

## **5.0 OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This section describes the range of recreational activities that currently take place in Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks, as well as the objectives and strategies for managing these activities in the future. *Appendix D* contains a Summary of Park Activities.

### **5.2 Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**

Marble Range and Edge Hills Provincial Parks provide attractive settings for a variety of opportunities for low-impact, dispersed, non-motorized outdoor recreation and nature appreciation. A number of natural attributes add to the attractiveness of these parks for visitors, including:

- natural beauty and tranquillity;
- spectacular views;
- unusual geological formations;
- variety in terrain, flora and fauna;
- wildlife viewing opportunities.

Recreational activities must be managed in these relatively small parks so that they are consistent with the vision and roles for these parks; are compatible with wilderness recreation zoning; are not detrimental to the natural and cultural values; and are consistent with visitor expectations.

Recreational activities inventoried to date include horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, sightseeing, nature appreciation and technical rock climbing. Commercial activities include recreational and hunting guiding. A variety of campground facilities exist in the vicinity of these parks that are managed by BC Parks, Ministry of Forests and private commercial operators (in association with guest ranch facilities).

Because of the proximity to the Cariboo Wagon Road, the general area was likely used for staging and hunting early in the province's history. Early ranching settlement followed, and local recreational use developed over time. There is a strong local affiliation with the wilderness nature of these parks, and with the opportunities the parks provide for hunting, horseback riding, hiking, wildlife viewing and nature appreciation. Historically, horses have played a large role in park access and enjoyment, and a significant amount of horse use can be expected to continue.



**Plate 5: Many trails follow alpine ridges**

Since both public and commercial recreation activities are established uses within these parks, it is important to balance these uses to ensure fairness of access, and to protect natural values which contribute to the recreation experience. Commercial uses will not take precedence over or displace public enjoyment of these parks.

A number of unmarked and unmapped trails and routes used by local residents and guides crisscross the parks. Very few trails are maintained in any way. People hiking or riding in the parks use this informal network of routes.

The bunchgrass-sage-cactus vegetation types in Edge Hills are generally more sensitive than vegetation types in the Marble Range, making this area more susceptible to use damage. This sensitivity and the higher fire hazard on the dryer sites in Edge Hills, provide a lower carrying capacity for recreation use than in the Marble Range.

Marble Range Park has a number of known caves. There is evidence to suggest that caves are used by wildlife (mineral licks, water, cover, dens), and the integrity of caves for such wildlife use should be maintained.

Concerns exist with respect to the ability of the informal trail network to sustain increased levels of use that could develop as a result of park designation. This concern is based on the general sensitivity of the ecosystems of the area to recover from disturbances. There is also concern about the potential conflicts between trail users, including hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers.

## **Outdoor Recreation Objectives**

The following broad outdoor recreation objectives are intended to provide direction to the range of public and commercial recreation activities that will take place in Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks. Activity-specific objectives and management strategies follow in this section.

- To maintain the remote, roadless, non-motorized wilderness qualities of the parks while allowing for a range of compatible, low-impact, public and commercial recreation uses.
- To ensure public access to these parks is not pre-empted by commercial recreation activities.
- To provide recreation opportunities that include wildlife viewing, nature appreciation, photography, hiking, hunting, backpacking, horseback riding and appreciation of cultural heritage values.
- To ensure that recreation activities are managed and monitored for their potential impacts on natural and cultural values within the parks, particularly on wildlife ranges and populations.
- To honor existing uses (uses present at the time of park designation), as specified in the CCLUP.
- To enhance visitor awareness and appreciation of the natural and cultural values of the parks, wildlife etiquette and user safety.
- To manage park use activities to minimize conflicts between various uses.
- To ensure that recreation information, development and use are compatible with conservation values and outdoor recreation features.

### **5.2.1 Primitive Camping**

#### **Objectives**

- To offer a primitive backcountry camping opportunity in a wilderness setting, while protecting the natural environment from possible deterioration as a result of camping use.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Provide continued opportunities for wilderness-type hiking/camping experiences that these parks offer.
- ◆ Identify environmentally sensitive sites where overnight use will not take place.
- ◆ Enforce a pack-in/pack-out policy.

- ◆ Monitor use levels and impacts over time and take remedial actions as required to protect park values (for example, closing camping areas or establishing minimum facilities).

### ***5.2.2 Recreational Horseback Riding***

#### **Objectives**

- To manage recreational horse use to minimize impacts on the natural environment, and minimize conflicts with wildlife habitat and between users.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Provide for horseback riding opportunities, particularly for hunting and pleasure.
- ◆ Where feed for horses is required, require that weed-free, pellet feed be packed in. This is necessary because forage for horses is low and in direct competition with cattle and wildlife use in these small parks.
- ◆ Monitor use by recreational horseback riding groups; the potential exists for small group excursions, but such use should be monitored with a view to limiting the number of horses per group and/or the number of groups per season of use.

### ***5.2.3 Mountain Biking***

#### **Objectives**

- To provide opportunities for mountain biking on roads and low elevation trails so that there is minimal impact from erosion and also so conflicts with other users are kept to a minimum.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Restrict mountain bike use to existing roads and designated areas (for example, Kelly Creek), and monitor for impacts. Adjust use levels or areas of use based on impacts over time.

### ***5.2.4 Hiking and Backpacking***

#### **Objectives**

- To ensure the continued use of these parks for non-motorized public recreation.
- To offer a primitive, informal backcountry trail network for high-quality hiking and backpacking experiences in a wilderness setting, while protecting the natural environment from possible deterioration as a result of these activities.

## **Strategies**

- ◆ Permit public recreation opportunities that are non-motorized, including hiking, backpacking and cross-country skiing.
- ◆ Work directly with Ministry of Forests staff to manage trail routes into the parks.
- ◆ Enforce a pack-in/pack-out policy.
- ◆ Trail maintenance requirements will be based on the ability of the trail to withstand use and recover from disturbance. Wherever possible, natural routes will be used and trail development will be avoided.
- ◆ Formal trail maintenance procedures will only be undertaken for environmental reasons.
- ◆ Ensure that all park information specifies the undeveloped nature of these parks so that conflicting expectations are avoided.

### **5.2.5 Caving**

#### **Objectives**

- To protect the integrity of the limestone cave formations in the parks in a manner that ensures their future sustainability.
- To maintain the cultural values and uses of caves for aboriginal people, recognizing the relative uniqueness of historic cave use within the park system.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Maintain the integrity of cave features used by wildlife.
- ◆ Discourage the public awareness and use of cave features by not publishing or promoting cave locations or interest value.
- ◆ Prohibit the use of caves for commercial recreation.

### **5.2.6 Camping and Day Use**

#### **Objectives**

- To maintain the park in its current natural state.
- To utilize existing recreation facility infrastructure in surrounding areas.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Prohibit the development of vehicle access camping and day use facilities within park boundaries, except as provided for in the management plan with respect to (1) viewpoints and (2) intensive recreation zones that may be required at a future date to accommodate previously developed areas, such as Pear Lake and Downing Park .

- ◆ Direct visitors to utilize the variety of campground and day use facilities that exist in the vicinity of these parks, managed by BC Parks, Ministry of Forests and private operators.
- ◆ Monitor day use to determine future requirements for day use or parking facilities at trailheads and key access points outside the park boundaries.
- ◆ Work with the Ministry of Forests to coordinate recreation facility planning on adjacent Crown lands.

### ***5.2.7 Non-Commercial Summer or Winter Motorized Use***

#### **Objectives**

- To maintain the low-impact, roadless, remote character of these parks.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Prohibit motorized use in the parks, except for park management and public safety purposes, and on public access roads as specified by the management plan.

### ***5.2.8 Recreational Guiding***

#### **Objectives**

- To place under park use permit all recreational guides operating in these parks at the time of designation of the CCLUP.
- To determine levels of use and management practices for guiding activities that are consistent with park objectives and protect natural values.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Authorize, by park use permit, pre-existing guide outfitting and backcountry recreation operations at their historic levels of use. Work with individual permit holders to set guidelines for use.
- ◆ Require all commercial backcountry permit holders to develop a business plan that is compatible with this management plan, and that can be updated and approved on a periodic basis consistent with the park use permit process.
- ◆ Monitor levels of backcountry use. Determine the potential for future commercial recreation operations by examining recreational impacts and the potential for adding one or more commercial operations over time. Work with individual permit holders to set quotas and guidelines for use.
- ◆ Monitor the effects of commercial backcountry use on the environment and visitor experiences, and adjust park use permits where the need is demonstrated to control environmental impacts from concentrated visitor use.

- ◆ Prohibit commercial backcountry camp areas with permanent structures or facilities and promote wilderness-type camps.
- ◆ Enforce a pack-in/pack-out policy and require that wilderness-type toilet facilities will be employed.
- ◆ Restrict the commercial use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) in these parks, including the use of snowmobiles, to specified uses by approved tenure holders and for park operation purposes.

### **5.2.9 Trail Use and Maintenance**

#### **Objectives**

- To maintain the informal nature of the trail network within the park, thereby minimizing the impacts of use on any particular trail route.
- To balance commercial and public trail use.

#### **Strategies**

- ◆ Prepare a trail inventory and trail management plan that can be used as a decision-making tool for managing public trail use, and for authorizing park use permits for commercial use of trails.
- ◆ Specify management activities and use levels for commercial horse use within park use permits that include:
  - authorized pre-existing levels of commercial horse use for each permit holder;
  - requirements for packing in weed-free, pellet feed for horses;
  - specifications for locating any permanent support facilities, such as corrals or loading/unloading facilities, outside of park boundaries;
  - a requirement to limit commercial horse use to designated trails and day trips, to the greatest extent possible;
  - mechanisms for monitoring the impacts of commercial horse use the trail infrastructure.
- ◆ Require all commercial trail development to be specified in park use permits, with commercial users being responsible under permit for the maintenance of the trails they use. Commercial trail maintenance should be aimed at maintaining minimum necessary standards and locations.
- ◆ Ensure that all trails used or maintained by commercial operators are also open to the public.

## **5.3 Aesthetic Values**

Aesthetic values relate to the scenery inside and around the parks, water and air quality, and opportunities for solitude and quietness.

Scenery in and around Marble Range and Edge Hills is fundamental to the visitor's experience. Mountain vistas, limestone formations, treed slopes and grasslands all contribute to the scenery. Park visitors can also view areas outside of the park boundaries from some locations. Development in the area adjacent to the parks can affect the viewscape and the visitor experience.

The CCLUP recognizes that resource development activities will occur on adjacent lands. Some park boundaries were drawn to explicitly exclude mineral claims. The SRDZ that surrounds the parks is intended to recognize, in part, the sensitive nature of the parks and the potential impacts of resource development approvals on aesthetic values.

### **Objectives**

- To retain aesthetic features within the parks so that the visual, water, and air qualities and wilderness atmosphere of the park, are protected.

### **Strategies**

- ◆ Work within sub-regional land use planning processes for surrounding lands, and with other agencies to protect values in the parks and adjacent to park boundaries. This includes minimizing impacts on scenic values, water and air quality and of noise through activities such as logging, mine infrastructure and gravel pits. Focus on areas with important scenic and recreation values.
- ◆ Work with the mining industry and the Ministry of Employment and Investment to mitigate the impacts of mineral exploration and development in areas adjacent to the parks.
- ◆ Locate and design all park structures in harmony with the visual setting and the characters of the surrounding natural landscapes.
- ◆ Work with local communities in the planning of park facilities so that they are in keeping with the character of the area and blend with the natural setting.
- ◆ Work with other agencies to develop a visual landscape plan for lands outside the parks.

## **5.4 Access Management**

Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks are located west of the Village of Clinton on Highway 97, approximately 170 kilometers south of Williams Lake.

Numbered highways, all weather roads and forest development roads provide very good access to the vicinity of Marble Range Park and enclose the park in a triangle formed by the Kelly Lake/Arden Park Road, the Jesmond Road and the Big Bar Lake Road.

Rough four wheel drive roads provide access to the Limestone and Jesmond Forest Service lookouts, which are located just outside the park boundary. These lookouts provide spectacular views of the Marble Range and surrounding countryside.



An extensive system of timber harvesting roads were developed along the eastern side of Marble Range Park, prior to park designation. An access management plan should be prepared for the park that directs future road development near the park boundary, including requirements for deactivating and rehabilitating pre-existing timber harvesting roads that are now within the park boundary. In general, roads to the park boundary should be deactivated to protect wilderness and wildlife values.

An informal system of trails and routes used by local recreationists and commercial operators follows creek drainages into Marble Range Park. The management focus for trails is to have an informal, unmarked, primitive trail system with a minimum of signage and maintenance. Trail upgrading is not anticipated and trails will remain in rough condition, except where management is required to address environmental concerns. One or two key trail routes into the park may be indicated on in-park brochures (see also Section 7.0 Communications), and this will be determined after completing a trail inventory. Existing routes that have potential as key routes into the park include 11 Mile Creek, Porcupine Creek, 57 Mile Creek, 59 Mile Creek and a trail on Mount Soues.

Two roads enter Edge Hills Park, the High Bar Road and the Cavanagh Creek Road. The High Bar Road is a gazetted provincial road that leaves the Jesmond Road, passes through the park, and leads to private land and Indian Reserves along the Fraser River, eventually connecting with the Big Bar ferry road. The middle portions of this road are very steep and recommended for four wheel drive vehicles only. Park visitor use of this road will only be encouraged as far as the lookout at Cougar Point.

The Cavanagh Creek road enters Edge Hills Park from Pear Lake. The road is passable to the height of land by four wheel drive vehicles, but beyond this point is very rough and only suited to short wheel base four wheel drive vehicles. Occasional road maintenance by the Whispering Pines First Nation allows access to the Band's fishing stations on the Fraser River, and to placer claims along the Fraser River. Public recommendations are for an access control point at the height of land to prevent motorized access to the sensitive grassland benches within the park. Consultation with First Nations and the placer claim holder will be necessary to identify long term access needs and controls. The Cavanagh Creek Road is the only road access to the existing mineral claims.

As with Marble Range, existing trails in Edge Hills will not be advertised or promoted so that disturbance to sensitive grassland ecosystems and wildlife populations can be avoided.

**Plate 6: Informal routes lead through open forest to alpine**



Access within the parks is provided by a network of informal trails or routes, many which may be difficult for first time visitors to follow. The intent is to maintain the informal nature of the trail network for the foreseeable future, and to keep trail location advertising and promotion to a minimum to protect sensitive sites and wildlife habitat.

Because access to Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks originates from surrounding Crown forest lands, the management of access will depend on coordinated efforts between BC Parks and the Ministry of Forests.

## **Objectives**

- To ensure the roadless nature of the parks by actively managing or deactivating pre-existing access.
- To restrict aircraft landings in the parks, consistent with wildlife management objectives.
- To provide an appropriate level of visitor access to wilderness recreation opportunities within the parks.
- To resolve the issue of long term access through Edge Hills Park to mineral claims on Cavanagh Creek.

## **Strategies**

- ◆ Prepare an inventory of existing roads and trails within and adjacent to the parks. Investigate 11 Mile, 59 Mile and other routes as a possible primary route into Marble Range Park.
- ◆ Prohibit new road construction in these parks for any purpose other than those specified in this management plan.
- ◆ Deactivate roads within the park boundaries and rehabilitate the rights-of-way to natural conditions (examples include the 3100 road into 59 Mile Creek and the Knox Creek Road).
- ◆ Ensure that access management plans and forest development plans in the vicinity of the parks include considerations for the protection of park values. To maintain wildlife and wilderness values, most forest development roads that approach the park boundaries should be deactivated and made impassable to motorized vehicles.
- ◆ Prohibit the landing of aircraft in the parks other than for park management and public safety purposes.
- ◆ Work with mineral exploration companies to mitigate the impacts of mineral exploration adjacent to park boundaries, for example at Cavanagh Creek.
- ◆ Investigate improving the Cougar Point access road as far as the lookout to a minimum safe standard for two-wheel drive public day use. The road should not be upgraded beyond the lookout, but should remain in rough condition as an access to Indian Reserve lands and private lands.

Obtain direction from the Land Use Coordination Office and Park Management Committee and meet with the placer tenure holder to determine long term access requirements and conditions to the placer claims along Cavanagh Creek.