

5.0 Communications

5.1 Introduction

Managing the information that visitors to these parks receive, both prior to their trip and during their time in the park, provides an important opportunity to increase visitor enjoyment and improve the management of the parks. Information and its management can:

- Set visitor expectations and assist in planning recreational uses;
- Promote user etiquette and minimize conflict between users;
- Increase the safety and security of visitors;
- Minimize impacts on wildlife, vegetation and other park values;
- Create an awareness and appreciation of natural settings, cultural features and conservation messages; and,
- Build support for management efforts in the parks.

These three parks have a range of conservation and recreational values as well as a range of management services that can provide opportunities to deliver a number of key messages. These conservation and recreation values must be incorporated into information that is provided to both park visitors as well as to the broader public that is interested in protected area management (e.g. forest licensees, international conservation organizations etc).

5.2 Interpretation and Management Messages

A number of sections of this plan have outlined the general management concerns for this block of parks. These concerns (in no particular order) include:

- Safety of visitors to the parks (e.g. bear/human interactions on the Bowron canoe circuit and the Mitchell River, canoeist safety, winter activities – avalanches and weak ice);
- Conservation and protection of both listed (e.g. mountain caribou, grizzly bear, wolverine etc) and non-listed (moose, black bears, goats etc) species in the parks;
- Balancing natural processes in the parks with management (e.g. fire and forest health) in order to re-establish a more natural distribution of vegetation across the landscape;
- Increasing knowledge of natural processes, predator-prey ecosystems, and fish and wildlife habitats and populations (e.g. inventory and research);
- Managing human use to provide long-term wilderness recreation opportunities;
- Meeting the objectives of the land use plans that created the parks.

Considering the above management concerns, the following messages should be integrated into any public information efforts around these parks (e.g. brochures, interpretive programs, signage, presentations, guidebooks etc):

1. All activities are managed to ensure ecological integrity is unimpaired.
2. Bowron Lake Park as being unique and valuable in British Columbia's protected area system because it is one of the few large parks which is managed (original boundaries) as a no-hunting/trapping wildlife sanctuary.

3. Bowron Lake Park as a world class wilderness canoe destination.
4. The theme to be used in cultural heritage interpretation of Bowron Lake Park is “First Nations, the fur trade, guide outfitting and early efforts in grassroots conservation.”
5. All the parks contribute to protecting an extremely large (5th largest in the province), unroaded predator-prey ecosystem (e.g. undeveloped watersheds stretching from Bowron Lake all the way through Wells Gray Park). This should also stress the connectivity role of Cariboo Mountains in linking Bowron Lake Park with Wells Gray Park.
6. Proper safety and backcountry practices. In particular, messages should stress the importance of proper behaviour around bears and procedures in bear country, paddling safety and correct packing for backcountry trips, and the importance of pack-in/pack-out and self-reliance in the backcountry.
7. User etiquette. This etiquette should stress appropriate behaviour around wildlife in order to avoid habituation, direct impacts and displacement from key habitats. As well, education should focus on etiquette around other park users, including use of and sharing of cabins, replacement of firewood used in cabins, motorized boats around paddlers, noise in wilderness areas, pack-in/pack-out etc.
8. Managing expectations about access to the parks and the level of facilities provided. It will be important to provide the rationale for management services provided or not provided. For example, trails not constructed in valley bottoms in Cariboo Mountains Park because of extremely high grizzly bear hazards or no snowmobiling in Cariboo River Park because of its importance as habitat for moose in critical winter periods.
9. Encouraging use of the Bowron Lake canoe circuit in the shoulder seasons (May - June and September) for those seeking fewer encounters with other visitors.
10. The importance of the parks in providing habitat for listed species. This should include information related to the vulnerability of these species in a provincial context (e.g. the decline of mountain caribou populations across the province; Mitchell River as one of the few intact areas in the interior where grizzlies have access to large populations of spawning salmon.)
11. BC Parks is working with other agencies and stakeholders on managing insect infestations and fire in areas adjacent to commercial forests outside the park. BC Parks is working cooperatively and aggressively pursuing all options available under the *Park Act* to limit the impact of natural processes inside the park on resources outside the park.
12. Cariboo River Park is an important area for providing habitat for moose in their most critical winter periods. In addition, the value and contribution of the wetlands in this park to waterfowl and migratory birds should also be communicated through any publications or public information.
13. Managing complex predator-prey ecosystems sometimes requires intensive short term management to re-establish balance. In the case of these blocks of parks, this may mean temporarily reducing wolf populations in order to provide opportunities for the red-listed caribou populations to recover.

Objectives

- Ensure information (published and verbal) is consistent with the park’s visions, roles and the key messages outlined above.
- To work cooperatively with local and regional tourism agencies, chambers of commerce, permit holders and other non-government agencies in communicating the key messages about the parks.

- To provide accurate and appropriate information for recreational users of the parks.
- To communicate the important conservation, recreation and cultural heritage roles and values of these parks to park visitors and other interested groups or organizations interested in the parks (e.g. magazines, SHARE groups, and other agencies).

Management Using Ecological Integrity Principles: Communications

Ecological integrity is a key communication message for BC Parks within Bowron Lake, Cariboo Mountains, and Cariboo River parks. Interpretation and communications can create a broader understanding of local ecology and ecological integrity; foster appreciation of protected areas; teach responsible use of parks; and create a better understanding of the issues that affect ecosystems within the parks.

The communications strategy for these parks will focus on the parks' ecology as it relates to safety (e.g., travelling in bear country), etiquette (e.g., pack in/ pack out, no trace recreation), visitor expectations (e.g., quality of wilderness experience), and education (e.g., interpretive signage and brochures on the ecology of the area being visited).

Strategies

- Work with First Nations to develop interpretive materials relating to First Nations' historic and present use of the area.
- Use the Bowron Registration Center as the main source of information for Bowron Lake Park.
- Work with Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Chambers of Commerce and other agencies and groups which publish information to communicate the sensitivity of fish resources on Mitchell River and changes in regulations (e.g. jetboat restrictions, Class One River etc).
- Develop a pamphlet to educate paddlers on appropriate packing techniques (see Section 4.7).
- Use information kiosks at Ghost Lake and the Cariboo River bridge to communicate park values and key conservation messages.
- Encourage school groups, communities and interested individuals to research the history of these parks to increase knowledge.
- Develop interpretive materials related to how BC Parks is addressing insect infestations and fire management in the parks.
- Liaise with various conservation organizations, naturalist clubs, industry organizations (e.g. CLMA), and local government land use plan monitoring groups (e.g. Cariboo Communities Coalition) on a regular basis to discuss ongoing management issues.
- Develop self-guided interpretive trails from the Bowron Lake Campground that provide information about the conservation and cultural heritage history of the area (see 4.4 - Bowron Lake section). Consider partnering with adjacent forest licensees to discuss forestry management on areas bounding the parks.
- Develop an entrance sign at Bowron Lake that shows park boundaries, access to the lake, private services and discusses user etiquette. (see 4.4 - Bowron Lake section)
- Develop the image of Bowron Lake Park as a day-use friendly area.
- Actively promote the Bowron Lake canoe circuit in order to fill available reservation openings.

6.0 Monitoring Strategy

6.1 Introduction

Monitoring the continuing status of the health of ecosystems, wildlife and fish populations, and the levels and impacts of recreational use in these three parks is vital to ensuring the ecological integrity of the parks. As such, a proactive and well-planned monitoring strategy is key to guaranteeing that the spirit and intent of this management plan is followed.

Monitoring vegetation, insects, recreational use, fish spawning patterns and wildlife populations is not solely the responsibility of BC Parks. Many other agencies and groups either play a central role at the present time (e.g. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management) or could be partners in monitoring. Examples of new partners may include Rod and Gun Clubs, First Nations, commercial operators and permit holders, community groups, universities and colleges, naturalist clubs, paddling, hiking, skiing groups or even interested individuals.

Management Using Ecological Integrity Principles: Ecosystem Science – Research, Inventory and Monitoring

A solid understanding of ecosystem science and the ecology of protected (and surrounding) areas is a critical component of managing for ecological integrity. Management decisions for protected areas need to be based on the best and most up-to-date information possible.

Research, inventory and monitoring are tools used to gain this type of information. Knowledge gained from research creates a fuller understanding of ecosystem science and allows treatment of the causes of loss of ecological integrity, not just treatment of the symptoms. Inventories provide a snapshot of the present conditions of an ecosystem and allow future monitoring from this baseline data. Monitoring is important because it provides feedback for management actions and is essential for adaptive management.

The implementation section of this management plan identifies the priorities for researching and inventorying where there are gaps in sufficient information to make appropriate management decisions. Monitoring programs have also been identified as ways to track change and apply adaptive management strategies when limits of acceptable change are exceeded.

Objectives

- To monitor the seral stage distribution of vegetation across the parks to ensure the objective of achieving a mosaic of age classes appropriate to the Natural Disturbance Type as outlined in the *Forest Practices Code Biodiversity Guidebook*.
- To monitor the distribution and population of umbrella species, keystone species and listed species in the parks.²⁸
- To monitor the instances of bear/human conflicts across the parks.

- To monitor the impact of recreational uses on fish, wildlife and vegetation in the parks.
- To monitor patterns, levels and trends of recreational use.

Strategies

Recreational Monitoring

1. Photopoints¹

Photopoints (e.g. Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring) can be established at key points on managed and unmanaged trails (e.g. Mitchell Lake trail, Cariboo Falls trail, Hunter Lake trail, Niagara Creek trail), campsites, and rough roads (i.e. Z Road) throughout the parks. Photopoints should also be established to monitor visual landscape objectives adjacent to the parks. Photopoints should be updated once every five years.

2. Overflights

Work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada on creel counts and fish counts to determine amount of fishing pressure on lakes and rivers throughout the parks. Particular emphasis should be placed on Bowron, Ghost and Mitchell lakes, Cariboo River and the Mitchell River. An easy to complete form or card can be developed and distributed to these agencies.

3. Trail Counters

Consider using trail counters or cameras to determine human and wildlife use of key trails (e.g. Mitchell Lake/River) in the parks.

4. Ranger/Wardens/Friends of .../Park Watch

Consider using staff or other partners in monitoring use levels and patterns of use around rivers or trails. This may include a Guardian Program, Friends of Cariboo Mountains or increased Park Ranger patrols into certain areas on a regular or random basis to determine use patterns in a statistically significant manner.

5. Surveys/Self registration

User satisfaction surveys, self-administered backcountry surveys and self registration can be implemented to determine use of areas, user conflicts, satisfaction levels and management issues. Ghost Lake may be an ideal location for a trial of this program.

6. Hosts

Consider using hosts or other BC Parks sponsored presence at the Ghost Lake campsite to determine use levels.

7. Commercial Operators

Work with commercial operators to develop and implement a simple, user-friendly method for reporting on numbers and activities of other users they encounter.

¹ **Photopoints** are areas where photographs are consistently taken. They can be used to monitor and track and communicate visible changes over time.

8. Park Watch

Encourage a Park Watch program, similar to the Wilderness Watch program, in the backcountry of these parks.

Conservation Monitoring

1. Overflights/Annual Counts

Work with other agencies to determine census areas in the parks and regular (e.g 1 - 3 years) census intervals for monitoring moose, goats, wolves, mountain caribou and other species in the parks (see 3 below).

2. Cameras

Consider using cameras to monitor bear and other wildlife populations. This may be particularly useful in remote areas like the Mitchell River spawning pools and the Upper Bowron River.

3. Identify Keystone or Umbrella Species

Identify a number of keystone and umbrella species to focus monitoring on. These may include bull trout and salmon for fish, grizzly bears and caribou for large mammals, and loons for waterfowl. Monitoring should focus on the long term population trends of these animals.

4. Forest Health Monitoring

Working in association with the Ministry of Forests, complete annual aerial survey of bark beetle and defoliator populations.

5. Commercial Operators

Work with commercial operators to develop and implement a simple, user-friendly method for reporting on animals encountered and animal behavior observed. Commercial operators can play a key role in monitoring, enforcement and inventory. These roles need to be better defined and discussed.

6. Creel Surveys

Use creel counts to monitor fish populations and catch levels.

6.2 Role of the Advisory Group

BC Parks acknowledges the important role of the Advisory Group in helping to determine the long-term vision for these parks and providing the strategies of how the vision can be implemented.

The Advisory Group (AG), which was formed through the management planning process, will continue to have a role in providing direction for the management of this block of parks. The AG will be invited to meet yearly to discuss ongoing implementation of the plan, information needs and results of monitoring.

BC Parks will keep a mailing list of AG members. In the interest of cost and efficiencies, members who are not participating may be deleted from the list over time. A letter asking if the person is still interested in receiving information will be sent prior to that person being removed from the list.

New members may be added to the AG list.

6.3 Adaptive Management

The concept of "**learning by doing**" or "**adaptive management**" has become widely accepted in resource management and environmental planning. Adaptive management is generally thought of as being flexible, encouraging public input, and uses extensive monitoring to look at the results of actions in order to adjust plans and try new approaches. Adaptive management essentially involves a three-stage process of planning, action, and monitoring.

For the purposes of the Bowron Lake, Cariboo Mountains and Cariboo River provincial parks Management Plan, adaptive management will be balanced with a need to provide long-term direction on management of the parks.

The plan has a life of ten years after which a formal public review will be undertaken of the vision, purpose, roles and zoning. In the interim however, adaptive management will be applied to areas such as recreation management (user numbers and use levels), wildlife management and vegetation management (e.g. fire and beetle management strategies). Commercial recreation strategies, for example, may change over time. The plan should be able to adapt and use new guidelines as they are developed.

Park managers will work to adjust strategies in response to new information collected through monitoring and public feedback (e.g. surveys). It is anticipated that the Advisory Group will have an ongoing role in both the collection of data and in making recommendations on decision making and change management.

⁴ Major work includes new development such as trails, campsites and boat launches. Minor is defined as maintenance to existing facilities and roads, repairs to septic systems, installing signposts, fire rings, bear caches etc.

7.0 Plan Implementation

Implementation of strategies in this management plan depends upon the availability of staff and resources within BC Parks, other agencies with a management role, First Nations and the enthusiasm and support of the public. Approval of this management plan does not constitute automatic approval of funding for implementation or individual tasks.

Timeframe indicates when a strategy should be initiated. An asterix (*) means the strategy is ongoing. The reference to the different program indicates the BC Parks program with a lead responsibility for ensuring an action is initiated. This section should be used by the Advisory Group to monitor the effectiveness of plan implementation and should also be used as the primary tool by BC Parks staff when completing Annual Management Plans (AMPs) for the parks.

7.1 Immediate (1-2 years)

- Authorize, by Park Use Permit, the continuation of pre-existing uses, including trapping, heli-hiking, heli-skiing, angle guiding, guide outfitting, horse tours, wildlife viewing and recreational guiding. Permits should be issued only for those activities that existed prior to June 1994 in Cariboo Mountains and Cariboo River Park and June 2000 for the additions to Bowron Lake Park.
- Require Fisheries and Oceans Canada to acquire a permit for the dam at Mitchell Lake.
- Work with Ministry of Forests to ensure logged blocks inside parks are free growing and roads are appropriately deactivated.*
- Ensure long-term monitoring of wildlife populations inside the parks and coordinate this monitoring with areas outside and adjacent to the parks.
- Recommend that Hunter Lake be closed to fishing from November 1 until May 1.
- Archaeological Impact Assessments required for all major developments, but not minor ones.^{4*}
- Close the yearly trapping opportunity in the Betty Wendle addition to Bowron Lake Park.
- Require permit holders to clean camps and remove structures which are dilapidated or no longer required.*
- Strictly enforce all bear management guidelines (e.g. use of bear caches, food storage and handling etc) *
- Work with licensees and agencies to ensure development around the park values is sensitive to park values. *
- Protect the integrity of gravesites and graveyards in the parks.*
- Work with the Coast Guard to prohibit the operation of personal watercraft on Bowron Lake.
- Educate park users about bear hazards and safe behavior in bear country.
- Use signage to prohibit the launching of personal watercraft on Bowron Lake
- Sign the end of the wetland where the Bowron River enters Bowron Lake with a notice that the lake is multi-use and motorboats can be expected. Include this message in the Registration Center video.

- Develop a Code of Ethics for motorboats in cooperation with Coast Guard and inform motorboaters.
- Educate canoe circuit users about firewood conservation and etiquette of cabin use.
- Sign Bowron Lake closed to snowmobiling (with the exception of local landowners, who require a permit to ride on the lake to their property).
- Use signage to ensure snowmobilers are aware of which areas are open and closed to snowmobiling.
- Develop and publish a pamphlet informing canoe circuit visitors about safe packing, appropriate equipment for the trip, and how to store and pack food to reduce possibilities of conflicts with wildlife.
- Liaise with various conservation organizations, naturalist clubs, citizen groups (e.g. SHARE), industry organizations (e.g. CLMA) and local government land use plan monitoring groups (e.g. Cariboo Communities Coalition) on a regular basis to discuss ongoing management issues.*
- Work with Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Chambers of Commerce, and other agencies and groups which publish information to communicate the plan, its objectives and any changes in regulations (e.g. jetboat restrictions on the Mitchell River). *
- Use shelters at Ghost Lake and the Cariboo River bridge to communicate park values and key conservation messages.*
- Provide information to winter users about potential hazards.
- Monitor use and conflicts of motorized watercraft on Bowron Lake.
- Consider developing a small day use area adjacent to the Registration Center on the shore of Bowron Lake, using the existing parking lot at the Registration Center. A small dock should be constructed as part of the site.

7.2 Short Term (3 - 5 years)

- Develop a long-term management plan for wildlife in conjunction with the Ministry of Forests, forest licensees, recreation groups, guides and First Nations. This should include habitat prescriptions, understanding predator-prey ecosystems, connectivity corridors, mapping wildlife ranges, distribution, habitats and movement patterns.
- Prepare a fisheries management plan for the lower Mitchell River and Bowron Lake. In the interim, the recommendations in section 4.2 – Wildlife and Fish, should be followed.
- Undertake research on spawning locations and life history of bull trout.
- Increase understanding of the Isaac Lake rainbow trout populations.
- Investigate, in partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the effectiveness and future of the water control structure at the outflow of Mitchell Lake.
- Update fisheries inventory throughout Bowron Lake Park according to formalized RIC standards.
- Increase understanding of public angler effort and use, focusing on Mitchell Lake, Ghost Lake, Cariboo River and the lower Mitchell River.
- Consider establishing day use trails to Sugarloaf Mountain and Devils Club Mountain.
- Work with the BC Floatplane Association and Thompson Region, Environmental Stewardship Division, to develop access guidelines for floatplane use on Twin Lakes.

- Develop a day use area at Bowron Lake adjacent to the canoe dock.
- Develop an entrance sign/information kiosk at Bowron Lake that shows park boundaries, access to the lake, private services and discusses user etiquette.
- Develop the image of Bowron Lake Park as a day-use friendly area.
- Provide education to large groups of hikers to minimize impacts and human-wildlife conflicts, and encourage smaller groups of hikers.
- Develop a Code of Ethics for motorboats on Bowron Lake in cooperation with Coast Guard and inform motorboaters.
- Encourage school groups, communities and interested individuals to research the history of these parks to increase knowledge.
- Develop interpretive materials on how BC Parks is addressing insect infestations and fire management in the parks.
- Develop educational materials for wildlife viewing including ethics, especially when animals are vulnerable to stress or intrusion.
- Work with other agencies, organizations, and universities to develop partnerships to increase knowledge of heritage values.
- Establish a Committee that meets annually to discuss communication, information needs and management issues around Bowron Lake.
- Undertake a photo-inventory of all known structures in the parks and classify structures in the parks as Type A, B or C.
- Replace elevated bear caches with ground level, box style bear caches.
- Place bear caches at both ends of portage trails
- Encourage the use of new technology canoe carts using wide, low impact tires.
- Complete a survey addressing public perceptions of management issues on Bowron Lake.

7.3 Long Term (6 - 10 years)

- Consider purchasing or entering into a private/public partnership for use of the private property at the outflow of the Bowron River and the beach at the tail of the lake to improve public access, use and enjoyment of Bowron Lake.
- Complete, in partnership with the BC Snowmobile Federation, local snowmobile clubs (Quesnel, McBride, Valemount, Wells) and other affected government agencies, a feasibility study on the snowmobile route through the Wolverine.
- Over the medium term or as demand warrants, upgrade the Ghost Lake campsite and install a boat launch.
- Over the medium to long term or as demand warrants, develop a day use area, boat launch and interpretive site at the bridge crossing the Cariboo River in Cariboo River Park.

- Assess conditions and monitor the effects of horse use and regulate it as necessary. Trails may be closed during certain conditions (extended periods of rain, late thaws, etc.)*
- Monitor impacts of recreational uses (hiking, horse use, mountain bikes etc) and undertake management actions if necessary.*
- Monitor the perceptions and satisfaction levels of park visitors on a regular basis.
- Complete a Cultural Overview Assessment (COA) of Bowron Lake canoe circuit.
- Undertake forage assessments in frequently used areas
- Work with First Nations and museums, organizations and agencies (e.g. universities, Barkerville Historic Town) to develop interpretive materials.
- Work with First Nations to develop interpretive materials on First Nations' use of the area.
- Use ongoing Advisory Group mailing list as a way to update user groups on park management.
- Develop self-guided interpretive trails from the Bowron Lake Campground that provide information about the conservation and cultural heritage history of the area (see *Bowron Lake* section). Consider partnering with adjacent forest licensees to discuss forestry management on areas bounding the parks.

- Provide interpretive materials to inform visitors about the history of the public cabins in the park.

¹²⁸ **Keystone Species** – Species that have a crucial role in supporting the integrity of the entire ecosystem and that by their effective disappearance from the system result (directly or indirectly) in the virtual disappearance of other species (e.g. salmon). **Umbrella species** -A species whose habitat encompasses the habitat needed by a large number of other species. Grizzly bears, for example, can be viewed as an umbrella species because of their broad ecological niche.