

Cariboo District

**MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
STATEMENT**

November, 1999

for Big Creek Provincial Park



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

Ministry of Environment
Lands and Parks
BC Parks Division

Big Creek Mountains Provincial Park

Approvals Page

Forward

The Provincial Government established Big Creek (also known as South Chilcotin) Provincial Park in recognition of its outstanding wilderness recreation, ecological and cultural heritage values.

This management direction statement for Big Creek Provincial Park provides management direction until such time a more detailed management plan is prepared. Management decisions are deliberately conservative to avoid compromising important conservation and cultural heritage values that have not as yet been adequately documented.

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Big Creek Park Management Direction Statement

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of MDS

Management Direction Statements provide strategic management direction for all protected areas that do not have a full management plan. MDS do not negate the need for future, more detailed management plans. Management Direction Statements also describe protected area values management issues and concerns; management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, directional statements from other planning processes.

B. Setting and Context

Big Creek Provincial Park is a topographically diverse area with rounded alpine summits, high and mid-elevation plateaus, forested valleys and extensive wetlands. The park represents the Central Chilcotin Ranges and Chilcotin Plateau Ecosections, protecting notable vegetation values such as the plant communities found on Clukata Ridge and habitat for large mammals such as California bighorn sheep, moose, mountain goat and grizzly bears. Located in the South Chilcotin area approximately 30 km south of the community of Big Creek and 100 km southwest of Williams Lake, this park encompasses much of the headwaters of Big and Nadilla Creeks. The park contains exceptional scenery and recreational opportunities.

This 65,982 hectare park was originally part of a larger study area that BC Parks identified as having vital importance to the Protected Areas system. Later, the Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE), and subsequently, the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan (CCLUP) confirmed the importance of protected status for this area. Big Creek Provincial Park received Class A Designation through the *Park Amendment Act* on July 12, 1995.

Other protected areas in the vicinity include Ts'yl-os Park to the west with its large lakes and wilderness; Churn Creek Protected Area, to the east, with its important grassland habitat and mule deer populations; and Junction Sheep Range Park to the northeast with its provincially significant California bighorn sheep herd. The Spruce Lake Study Area, located in BC Parks' Thompson River District to the south, is currently being considered by the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan table.

II. Protected Area Values

A. Conservation

Big Creek Park protects representative features of the Chilcotin and Central Chilcotin Ranges Ecosections. The following is a list of important species found in Big Creek Park:

Map 1 Regional Context

Map 2 – Big Creek Park

Endangered, Threatened and Vulnerable Species

- Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) red list
- narrow leaved goosefoot (*Chenopodium leptophyllum* var. *oblongifolium*) - red list
- five-leaved cinquefil (*Poentilla quinquefolia*) - blue list
- California bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) - blue list
- Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) - blue list
- Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) - blue list
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) -blue list

Sensitive Species and Habitats

- moose (*Alces alces*) winter range and riparian use
- mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*)
- Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)
- small stream rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*)
- riparian areas for waterfowl and shore birds
- fur bearers
- Clukata Ridge alpine and sub-alpine plant communities, containing Altai fescue (*Festuca altaia*) grass communities at the southern extent of their range
- mule deer
- black bear

B. Recreation and Tourism

The southern area of the park contains extensive sub-alpine and alpine areas and provides a range of excellent backcountry recreation opportunities including horseback riding, hiking, hunting and wilderness camping. The diverse setting offers a number of dramatic vistas and wildlife viewing opportunities throughout the park. The area can be accessed through the extensive network of horseback and cattle trails which connect to trails outside of the park.

C. Cultural Heritage

Big Creek park overlaps with traditional use areas of the Tsilhqot'in and Sexwa'pmux (Shuswap) First Nations. The Stone and Nemiah Bands have traditionally used areas of the park for hunting and plant gathering. Several First Nation cultural heritage sites have been identified in the park.

The entire area has been used for ranching since the early 1900's.

D. Significance in the Protected Area System

Big Creek Park provides a diversity of landscapes and ecosystems from the peaks, valleys and glacial lakes in the south, across the broad expanse of the Dil Dil plateau to the low wetlands in the north.

The park is located in close proximity (within 50 km) to four other large parks and protected areas in the Chilcotin (Ts'yl-os, Junction Sheep Range, Churn Creek and Taseko). In

conjunction with the Special Resource Development Zones, these linkages provide the means for effective ecosystem management in the area.

If the Spruce Lake Study Area (currently being considered in the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan process) becomes a protected area, a strong link to the park network will be created, with protected areas on both the south and north slopes of the Southern Chilcotin Ranges.

Big Creek Park represents a significant portion of the Central Chilcotin Ranges Ecosection (CCR) and to a lesser degree, the Chilcotin Plateau Ecosection (CHP). The great variation in aspect, elevation and climate create a diverse vegetation mix. Engleman Spruce-Subalpine Fir dominates most of the upper Big Creek valley, with barren alpine tundra covering the ridges and mountain tops above 2000 meters in elevation. The surface of the Dil Dil plateau is quite barren, with mosses, lichens and sub-alpine boreal vegetation. Four different biogeoclimatic zones can be found in the park: Alpine Tundra, Montane Spruce, Engleman Spruce-Subalpine and Sub-Boreal Spruce-Pine. In addition, Big Creek Provincial Park contains:

- provincially significant wilderness recreation potential;
- has many regionally significant rivers, ridges and mountain passes;
- includes significant populations of California bighorn sheep and moose and significant habitat for grizzly bears;
- protects an undisturbed example of alpine Altai fescue (*Festuca altaia*) grassland community at the southern limit of its extent;
- regionally significant wetland complexes and associated moose habitat;
- small glaciers and a number of small lakes at a variety of elevations;
- large expanses of alpine and sub-alpine meadows and tundra;
- mostly gravelly, fine sandy soils on fluvial sediments with a thin layer of volcanic ash common at higher elevations - all soils are classified as Ortho-Eutric-Brunisols

III. Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

A. Access

There are no designated roads entering the park; however, the following rough 2-wheel-drive roads provide access to trails leading into the park:

- To the north end of the park by gravel logging roads leading south from Hanceville on highway 20;
- To the south end via a gravel logging road leading partway up Relay Creek from Carpenter Lake, northwest of Lillooet and from Spruce Lake; and,
- To the east side of the park by logging roads leading from both Gang Ranch and Riske Creek on highway 20.

B. Tenures

- Mineral Tenures:
 - MT5 and MT6 and Eagle 1 and Eagle 2 claims

- Inholdings: DL's 5029, 5030, and 5031 Lot A, Plan 4317 - owned privately at Scallon Creek and DL 8670
- License of Occupation:
 - PUP 10102 cabin sites in Bear Creek Valley, Nadilla valley and north of Nadila Lake.
 - BC Lands file 0294099 CANCELLED - Gang Cow Camp at the junction of Graveyard and Big Creek. Camp is now under Special Use Permit with the MOF
- Map reserve in Ministry of Forests favour for forest management and research - Dash Hill - CANCELLED
- Map Reserve in BC Parks favour for Clukata Ridge Ecological Reserve Proposal - CANCELLED
- Notation of Interest for trapline cabin on Big Creek; BC Lands file 5404377
- Guide Outfitting: Rush Dalziel, Darryl Buchholtz, Eric Mikkelson, Randy Saugstad, Kevan Bracewell
- Trapping Licenses:
 - TO503T001
 - TO504T005
 - TO508T007
 - TO504T099
- Grazing Permits:
 - 070359 to Joan Fisher
 - 070524 and 072199 to Guy and Clarke Savstad
 - WL1278 to Sky Ranch
 - 070522 to W. Mychaluck and A. Warner
 - WL1343 to Hans Burch
 - 070073 to John Wheatman
 - WL 1326 to Joe Hoessl
 - 071479 to Anvil Mtn. Guiding and Outfitters
 - 072563 to Chilcotin Holidays Ltd.
 - WL1186 to Mary Thompson
 - 071663 to 89 Cattle Company

C. Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- Commercial and private trail riding and hiking on extensive trail network;
- Cattle grazing throughout park;
- Hunting and fishing throughout; both private and guided;
- Occasional snowmobile use primarily in the southern half;
- Wildlife viewing throughout;
- Cabins, corrals, outbuildings and camps for guide outfitting and ranching;
- Hiking and camping; and,
- A trespass airstrip exists south of the Grant and Tosh creek junctions.

D. Adjacent Patterns of Use

- The southern boundary of the park borders the Thompson River BC Parks District; the Thompson-Okanagan Lands Region; and the Lillooet Forest District and Timber Supply

Area (TSA). A Land and Resource Management Process (LRMP) is currently underway in the Lillooet TSA.

- The park is encircled by Special Resource Development Zones (SRDZ's), including the Taseko Lake SRDZ to the north and west and South Chilcotin SRDZ to the east.
- Timber harvesting is planned around the entire park.
- Grazing exists in the park and on a number of ranches primarily north and east of the park.
- Recreation - horse outfitters, hunting, hiking and camping, primarily in the Hungry Valley, Churn Creek and Relay Creek areas.

E. First Nations Interests

- The Stone and Toosey Bands of the Ts'ilhqot'in National Government, the Sexwa'pmux (Shuswap) nation and the independent Alkali Lake Band all have overlapping Areas of Interest coinciding with the Big Creek Park.
- Archeological sites provide evidence of historic use of the area by First Nations.

F. Other Agency Interests

- The Ministry of Forests manage grazing tenures in the park - the CCLUP authorized 3457 AUMs. BC Parks works cooperatively with the Ministry of Forests on fire and pest management plans for areas adjacent to the park.
- Fish and Wildlife Branch and Habitat Protection Branch (Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks) work with BC Parks to inventory and manage wildlife.
- The Ministry of Energy and Mines manages mineral tenures in the park.

G. Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

The South Chilcotin Subregional Planning Process is currently completing a plan for the South Chilcotin SRDZ, located primarily to the east of the park. This planning table is addressing issues such as visual quality from the park, wildlife management areas, backcountry, road access, and recreation and commercial tourism. Other stakeholders with interests in the park include:

- Guide outfitters;
- Ranchers with grazing tenures;
- Mineral tenure holders within and bordering the park;
- Trappers;
- Forestry companies, with reference to accurate boundaries
- Owners of the private properties within the park;
- Commercial tourism operators; and,
- Angling guides.

IV. Role Statement

Big Creek Provincial Park protects a topographically diverse area with rounded alpine summits, high and mid-elevation plateaus, forested valleys and extensive wetlands. The park protects representative features of the Central Chilcotin Ranges and Chilcotin Plateau Ecosections, such as unique vegetation communities, headwaters of several large creeks, mountain passes, glaciers and habitat for large mammals such as California bighorn sheep, moose, mountain goat and grizzly bears. The Park offers provincially significant scenery and associated recreation opportunities, including horseback riding, hiking, hunting, and wilderness camping on a network of horse trails.

If the Spruce Lake Study Area (currently being considered in the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan process) becomes a protected area, a strong link to Big Creek Park will be created, with protected areas on both the south and north slopes of the Southern Chilcotin Ranges.

V. Management Commitments and Issues

A. Management Direction from Previous Planning Processes

The Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan (CCLUP) provides some general management direction for the new protected areas. This includes:

- The dominant ecological values should be protected and that uses, such as recreation, cattle grazing, hunting, trapping and backcountry tourism, will be allowed.
- Existing approved levels of cattle grazing (AUMs) will continue
- Mining tenures fully within the boundaries of protected areas will be extinguished.
- Protected Areas are available, in principle and where appropriate, for commercial tourism and recreation.
- No private land will be included within protected areas unless the government negotiates a mutually agreed purchase. Existing landowner use, development and access rights will be unaffected by protected areas.

The Cluckata Ridge area was proposed for an ecological reserve in 1982. The area was chosen to protect the relatively undisturbed *Altai fescue* grasslands including its outstanding diversity of alpine and subalpine plant communities and important ungulate range.

B. Management Issues

- Much of the boundary is not height of land and the park contains many incomplete watersheds making habitat management more difficult.
- Access to the park will increase and improve with the proposed road building for adjacent logging.

- Increasing unregulated use of ATV's and snowmobiles is occurring next to and within the park.
- Anticipated conflicts between commercial activities and recreational users regarding the use of existing facilities and grazing.
- Livestock grazing conflicts with the management of natural plant communities, particularly on Clukata Ridge.
- Minimizing the visual impact of adjacent harvesting.
- Possible upgrading of access to private land within the park.

VI. Management Strategy

A. Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

Objective	Strategy
Protect and maintain the park's wildlife and fish populations and their habitats with priority focused on grizzly bear, big horn sheep, moose, and mountain goat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a cooperative working relationship with FWHP regarding the management of wildlife and fish in the park - <i>BC Parks Resource Officer and Area Supervisor</i> • locate any future trails and campsites so they avoid high value grizzly habitat - <i>BC Parks Recreation and Resource Officers and Area Supervisor</i> • close the park to recreational ATV use consistent with the <i>Park Act</i> - <i>BC Parks Recreation and Resource Officers and Area Supervisor</i> • develop a snowmobile management plan - <i>BC Parks Recreation and Resource Officers and Area Supervisor</i> • Work towards maximum protection of the sensitive vegetation in the Cluckata Ridge area - <i>BC Parks Resource Officer and Area Supervisor</i>
Increase knowledge of natural, cultural and outdoor recreation values and opportunities within the protected area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish priorities for the inventory of natural, cultural and outdoor recreation values in the protected area - <i>BC Parks Planning, Recreation and Resource Officers</i> • work cooperatively with FWHP to establishing long term mapping and monitoring of moose and sheep populations - <i>BC Parks Resource Officer</i> • work with Ministry of Forests to monitor forest health problems - <i>BC Parks Resource Officer and MoF</i> • solicit community naturalist groups for volunteer services such as wardens or for data collection - <i>Parks Extension Officer and Area Supervisor</i> • Complete a fish inventory, especially for Bull trout - <i>BC Parks Resource Officer</i>

Objective	Strategy
Honour Commitments of the CCLUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put existing commercial operations under permit before evaluating additional applications - <i>BC Parks Area Supervisor and Recreation Officer</i> • issue Park Use Permits for existing tenures and commercial operations - <i>BC Parks Area Supervisor and Recreation Officer</i>
Provide information about the park to the public and government agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • post signs at access points indicating the boundaries of the park - <i>BC Parks Area Supervisor and Extension Officer</i> • Close illegal airstrip and advise local air carriers and private pilots - <i>BC Parks Area Supervisor</i> • develop an in-park handout for distribution - <i>BC Parks Extension Officer</i> • develop a web page for BC Parks web site - <i>BC Parks Extension Officer</i>
Establish and develop a relationship with the Stone and Toosey Bands and the Alkali Lake Band regarding traditional activities in the park and adjacent areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet with the Stone, Toosey Bands and the Alkali Lake Bands to gain an understanding and appreciation of their traditional use areas, cultural sites and sensitive areas as well as any values, issues and concerns they have about the park - <i>BC Parks Area Supervisor, Operations Officer and Park Planner</i>

B. Consultation and Future Planning

Planning and management of the park will conform to the intent and directions as set forth in the Provincial Protected Areas Strategy. BC Parks is accountable for planning, administration and management of the park through application of the laws, policies and regulations granted under the *Park Act*. BC Parks will coordinate with other agencies, the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan (CCLUP) implementation table, various public planning groups and First Nations in developing management plans for all of the new parks arising from the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan (CCLUP).

Big Creek Park's provincially significant resources, its relative newness to the protected area system, high levels of recreational and commercial tourism use and the anticipated increase in access due to adjacent forest development make it a high priority for a full management planning process in the next five years.

In the interim, a snowmobile management plan to minimize the impact of snowmobiles on both non-motorized recreational opportunities and sensitive wildlife populations in the park will be completed.

C. Zoning

At the present time, insufficient information is available to zone Big Creek Park. Zoning will be completed during a full management planning process.

Appendix One

Summary Table of Acceptable Uses and Facilities

The following table provides a summary of acceptable uses, activities and facilities in the protected area.

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	Y
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	Y
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	Y
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	M
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	M
Backcountry Huts	M
Water Control Structures	N1
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N
Road Access	N
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	M
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Mountain biking	Y
Motorized Water Access	N
Cat assisted skiing	N
Heli-skiing	N
Aircraft Access	M
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	M
Fire Management (prevention)	Y
Forest Insect/Disease Control	M
Noxious Weed Control	Y
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	M
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M
Removal of Wildlife for Transplants	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 Two
BC Parks Management Plan Screen