discovered by visitors, of providing rafting and kayaking opportunities of high quality.

Babine River Corridor Park contains the potential for a significant education role related to the presentation of First Nations cultural heritage values and the education of the public about past and present First Nations use within the river corridor. This role, of secondary importance at this

## **Management Commitments and Issues**

### **Direction from Previous Planning**

Three strategic land use plans have dealt with the Babine River Corridor Park area. The Babine River Interim Local Resource Use Plan ("LRUP"; 1994) first proposed the area as a "wilderness zone". The Kispiox and Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plans (1996, 1998) confirmed the LRUP zoning and recommended protection of the corridor in accordance with the Protected Areas Strategy. Neither Gitksan nor Ned'u'ten (Lake Babine Nation) representatives were actively involved in these planning processes.

#### Babine River Interim LRUP (1994)

- 1) *restrict motorised access*
- 2) *do not allow public roads*
- 3) *do not allow commercial harvesting, but possibly permit cutting where fire, safety, and pest management are of concern*
- 4) *minimise the impact of mountain pine beetles spreading into adjacent stands*
  - a) *use fall and burn or heli-logging to control mountain pine beetles*
  - b) *cut between November and March to minimise impacts to recreationists*
  - c) *discuss activities outside this time frame with users*
  - d) *minimise flagging and paint—remove flagging after operations and paint blazes with a dark colour*
- 5) *detail fire management in management plan*
  - a) *respond immediately to all fires (e.g. heli-tack crews, air tankers, helicopters, foam etc)*

- b) *take precautions to avoid stream contamination when retardants are used*
- c) *use the “light hand on the environment” principle to suppress large fires—include this principle as guidelines in the wilderness management plan*
- 6) *allow existing trapping*

Kispiox LRMP (1996)

- 1) *follow guidelines in the LRUP*

Bulkley LRMP (1998)

*Objectives: To maintain the wilderness quality of the high-value grizzly-bear habitat located in close proximity to the river through designation and management as a protected area. To manage according to the guidelines set out in the LRUP. Management direction:*

- 1) *include access planning within the corridor as part of the Management Plan; co-ordinate access within park with access to the entire planning unit with input from the Community Resources Board and the public as necessary; address motorised access; include motorised access users in the planning process*
- 2) *permit cutting of trees where fire, safety and pest management are concerns; use fall and burn and other measures in accordance with Park Act, preferable between November and March*
- 3) *maintain existing levels of water quality, clarity and hydrologic stability in the Babine River and its tributaries*
- 4) *maintain fish habitat*
- 5) *maintain the provincially significant angling values associated with the Babine River*
- 6) *complete Management Plan as a priority*

**Management Issues**

Babine River Corridor Park was established to protect the wilderness values of the river corridor for fish, bears and wilderness recreation. Some of these values may already be compromised by current levels of recreational use. Determining and managing the capacity of the park to accommodate recreational use will be of paramount importance.

Many issues transcend park boundaries and cover the entire watershed. Water travels to the Babine River through tributaries; fish move throughout river systems and to the ocean; grizzly bears move over large areas; watershed development impacts the wilderness experience in the park. Note that some management issues and actions listed below cover the entire Babine watershed and that many issues are inter-connected. Appendix I contains a summary of acceptable activities, uses and facilities for the park.

The following management issues require attention:

Theme	Issue
<b>Protecting ecological values: fish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sedimentation from forestry activities (particularly hauling during wet fall weather) may travel through tributaries and decrease spawning opportunities</li> <li>• rock slide may again block river (historical slide stopped all water)</li> <li>• incidental catch could endanger bull trout population (blue-listed species)</li> <li>• large bull trout spawners are vulnerable to habitat disruption and harvest following human access improvement in smaller tributaries outside park</li> <li>• individual steelhead are caught and released repeatedly with unknown mortality consequences (single capture 5% mortality); high pressure by late-season guided anglers</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting ecological values: grizzly bears</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased road access through the watershed will impact bear population</li> <li>• habitat loss in watershed may decrease bear population; bears may also spend relatively more time in the park, as good habitat becomes rarer</li> <li>• helicopters may elicit avoidance responses, particularly when seeking viewing opportunities in the course of doing forest development</li> <li>• high human use along the river displaces bears from feeding opportunities</li> <li>• bears habituate to people; some become food-conditioned and consequently suffer higher mortality (hunting, poaching, control kills)</li> <li>• impacts of human use (displacement, habituation, conditioning) may affect different classes of bears differently, with consequences to population and behaviour</li> <li>• hunting has an unknown impact on population</li> <li>• bear viewing may lead to habituation and associated risks to bears</li> <li>• due to difficulty in censusing bears, population status in watershed is unknown (currently, ~100 bears use the river seasonally)</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting ecological values: vegetation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fire and mountain pine beetles are a natural part of the ecosystem; however, both may impact adjacent forest</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting recreation values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• noise, smell and visual impacts from activities outside the park diminish the wilderness experience (e.g. road blasting, logging, helicopter flights)</li> <li>• increased sedimentation due to activities in the watershed will decrease fishing success to unacceptable levels (natural sedimentation levels are already high)</li> <li>• increasing recreational activities (commercial and non-commercial) may impact wilderness experience:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ high numbers of people camping and littering near park entrance impacts wilderness experience</li> <li>➢ number of rafters and kayakers is expanding rapidly</li> <li>➢ frequent jet-boat trips impact experience for other users</li> <li>➢ conflict over angling allocation could raise total effort to unacceptable level—currently all fishing holes at the top end are used during peak season (mid September to mid October)</li> <li>➢ major sockeye fishery (4 of past 5 years) leads to crowd of anglers camping and/or angling near the park entrance</li> <li>➢ heavy or inappropriate campsite use could degrade sites and lead to bear displacement or conditioning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Theme	Issue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased trail access (unless via permit) may lead to increased use, decreasing wilderness experience</li> <li>• current levels of access limit non-guided angling use past the top 3 km to skilled, prepared fishers</li> <li>• uncontrolled trails may widen and be used by motorised vehicles</li> <li>• increased access to the park over time as the watershed develops will lead to increased use (decreasing the wilderness experience and increasing potential for bear/human interactions)</li> <li>• inadequate waste management or fuel storage may impact river</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting cultural values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concern that First Nations communities will not benefit from park management</li> <li>• many concerns relating to watershed development, including siltation, loss of bear habitat, loss of moose habitat, changed hydrology</li> <li>• trapping and fishing are important cultural activities</li> <li>• important cultural features/resources are not identified</li> <li>• burns were used as an ecosystem management tool</li> </ul>
<b>First Nations Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake Babine Nation concerned about the process of designation and ongoing consultation</li> <li>• Gitksan desire for co-management and involvement in park operations</li> <li>• interest in ensuring aboriginal rights are respected</li> </ul>
<b>Human safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• human/bear interactions are a major concern at the park entrance; high concentration of both grizzlies (feeding on dead fish) and people (angling and camping) at the same time is potentially dangerous</li> <li>• human/bear interactions are also a concern at wilderness campsites and Grizzly Drop; camping and littering leads to habituation and food-conditioning</li> <li>• water safety is an issue: inexperienced users will underestimate the challenges of the river</li> <li>• parking on the logging road is dangerous</li> <li>• standing on the bridge is dangerous</li> </ul>

## Management Strategy

While some management issues can be dealt with directly, others will need further planning. Specifically, the complexity of bear/human issues necessitates collecting further information, and the multiplicity of interests involved in recreation activities necessitates further public involvement. Both planning activities have a high priority, but will take at least two years. Hence this Management Direction Statement provides interim actions to guide management until the plans are complete. These interim actions are subject to modification as the plans develop or as new information arises.

Notwithstanding the need for further planning, the priority for management is to protect the conservation values, notably the fish and bear populations.

A second priority is to protect wilderness recreation values in the park and permit wilderness recreation opportunities that are compatible with protecting conservation values. Maintaining, or in the case of overuse, restoring a wilderness experience will be perused in management actions or decisions relating to issues such as access, and permit approvals and renewals.

It is recognized that, given the linear nature of the park, protection of conservation and wilderness recreation values will require strong coordination with other agencies responsible for management of resources adjacent to the park and in the broader Babine River watershed.

First Nations aboriginal rights are constitutionally protected and may be exercised subject to safety and conservation concerns.

The following table describes management strategies to deal with outstanding issues raised. In addition, Appendix I contains a list of acceptable land and resource uses for this park.

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
<b>Protect the park’s fish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss sedimentation concerns with Babine LRUP Monitoring Committee; work with Ministry of Forests and BC Environment to deal with concerns</li> <li>• Develop contingency plan in the event of a slide covering access options and management; work with Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ministry of Forests and BC Environment</li> <li>• Work with BC Environment to define problems relating to bull trout conservation; seek funding to monitor by-catch if required</li> <li>• Work with BC Environment to define problems relating to steelhead conservation; investigate existing information on impacts of catch-and-release fishery; investigate risks of repeated capture; seek funding for monitoring as required</li> </ul>
<b>Protect the park’s grizzly bears</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss watershed concerns with Babine LRUP Monitoring Committee</li> <li>• Critically review development proposals in adjacent Special Management Zone to minimise impacts on grizzly bears</li> <li>• Pursue boundary expansion at the southeast end of the park to incorporate land adjacent to the DFO weir</li> <li>• Develop a Human/Bear Management Plan (see Appendix A for important considerations)</li> <li>• Interim management actions include the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review recommendations included in “Bear Hazard Evaluation at Campsites on the Babine River” (MacHutchon, 1998); implement selected recommendations</li> <li>➤ Support on-going monitoring activities</li> <li>➤ Investigate impacts of lodges</li> <li>➤ Develop and deliver guidelines on appropriate human behaviour around bears, an information package about the areas of the park with high bear use, and signage; post graphic signs showing effects of garbage on bears, listing safety precautions and educating users about the links between human safety and bear conservation at park entrance area; consider more proactive, effective education if required (e.g. video, one-on-one orientation)</li> <li>➤ Do not allow garbage to accumulate (collect daily or do not provide garbage containers); work with Ministry of Forests, BC Environment and Department of Fisheries and Oceans to develop protocols on garbage management outside park</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
	<p>entrance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work with Ministry of Forests, BC Environment and Department of Fisheries and Oceans to limit recreation use near the park entrance to the east side of the river; post explanatory signs</li> <li>➤ Do not allow camping at the park entrance; close area 30 min before dusk; post signs</li> <li>➤ Continue working with Ministry of Forests, BC Environment and Department of Fisheries and Oceans to design, develop and manage camping options outside park entrance; post signs to alternative camping options (e.g. full hook-up camping at Fort Babine Lodge)</li> <li>➤ Provide adequate enforcement and extension services (including ranger presence) from August 1 to October 31</li> <li>➤ Consider closing the top 3 km of the park to recreation from 30 min before dusk to 30 min after dawn; post signs</li> <li>➤ Consider closing the river to motorised travel from 30 min before dusk to min after dawn; post signs</li> <li>➤ Manage recreational use at Grizzly Drop; do not allow camping within 2 km; close area to hunting and fishing; request voluntary “no-fly zone”; limit stop at top of rapids to 30 min; at bottom of rapids to 10 minutes; no litter, no urinating</li> </ul>
<b>Protect park’s vegetation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Fire Management Plan in co-operation with Ministry of Forests</li> <li>• Develop Vegetation Management Plan</li> <li>• Follow LRMP direction to control mountain pine beetles</li> <li>• Use natural species mixes for rehabilitation</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain a wilderness recreation experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically review development proposals in adjacent Special Management Zone to minimise impacts on wilderness experience</li> <li>• Seek to reduce outside impacts—manage noise, visual impacts and smell to maintain wilderness and conservation values; work with Ministry of Forests to time forestry activities (helicopter flights, slash-burning, road building, harvesting, fall and burn) outside of peak recreation/bear use period (August 1 to October 31); work with Transport Canada and commercial operators to designate canyon as a “no-fly zone” or suggest voluntary height restrictions from August 1 to October 31; work with Ministry of Forests to relocate gravel pit further from the river</li> <li>• Develop Recreation Management Plan defining capacities and regulations applying to floatcraft, jetcraft, angling, camping and land access to the river (see Appendix B for list of considerations). Plan development will require stakeholder participation.</li> <li>• Interim management actions by topic include the following:</li> <li>• floatcraft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Limit number of trips to 40/year</li> <li>➤ Allow maximum of 20 commercial trips/year</li> <li>➤ Consider registration of all trips to minimise overlap and as a safety precaution; maximum one through trip/day</li> <li>➤ Initially, consider long-term historic use in the allocation of Park Use Permits</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Deliver bear information package (see above); include recommendations of safe campsites based on MacHutchon (1998)</li> <li>➤ Develop and deliver water safety package <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water motorised craft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Discourage motorised use to conserve wilderness and conservation values; investigate options for permitting or registration</li> <li>➤ Prohibit motorised use below Gail Creek due to safety considerations</li> <li>➤ Work with angling guides to decrease impacts of jetcraft to other users and to bears (e.g. regulating timing of daily trips, floating downstream, minimising noise)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• angling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work with BC Environment to examine options for managing angling use</li> </ul> </li> <li>• camping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consider designating official campsites for float trips based on MacHutchon (1998) report</li> <li>➤ Limit group size at campsites to a maximum of 15 people</li> <li>➤ Develop and deliver protocols for minimum impact camping; no wood cutting; pack out garbage; pack out poop (use toilet boxes)—except where facilities provided; use fire pans</li> <li>➤ Monitor impacts on ecology; develop baseline inventory (photo record) of designated sites; monitor campsite use (BC Parks' Backcountry Impact Monitoring)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Participate on LRUP monitoring committee and in Access Management Plans</li> <li>➤ Prohibit motorised land access to river</li> <li>➤ Limit aircraft access to maintain wilderness experience</li> <li>➤ Monitor forest development plans for roads near the park boundaries</li> </ul> </li> <li>• management of commercial facilities/activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Require Park-use-permits</li> <li>➤ Prohibit development of further commercial facilities or approval of new facility based commercial enterprises</li> <li>➤ Seek voluntary retirement of rod days on renewal or transfer of commercial guide angling licenses/permits</li> <li>➤ Discuss concerns, as they arise, with commercial guides</li> <li>➤ Follow Pollution Prevention Policy of BC Environment for fuel storage and waste management</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Protect the park's cultural heritage values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate and collate existing information on cultural heritage values; prepare Cultural Features Information Summary</li> <li>• Continue to develop consultation process with Gitxsan; discuss important resources (e.g. cultural infrastructure, wildlife habitat, berry patches, cultural burns, medicinal plants); discuss management opportunities</li> <li>• Discuss options for managing camping use near park entrance with Wud'at residents and with Ned'u'ten Nation</li> <li>• Participate in discussion of watershed development</li> <li>• Investigate opportunities for partnership/employment</li> </ul>

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
<b>First Nations' Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Rights may be exercised subject to safety and conservation concerns</li> <li>• Meet with the Gitksan and Lake Babine Nation to discuss park issues including the designation process</li> <li>• Continue to work with the Gitksan under the Gitksan --British Columbia reconciliation agreement</li> <li>• Finalize BC Parks consultation appendix as part of the Gitksan reconciliation agreement</li> <li>• Follow ministry guidelines on consultation</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure park is safe for recreational use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address human/bear safety in Human/Bear Management Plan (see Appendix A)</li> <li>• Develop and deliver bear information package (see bear conservation, above)</li> <li>• Evaluate safety of existing foot trails near park entrance; gather data on trail use by people and bears; post warning and educational signs about bears; improve or deactivate trails as necessary</li> <li>• Follow Bear-people Conflict Prevention Guidelines</li> <li>• Develop and deliver water safety package (see floatcraft, above)</li> <li>• Work with Ministry of Forests, BC Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans to develop and manage camping and day-use parking outside park boundary</li> <li>• Work with above agencies to limit recreational use to east side of river near park entrance</li> <li>• Discuss speed limits near park entrance with Ministry of Forests and forest licensees</li> <li>• Work with Ministry of Forests to prohibit parking on logging road; post signs warning of road dangers</li> <li>• Consider developing viewing platform/walkway next to road bridge if level of informal viewing becomes too high and hence dangerous</li> </ul>

## Consultation and Future Planning

Several planning processes dealing with the Babine River have been completed (Babine LRUP, Bulkley and Kispiox LRMPS); others have stalled (e.g. Babine Angling Use Plan, Kispiox Co-ordinated Access Management Plan). Stalled planning processes and perceived lack of action have led to a high level of public energy. The high public profile, increasing public use, potential for increased conflict between park users and potential for increased human/bear interactions impacting both bear conservation and human safety suggest an expeditious start to developing a human/bear management plan and recreation management plan.

BC Parks intends to complete a full management plan as a high priority in the District in a 5-10 year period.

### First Nations Involvement

BC Parks is currently developing a consultation process with the Gitksan people. Working towards collaboration will take time—to build trust, to forge relationships and to avoid negatively impacting ongoing and future negotiations. BC Parks is also meeting with the Lake Babine Nation (Ned'u'ten). Efforts should be made to involve First Nations as per Ministry

guidelines and to the extent practical. Development of the Management Plan for Babine River Corridor Park should try to involve both the Gitx̱san and the Lake Babine Nation. BC Parks will explore opportunities to work together on park management activities. Attempts to identify potential impacts of park use and management on cultural values should be made and strategies enacted to ensure impacts are mitigated or eliminated.

### **Preliminary Zoning**

The upstream section of the park (to the confluence with Nilkitkwa River) is zoned as Natural Environment, reflecting the presence of foot trails and high use of the area (Figure 3). The Babine River itself, from the park entrance to Gail Creek, is also zoned as Natural Environment due to the use of jetcraft by angling guides. Grizzly Drop is zoned Special Feature to protect bears as they fish at the rapids. The rest of the park is zoned Wilderness Recreation, reflecting its challenging access and wilderness character.

Figure 3 - Zoning Map

**Appendix I - Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities**

<b>Activity/Use/Facility</b>	<b>Acceptable Uses</b>
Aboriginal Rights	Y
Hunting	Y
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)	Y
Guide outfitting (fishing)	Y
Guide outfitting (nature tours)	M
Guide outfitting (river rafting)	Y
Cat-assisted skiing	N
Ski hills	N
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	N2
Commercial recreation (non-facility-based)	Y
Backcountry huts	N
Water control structures	N
Fish stocking and enhancement	N
Road access	N1
Off-road access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road access (motorised)	N
Off-road access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorised water access	N2
Aircraft access	N2
Fire management (suppression)	Y
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	M
Fire management (prevention)	M
Forest insect/disease control	Y
Noxious weed control	N1
Exotic insect/disease control	N1
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

## **Appendix II - Considerations for Human/Bear Management Plan**

As well as referring to the BC Parks Bear-People Conflict Prevention Plan, a plan must be developed specifically for Babine River Corridor Park. The plan must deal with reducing opportunities for conflict at the park entrance, education, enforcement, Grizzly Drop regulations, hunting and viewing.

### A. Reducing opportunities for conflict at park entrance

The first component deals with avoiding conflict between bears and people by separating use in time and space and increasing predictability of human activity. Such measures have been used successfully elsewhere. Most dangers to people and to bears exist at the park entrance—efforts should be focussed there.

- 1) Study use of park (particularly top 3 km) by bears and by people (use local knowledge held by park users and Dave Hatler's work); consider recommendations offered by MacHutchon (1998) and Hillcrest Recreation Consulting (1995)
- 2) After study and discussion, set aside certain times and/or locations for bears only, for example,
  - a) daily—consider closing areas during dawn and dusk when bears prefer to feed
  - b) seasonally—consider ending angling season early to allow for fat accumulation before denning
  - c) set aside one side of the river in certain reaches
  - d) set aside certain sand bars
- 3) Increase predictability in space and time of human use to allow bears to adjust, for example,
  - a) limit jet-boat use to certain periods of the day
  - b) allow use of certain areas only in mornings or only in afternoons.
- 4) Do not allow camping at the park entrance—close area at night
  - a) consider enforcement options
- 5) Control camping near to park entrance (if no camping is provided near park entrance, people will camp in an uncontrolled and unenforceable manner, creating bear/human conflict and diminishing the wilderness experience)
  - a) continue working with Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ministry of Forests, BC Environment and Fort Babine Enterprises to design, develop and manage camping use near park entrance, but outside park boundaries
  - b) develop Memorandum of Understanding between agencies for campsite management
  - c) post signs to alternative camping options (Forest Recreation Sites, Fort Babine Lodge)
- 6) Continue working with Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ministry of Forests, BC Environment to limit recreational use to the east side of the Babine River (bears use primarily the west side during daylight hours, though they move along the east side nocturnally, and use the entire area at times)
  - a) close trails on west side of river
  - b) post signs
- 7) Do not allow garbage to accumulate

- a) study problems around the park entrance and boat launch area
- b) consider providing bear-proof garbage containers, providing no garbage containers (and signage explaining why), and removing garbage daily
- 8) Work with DFO on contingency plan, agreeing on response to bear/human problems near to the park entrance
  - a) if BC Parks closes area (as per Bear-People Conflict Prevention Plan), discuss closing fishery above bridge with DFO
  - b) discuss options for eliminating the pool of dead fish behind the weir

### B. Education

The second component educates park users. Aggressive education has effectively reduced conflicts and bear mortality elsewhere. Focus effort at the park entrance, but also provide information on the rest of the park, especially to anyone who will be camping in the park (mostly float trips).

- 1) Develop and deliver guidelines on behaviour around bears, an information package about the areas of the park with high bear populations and signage
  - a) dangers of garbage
    - i) post graphic signs showing effects of garbage on bears
  - b) fish cleaning
    - i) study if cleaning poses problems (note the collection of dead fish collected at the fish weir)
    - ii) develop protocols and signage if necessary
  - c) hiking trails
    - i) study use by bears and people of trails near park entrance
    - ii) develop protocols (e.g. noise, minimum distance, no litter) and signage for trails
    - iii) improve trails as necessary (e.g. increase visibility)
    - iv) close or deactivate trails as necessary
  - d) collect information on areas of high bear use, develop map showing locations and pamphlet describing protocols
  - e) consider more aggressive, effective education if required (e.g. video, one-on-one orientation)
  - f) recommend safe campsites for float trips based on MacHutchon (1998)
- 2) Include safety information
  - a) post signs listing safety precautions and educating users about the links between human safety and bear conservation at park entrance
  - b) develop pamphlet for people camping in the park (primarily whitewater rafters and kayakers) listing safety precautions, for example
    - i) consider staying in groups to scout rapids
    - ii) consider requiring bear-proof food canisters
    - iii) consider providing food platforms at designated campsites
    - iv) consider packing out all waste (including human waste)
    - v) consider other recommendations as discussed in MacHutchon (1998)

### C. Enforcement

For reasons of human safety and bear conservation, a Park Ranger should be stationed at the park entrance from August 1 to October 31 each year. Aggressive, effective education will reduce the needs for enforcement.

### D. Grizzly Drop

Bears catch live fish at Grizzly Drop (and at several other side eddies and pools). This area should receive special management consideration. Only whitewater rafters and kayakers travel downstream through Grizzly Drop.

- 1) Do not allow camping
- 2) Close the area to hunting
- 3) Request a “no-fly” zone or height restriction
- 4) Do not develop land access
- 5) Limit stop at top of rapids to 30 min; at bottom of rapids to 10 min; no litter, no urinating
  - a) monitor restrictions and modify as necessary
  - b) consider signage
- 6) Consider other feeding locations in canyon for regulatory requirements as required

### E. Hunting

- 1) Manage jointly with BC Environment; regulate hunt and close areas if conservation issues arise
  - a) collect information on population to better estimate numbers and to learn about the impacts of hunting in the river corridor on the population
- 2) Close the area around Grizzly Drop to hunting (see above)
- 3) Keep the area at the park entrance closed to grizzly hunting (to Nilkitkwa Creek)
- 4) Consider hunting when developing Recreation Management Plan (e.g. new trail development will increase hunting access)

### F. Viewing

- 1) Do not market Babine River Corridor Park for bear viewing
  - a) work with BC Environment and Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture
- 2) Do not develop viewing stations in park
  - a) if informal viewing presents a hazard to bears and people, consider walkway adjacent to road bridge
- 3) Monitor situation and modify as necessary

### **Appendix III: Considerations for Recreation Management Plan**

This plan will define capacities and regulations applying to recreational use of Babine River Corridor Park. Capacities must be set to conserve the natural and cultural resources of the park and to maintain a wilderness experience. Fairly allocating recreational opportunities among the various user-groups requires public participation at professionally facilitated meetings. The Recreation Management Plan must deal with floatcraft, jetcraft, angling, camping and access.

#### A. Floatcraft

Both whitewater enthusiasts and anglers use floatcraft (rafts and kayaks). Whitewater trips (commercial and non-commercial, floating through the entire park) are largely independent of other user-groups. Floating trips by non-commercial anglers should be considered in conjunction with angling and access components of the plan.

- 1) Determine capacity
  - a) consider wilderness experience
  - b) consider camping capacity
  - c) include whitewater and angling floatcraft use
  - d) consider capacity in different sections, for example
    - i) km 0-50: whitewater and angling float trips
    - ii) km 50+: whitewater trips only
- 2) Limit the number of trips
  - a) set conservative limits initially
- 3) Consider mandatory registration of all trips as needed to control total numbers, minimise overlap and as a safety precaution
  - a) maximum one through trip/day
  - b) schedule trips to ensure campsites are available (note bottleneck at Slide Camp prevents stopovers)
  - c) deliver safety package (see Appendix A for bears, management direction statement for water)
- 4) Allocate whitewater float trips to commercial and non-commercial users
  - a) involve First Nations in discussion
  - b) allocate  $\geq 50\%$  use to non-commercial users
  - c) allocate any unused non-commercial trips to commercial users
  - d) consider dangers of unguided whitewater rafting in planning
- 5) Develop policy on how to allocate Park User Permits to commercial ventures
  - a) involve First Nations in discussion
  - b) consider long-term historic use in allocation of Park Use Permits
  - c) include criteria that favour local companies
- 6) Consider tenuring permit holders
- 7) Consider requiring that non-residents be guided

## B. Water Jetcraft

Most jetcraft use is by commercial angling guides; very few non-commercial anglers know the river well enough to overcome the navigational hazards. Jetcraft use should be considered in conjunction with river access (for example, if no foot trail pullout is developed for floatcraft, non-commercial anglers will want to use jetcraft). Impacts on bear behaviour should be investigated and considered.

- 1) Determine capacity
  - a) consider bears
    - i) displacement of wary bears
    - ii) habituation and aggressive behaviour
  - b) consider wilderness experience
  - c) consider angling guides
- 2) Limit use by, for example
  - a) requiring permits for motorised use
    - i) investigating ways to prohibit new technologies (e.g. sea-doos)
    - ii) discouraging increased non-commercial jetcraft use and prohibiting new commercial jetcraft use
    - iii) limiting # boats/commercial guide
    - iv) regulating noise levels
    - v) requiring that guides float downstream
  - b) designating non-motorised sections of the river
  - c) regulating #trips/day, time of daily trips, quiet times
    - i) hold workshop to find ways to decrease impacts to other users and to bears

## C. Angling

An Angling Use Plan for the Babine initiated by BC Environment has stalled. BC Environment does not intend to continue with this process. Recommendations for angling use have been drafted by local stakeholders (commercial and non-commercial, see Appendix C) suggesting that users can agree on allocation and stating that they would be prepared to limit capacity as necessary. Further discussion with the existing group of stakeholders will be necessary.

- 1) Work with BC Environment to examine options for managing angling use (setting capacity and allocation)
- 2) Determine capacity
  - a) consider capacity along different sections
  - b) consider bears
    - i) displacement
    - ii) habituation
  - c) consider human safety
  - d) consider wilderness experience
  - e) define wilderness experience
    - i) density (# users/km) in each section

- ii) availability of fishing locations (fishing pools/km)
  - iii) angler satisfaction with experience (River Guardian survey)
  - iv) consider relationship between density and satisfaction on other rivers
- f) develop simple model showing how various angler densities translate to use along river sections
- 3) Allocate commercial and non-commercial rod-days
- 4) Consider other regulations as necessary, for example
  - a) extending the classified season
  - b) requiring that all non-residents be guided
  - c) allocating guided rod-days by week

#### D. Camping

Most wilderness campers in the park are on whitewater float trips. The camping component of the Recreation Management Plan should require little modification from management direction provided in the Management Direction Statement.

- 1) Determine capacity and limit group size
  - a) Recognize and manage for different users (e.g. no facilities and small camping areas in whitewater portion of river; larger camping areas, possible facilities in angling portion of river)
- 2) Modify protocols for minimum impact camping as required
  - a) look at successful regulations in other wilderness parks in Canada and the US
- 3) Monitor impacts on ecology
  - a) develop management strategies to deal with campsite degradation

#### E. Access

Increased access will increase users and may decrease wilderness experience as well as impact the natural and cultural values of the park. Conversely, the status quo leads to a perception of elitism. Prior to considering any change to access, a mechanism is required to regulate river use by all users (guided and non-guided) preventing greatly increased human/bear and user-group conflict.

- 1) Prohibit motorised land access to river
- 2) Investigate developing a foot trail to river at “Beetle Blocks” (~ km 20) for pull-out
  - a) assess costs and benefits, including, for example
    - i) increasing use—increasing user conflict
    - ii) spreading out use
    - iii) impacting ecology (e.g. vegetation, bears, garbage)
    - iv) increasing human/bear interactions
    - v) increasing hunting
  - b) control trail use, by for example
    - i) education and enforcement by Ranger staff
    - ii) requiring registration of trail use

- iii) locking gates to prevent motorised use
- iv) closing area around trail to hunting
- c) consider facilities (e.g. outhouse) at trail

### Appendix IV - Zoning Description

	Natural Environment	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation
<b>Objective</b>	To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment	To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designated sites.
<b>Use Level</b>	Relatively low use but higher levels in association with nodes of activity or access	Generally low	Very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.
<b>Means of Access</b>	Mechanized (powerboats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles), non-mechanized (foot, horse, canoe, bicycle). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pickup points will be permitted.	Various; may require special access permit.	Non-mechanized; except may permit low frequency air access to designated sites; foot, canoe; horses may be permitted.
<b>Location</b>	Removed from all-weather roads but easily accessible on a day-use basis. Accessible by mechanized means such as boat or plane.	Determined by location of special resources; may be surrounded by or next to any of the other zones.	Remote; generally not visited on a day-use basis.
<b>Size of Zone</b>	Can range from small to large	Small; usually less than 2000 hectares.	Large; greater than 5,000 ha.
<b>Boundary Definition</b>	Boundaries should consider limits of activity/facility areas relative to ecosystem characteristics and features.	Area defined by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of cultural resources (adequate to afford protection).	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access. Will be designated under the <i>Park Act</i> .
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>	Walk-in/boat-in camping, power-boating, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, river rafting, horseback riding, and specialized activities.	Sightseeing, historic and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (e.g. caving, climbing).
<b>Facilities</b>	Moderately developed for user convenience. trails, walk-in, boat-in campsites, shelters; accommodation buildings may be permitted; facilities for motorized access, e.g. docks, landing strips, fuel storage	Interpretative facilities only, resources are to be protected	Minimal facility development. Limited development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment, e.g. trails, primitive campsites, etc. Some basic facilities at access nodes, e.g. dock, primitive shelter, etc.

	Natural Environment	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation
<b>Impacts on Natural Environment</b>	Area where human presence on the land is not normally visible, facility development limited to relatively small areas. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting	None; resources to be maintained unimpaired.	Natural area generally free of evidence of modern human beings. Evidence of human presence is confined to specific facility sites. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.

	Natural Environment	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation
<b>Management Guidelines</b>	Oriented to maintaining a natural environment and to providing a high quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation modes. Designation of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).	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 size, location, and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
<b>Examples of Zoning</b>	Core area in Cathedral Park; North beach in Naikoon Park	Tidepools at the Botanical Beach Site in Juan de Fuca Park; Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Wilderness Zone in Spatsizi Park.