

Appendix D

SUMMARY / ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR BUGABOO PROVINCIAL PARK and HEIGHT OF THE ROCKIES / ELK LAKES PROVINCIAL PARKS

In an effort to produce the best management plan possible for Bugaboos, Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes Provincial Parks that addresses the needs of the general public, a major public consultation process was included in the planning process. This is standard policy of BC parks which is also consistent with the management direction for the planning of new protected areas established through the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS).

Public Process

The planning process had two stages of public involvement; firstly, working draft plans for both parks were prepared and mailed to various key interest groups in early November 1997 for review. From the comments generated the plan was revised and presented to the general public through a series of open houses.

Secondly, open houses were held in December at communities in close proximity to the parks, including Golden, Invermere, Cranbrook, and Sparwood. Displays with photographs and maps were used by park staff to explain the draft management plan to the public. About 120 people in total attended the meetings. A one month period was set aside to receive letters and comment sheets. Written submissions were received from a wide spectrum of park users. For Bugaboo Park eleven written submissions were received, while Height of the Rockies/Elk Lakes received seventeen.

General Public Comments

A number of people voiced their appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the management plan. It has been nearly ten years since there has been public consultation for planning in the region. As many people were not very familiar with park planning concepts such as zoning or as familiar with some of the management strategies resulting from the KBLUP - IS such as recognition of existing tenures, many of the comments on the draft management plans reflected a need for clarification of these pre-determined conditions.

The following are the main comments provided by the public consultation process relating to the management issues for each park. These comments are not all inclusive. They do not include the numerous editorial comments or questions of clarification. In most cases these changes were incorporated in the revised plan and/or further explanation given for clarity. Also provided in the summary is a brief response and what the plan was recommending.

Specific Public Comments for Bugaboo Provincial Park Draft Management Plan

Issue: Park Role, Vision, Zoning

As Bugaboo Park is relatively large and has some outstanding natural features, there was a feeling that it should be managed as a wilderness area and that the park zoning should reflect this.

Response: The definition of Wilderness in the BC Parks Zoning Policy precludes the park from being zoned wilderness. Types and levels of use in the park exceed what is expected in wilderness areas. The concentration of climbers in the southern part of the park and the distribution of heli-hikers and heli-skiing throughout the rest of the core areas are key limiting factors.

Plan Recommendation: With the exception of zoning the riparian habitat in the valley bottoms of Vowell and Malloy Creeks as Special Features Zones, and a small Intensive Recreation Zone covering the main park road and parking lot, the rest of the park is zoned natural environment to reflect the requirements to manage backcountry recreation uses and their impacts.

Issue: Reduce and or Eliminate Air Access to the Park

Air access is viewed by many, especially non-resident visitors, as unique and necessary for their enjoyment of the park, while others believe the impacts on solitude and wildlife are too severe and should be discontinued.

Response: Air access is a pre-existing use that began several years before the park was designated and it was recognized as important to continue in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan.

Plan Recommendation: To continue to allow air access, but within definable limits that would seek to reduce impacts. Mitigate impacts of helicopter activity on visitors by establishing flight paths and landing sites away from areas of concentrated visitor activity. Development of a backcountry management plan would also help to reduce impact on other users by establishing mechanisms where backcountry recreation could be coordinated between commercial and non-commercial users to avoid conflict.

Issue: Overcrowded Climbing/Poor Climbing Ethics

Most agree that the Conrad Kain Hut is at its maximum capacity for use, but the perception of overcrowding on the climbing routes varies. Many people have expressed concerns about debris left at the base of climbs and unregulated bolting of new climbing routes. Bolting of climbing routes is a benefit to many climbers who appreciate the convenience and added safety of the bolts while others believe it takes away from the natural climbing experience.

Response: Overcrowding does occur at the most popular routes during peak times, as evidenced by line-ups, but there appears to be a lack of awareness of the numerous other routes in the park. There are ample opportunities to meet the climbing needs and aspirations of visitors. A balance needs to be achieved to ensure a variety of opportunities is available.

Plan Recommendation: Develop with the climbing community a climbing management plan that seeks to better balance and manage this world class climbing resource.

Issue: Develop more trails and provide camping at the trailhead

Several people suggested expanding facilities in the park, with specific proposals for camping at the trailhead.

Response: While some people do overnight in their vehicles at the trailhead, there is insufficient room to develop a campground at this location. A Forest Service Campground just outside the park boundary already provides overnight accommodation.

Plan Recommendation: The trailhead and road access will be improved but no camping facilities are proposed at the trailhead. Other hiking opportunities will be explored but no new trails are being proposed at this time.

Issue: Minimizing Impact from Adjacent Areas

The harvesting of resources adjacent to the park boundaries was brought forward as a major concern that needed to be brought to the attention of other governing agencies with the objective of ensuring that impact on park values is minimized. The impact of logging will affect both wildlife values and the visual integrity of the park.

Response: While adjacency issues are outside BC Parks statutory authority, all participants in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan recognized the need to work in a cooperative manner to ensure the land use plan is implemented to the optimum benefit of the public.

Plan Recommendation: Provide advice to the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees to help ensure, through the Forest Development Plan Review Process, that areas outside the park boundary are managed in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* to protect views.

Specific Public Comments for the Height of the Rockies / Elk Lakes Management Plan

Issue: Role, Vision Zone

Public opinion generally varied between having these parks developed and managed for increased recreational use and keeping these areas primitive and wild. The fundamental issue which would define the recreation role and affect the vision for the park was whether wilderness recreation zoning would be the dominant zoning of the park.

Response: The BC Parks Zoning Policy considers many factors in the selecting of zones, including existing uses and proposed management. A number of existing tenures; e.g., guide-outfitting, are required to be continued as a result of the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy. These uses, including hunting, preclude applying the wilderness conservation zone.

Plan Recommendation: Three zones have been established - special features, natural environment and wilderness recreation. The latter covers 98.5% of the park.

Issue: Long Term Management of Wildlife Values

There was great concern expressed for a comprehensive strategy to manage wildlife for their long term sustainability. Mountain goats were of particular concern. The lack of good inventory and understanding of what needs to be done to accomplish this was emphasized, along with the need to do extensive monitoring of impacts.

Response: BC Parks is in full agreement with these comments.

Plan Recommendation: Develop a separate wildlife management plan for mountain goats including determining the requirements for sustaining viable populations.

Issue: Adjacent Land Management

It is important to coordinate park management planning with land use planning outside the park. Currently there are plans to harvest the forests adjacent to the park as well as tenured coal resources which could be extracted at sometime in the future although there are no current exploration or development proposals.

Response: While adjacency issues are outside the statutory authority of BC Parks, all participants in the Kootenay and Boundary Land Use Plan recognized the need to work in a cooperative manner to ensure the land use plan is implemented to the optimum benefit of the public.

Plan Recommendation: Participate in coordinated management planning to address the impact on park values of industrial activities in adjacent resource management zones. Provide advice to the Ministry of Forests and forest licensees to help ensure, through the Forest Development Plan Review Process, that areas outside the park boundary are managed in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia* to protect viewscapes. Work with the Ministry of Employment and Investment and BC Environment to ensure adequate research and assessment to

minimize the impact on park values in the event that coal resources are extracted in proximity to the park.

Issue: Stocking of Lakes

Some people felt that it is inappropriate to be artificially stocking lakes in a wilderness area

Response: Most of the lakes in these parks are not natural fisheries. Prior to park designation they had been repeatedly stocked for decades and some are popular destinations for anglers.

Plan Recommendation: Assess the stocking of lakes in the parks in concert with BC Environment to determine which lakes should continue to be stocked. In the interim continue to stock Upper and Lower Aosta Lakes, Deep Lake, Driftwood Lake, Duck Lake, Frozen Lake, Riverside Lake and Monument Lake.

Issue: Snowmobile Use

Snowmobilers want to continue to use Abruzzi Creek while some people believe that they are having an impact on wildlife and certainly wilderness solitude values.

Response: While the impact of snowmobiles has been documented for other jurisdictions the impacts can vary with site conditions. The impacts of this activity have not been assessed for these parks.

Plan Recommendation: Continue snowmobiling in Abruzzi Creek, but monitor and assess the impact of continuing snowmobile and mountain bike use in the Abruzzi Creek corridor (seismic road), through the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process Policy, including an impact assessment of these uses on wildlife values.

Issue: Expand trails and camping facilities

Some people felt that more trails and campsites should be built.

Response: These parks are wilderness areas that currently experience very low use. Expanding facilities is neither justified nor desirable at this time. Increasing the man made elements in these parks reduces the quality of the wilderness experience and impacts natural values such as wildlife.

Plan Recommendation: Retain the existing level of facilities