

# MOUNT GRIFFIN PROVINCIAL PARK AND ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

## PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

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Approved by:



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## **MOUNT GRIFFIN PROVINCIAL PARK AND ECOLOGICAL RESERVE Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan**

### **Introduction**

Mount Griffin Provincial Park and Mount Griffin Ecological Reserve are situated on the northeastern end of the Hunters Range, approximately 6 kilometres southwest of Three Valley Gap (Trans-Canada Highway). The west side of Mount Griffin can be accessed via the Yard Creek Forest Service road, beginning at Yard Creek Provincial Park. The lower sections of the Park and Ecological Reserve are reached by 11 kilometres of logging road from the Trans-Canada Highway.

The boundaries of the 1249 hectare ecological reserve form an irregular hourglass shape, extending from the southeast side of Wap Creek Valley over an elevational range of 1625 metres to include the alpine summit of Mt. Griffin. The steep upper mountain slopes of the reserve are separated from lower slopes by a broad gently sloping benchland in the middle section. The lower portion of the reserve extends down over the moist bottomlands and the interconnecting ponds and wetlands of Wap Creek.

The 1,758 hectare park consists of three separate areas that adjoin the upper and lower boundaries of the ecological reserve. The boundaries of the upper park section (site 2) wrap around the northern side of the reserve, over adjacent mountain slopes, ridges and basins. The west section (site 1) covers benchlands and lower forested slopes along the west side of the Ecological Reserve. This west section of the park captures Wap Lake in the valley bottom and the small lakes basin, locally known as the Caribou Lakes, on the upper benchlands. The lower eastern section (site 3) extends down from the lower east side of the ecological reserve to include a 3 kilometre stretch of Wap Creek. This part of the park averages 300 to 400 metres in width and features a slow meandering stream course that breaks out into rocky fast flowing creek habitats.

The interconnecting aquatic ecosystems of the park and ecological reserve contain important conservation values primarily related to the protection of indigenous populations of bull trout, kokanee, coho and spring salmon. Wap Creek and its associated system of ponds and wetlands form critical rearing habitat for coho fry. The Wap Creek system also has introduced populations of rainbow and west slope cutthroat trout. Rainbow trout were introduced into Caribou Lake. The introduced rainbow and cutthroat trout populations are self propagating.

### **Primary Role**

#### **Mount Griffin Ecological Reserve**

The **primary role** of Mount Griffin Ecological Reserve is to protect an elevational range of ecosystems, from valley bottom wetlands to alpine and subalpine environments in a region of wet interior climate. The ecological reserve exhibits a rich assortment of ecosystems. Thick willow and alder shrublands surround the ponds and sedge meadows of Wap Creek. Mixed stands dominated by western hemlock and Douglas fir, with varying composition of western red

cedar, lodgepole pine and paper birch dominate the lower south-facing slopes to about 1400 metres. Further up into the engelmann spruce-subalpine fir zone, subalpine fir becomes the dominant tree species, with characteristic understory of black huckleberry and white rhododendron. Above 1800 metres the forest opens into subalpine parkland and meadows, eventually extending to krumholz at the limits of the tree line. A small amount of alpine tundra occurs along the ridgetop and summit of Mount Griffin. The ecological reserve contains at a least one known rare plant species. The ecological reserve protects critical habitat for endangered bull trout, coho and west slope cutthroat trout.

The ecological reserve remains in pristine condition, largely due to its isolated location and the surrounding rugged terrain. The reserve is periodically patrolled by a volunteer warden and by Parks staff.

### Mount Griffin Park

The **primary role** of the Park is to protect the integrity of ecosystems extending through from Mount Griffin Ecological Reserve. By itself, the ecological reserve protects only a narrow cross section of habitats, stretching from valley bottom to mountain top, which would pose long-term management difficulties. Together, the park and adjacent ecological reserve provide a larger and more viable land base for protecting natural ecosystems on Mount Griffin. By protecting land around the ecological reserve, the park allows for better control of potential threats from outside activities. The park also adds small lake basins and creek habitats to the protected area land base, providing much greater value for protection of fish habitats. There are no known rare plants in the park.

### Secondary Role

The secondary role of Mount Griffin Park is to provide for continued recreation access and use of the Caribou Lake area and Wap Lake. A pre-existing trail and primitive forest recreation site at the Caribou Lake area receive some use by locals, primarily for fishing. However, the very lengthy and rough drive into the trailhead and the deteriorating condition of the trail access deter much use. There is also local fishing use of Wap Lake. Overnight use and access is provided on the southeast corner of Wap Lake on a forest recreation site situated just outside of the park boundary. Current and potential recreational use and interest in the park is limited.

Known Management Issues	Response
Protecting Ecological Values: 1. Plant communities are sensitive to disturbance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain strict restrictions on public access into the ecological reserve</li> <li>• Mark and sign ecological reserve boundaries.</li> <li>• Work closely with ecological reserve volunteers to ensure periodic patrols.</li> <li>• Monitor plant communities. Act immediately if changes detected and eliminate impacts</li> </ul>

<p>2. Lack of knowledge of rare and endangered species or communities</p> <p>3. Outside land and resource use activities may lead to access encroachment.</p> <p>4. A grazing tenure extends into the western edge of the Park. Cattle stray outside of the tenure area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek opportunities to increase knowledge of natural values and apply precautionary principles in management decisions to account for high uncertainty.</li> <li>• Ensure no further stocking of trout and maintain close coordination with the Ministry of Environment Fish and Wildlife Section and Fisheries and Oceans Canada in monitoring fish populations. Act immediately if changes detected and eliminate impacts</li> <li>• Maintain ongoing liaison with Ministry of Forests and Range and forest companies to ensure due consideration of access concerns.</li> <li>• Act immediately to investigate changes and eliminate impacts if changes detected</li> <li>• Primary objective for the ecological reserve is to discourage public access. Access management strategies may include gating of roads and road deactivation.</li> <li>• Recreation access and use of the Caribou Lake area will not be encouraged. Unless commitment is secured through local outdoor groups to maintain facilities on a voluntary basis, the pre-existing trail access and campsite at Caribou Lake will be allowed to naturally deteriorate.</li> <li>• Work with Ministry of Forests and Range and tenure holder to prevent cattle drift outside of tenure area.</li> </ul>
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**Zoning**

The whole of the west section of the Park (site 1) is zoned as Nature Recreation in recognition of pre-existing use of Wap Lake and Caribou Lake. The northern section (site 2) and eastern section (site 3) of the Park will be zoned as Wilderness Conservation to provide a protective

buffer to the Ecological Reserve. Recreation use will not be facilitated nor encouraged in the Wilderness Conservation Zone.

### **Protected Area Values and Significance Summary Matrix Conservation**

#### Representation

Ecosection

Shuswap Highlands Ecosection – The ecosection is well represented (16.7%) in the protected area system. Contribution to the province-wide protected area representation of this ecosystem by the ecological reserve is .54% and .76% by the park.

Biogeoclimatic subzone/variant

Both the ecological reserve and park add very minor amounts (less than .05%) to the protected areas system representation of AT unp, ESSFvc, EESFwc2 and ICH wk1 subzone/variants.

#### Special Features

The aquatic ecosystems of both the ecological reserve and park are considered of special significance for protection of bull trout, Cutthroat trout, coho, spring and kokanee salmon. Inventories are required to determine the extent of use by fish species.

#### Rare/Endangered Values

Crested Wood Fern (*Dryopteris cristata*) is found in the ecological reserve.

Within the boundary of the central Monashee grizzly population unit.

#### Scientific/Research Opportunities

Valley bottom to the mountaintop range of ecosystems.

### **Recreation**

#### Representation

Backcountry

The park is a minor regional attraction for hiking, camping, fishing and hunting.

Destination

Travel corridor

Local recreation

#### Special Opportunities

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

## **Cultural Heritage**

Representation

Special Feature

## **Other Management Considerations**

Other Designations

Relationship to Other Protected Areas

The Kingfisher Ecological Reserve and Park are also located in the Hunters Range, but in the more westerly and drier region.

Collaborative Management Arrangements

Partnerships

Vulnerability

Relationship to Other Strategies

Park was recommended through the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), with provision that pre-existing hiking and fishing use would be permitted to continue.

### **Area**

Ecological Reserve - 1,249 hectares

Provincial Park - 1,758 hectares

### **Date of establishment**

Ecological Reserve – September 1, 1972

Provincial Park – April 18, 2001

