

MANAGEMENT PLAN

April, 1999



for Naikoon



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Environment,
Lands and Parks
BC Parks Division

Naikoon

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by
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Naikoon

Management Plan

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This document is without prejudice to the positions of the Haida Nation or the Province of British Columbia on issues related to ownership or jurisdiction.

In this document, the area identified by the Province as a Provincial Park is an area called “Naikoon”.

Message from the Minister

I am pleased to release the Management Plan for Naikoon and would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all of the members of the Naikoon Study Team who worked with BC Parks staff to prepare this plan. This management plan provides direction for managing the protection of Naikoon's important values in a manner that is respectful of Haida traditions and local uses.

I am particularly encouraged by the willingness of local citizens, Haida Councils, and BC Parks staff to work together in the on-going stewardship of Naikoon, one of British Columbia's most precious protected areas. The management plan provides solutions to many difficult issues, ranging from vehicle use of Naikoon's beaches to defining education and communication programs to achieve better understanding among protected area visitors. These solutions, I am pleased to note, were generated largely through the knowledge and contributions from local citizens of Haida Gwaii which augers well for sustaining the ecological integrity of Naikoon.

Throughout the Naikoon management planning process, BC Parks has received and incorporated important Haida information into the plan. In August of 1996, BC Parks presented the draft management plan to the Skidegate and Old Masset Village Councils and requested comments from Council members. The Councils would like opportunities to comment on aspects of implementation of the management plan as needed. Therefore, in approving this management plan, I am approving the direction for BC Parks to "develop longer-term cooperative arrangements with the Haida concerning the planning, management and operation of Naikoon" (Section 3, Naikoon Management Plan). I am also supportive of the formation of a Naikoon advisory committee to provide local knowledge and advice to BC Parks staff as this plan is implemented.

Cathy McGregor
Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks

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Acknowledgments

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The project was directed by Hugh Markides, District Manager for the Skeena District. Under the direction of the District Manager, Dan Adamson, Planner, coordinated the project and prepared this plan. Gord MacDonald, Zone Manager of the Skeena/Charlotte Zone (until 1995), Gerry Ferguson, Area Supervisor for Naikoon Park (until 1995), Al Midnight, Area Supervisor (after 1995), and Roger Norrish, Management Plan Coordinator in Victoria provided much assistance and expertise. Ted Frechette, Manager, Research Services and Brian Dyck, Senior Research Officer prepared the public questionnaire and summary. Sean Sharpe, Resource Officer (until 1994), Robin Draper, Operations Officer (until 1995), Mike Murtha, Manager Planning Services, Gail Ross, Visitor Programs Officer (until 1995), and Jovanka Djordevich, Visitor Services Technician (until 1995) all contributed to the preparation of this plan.

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Plan Overview

This management plan establishes priorities for managing Naikoon in order to strike a balance between peoples' enjoyment of the area and protecting important natural and cultural values. As well, this management plan establishes principles for developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between BC Parks, the Haida, and local residents. Enhancing BC Parks relationship with the Island community will lead to a broader commitment to stewardship and the wise use of Naikoon.

The primary emphasis is on identifying the types of information that are most important to obtain so that we have a better understanding of how best to manage Naikoon's natural and cultural resources, features, and processes. In broadening our understanding of Naikoon, we will be in a better position to ensure that Naikoon's natural and cultural values are maintained for future generations. There is little planned in the way of major facility development with the exception of working with local groups to improve hiking opportunities to interior portions of Naikoon. Providing information to the public about Naikoon's cultural and natural resources, processes, and features is a high priority so that these intrinsic values are understood, appreciated and respected.

It is difficult to predict how the growth in the tourist sector will affect Graham Island, but there is a need to ensure that, while visitor numbers to Naikoon will likely continue to increase, the essential character of Naikoon will be maintained as it is today. This management plan's objectives and strategies are in keeping with this overall intent.

Plan Highlights

- Naikoon conserves ecological diversity of a portion of the lowlands of Queen Charlotte Islands-Haida Gwaii. This area contains outstanding natural features such as Rose Spit-Naii Kun, extensive sandy beaches, dune formations, wetland systems, forest communities, and important mammal, bird and fish habitat.
- Naikoon is an area steeped in Haida history and continues to play a dominant role in the day to day lives of Haida citizens. The area continues to provide cultural, spiritual, economic, and subsistence values. Colonial settlement and agricultural attempts in Naikoon area also an interesting component of the history of the area.
- The Vision Statement for Naikoon highlights a priority for seeking to maintain Naikoon as it is today. There are no priorities identified for additional roads or road upgrades and although some replacement of damaged facilities may occur (e.g. Agate Beach campground), there are no plans for new major facility development.
- Over 90 percent of Naikoon is maintained as wilderness where signs of human use are kept minimal and facilities for backcountry recreation are limited and rustic. Most human activities are concentrated to the beach fringes of Naikoon where vehicle access is available.
- Priorities for preparing specific management plans for vegetation, wildlife, and fish are identified. Mapping will be prepared to identify important wildlife habitats. A project is identified to address the effects of beaver on

terrestrial and aquatic habitat within Naikoon's interior water systems. Wildlife inventory work is also identified for species that are listed as sensitive, rare or endangered.

- Strategies for managing Naikoon are to be compatible with the intended purposes of the Rose Spit and Tow Hill Ecological Reserves. Direction is given for preparing detailed management plans for the Rose Spit and Tow Hill Ecological reserves.
- Cooperation with other agencies, such as the Fish and Wildlife Branch, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Queen Charlotte Islands-Haida Gwaii Sport Fishery Advisory Board will be sought in undertaking such projects as a fishery assessment and a fisheries management plan for Naikoon.
- The Island community contributes to the majority of Naikoon's use and they enjoy its opportunities year round. During the summer months, tourists to Naikoon increase in numbers and often the campgrounds are full. The importance of Naikoon to these people is a major consideration to the area's management. Cooperation with the Haida is an essential component of successfully implementing this management plan.
- The beaches of Naikoon will be shared by people both with and without vehicles. Driving on Naikoon's beaches has long been an important part of the experience of Naikoon, particularly for the Island community. For the most part, vehicle use on the beaches below high tide line does no apparent damage to the natural environment. This management plan provides strategies for managing this

activity on an on-going basis with the Island community in order to meet Naikoon's conservation and recreation objectives.

- Tlell Beach and Agate Beach are identified as "closed to vehicles" during the summer months to provide areas close to the campgrounds where people can enjoy a beach area away from mechanized uses. A "courtesy beach" is identified along South Beach during July and August where lower levels of vehicle use is encouraged for the summer months. This strategy maintains vehicle access for North and East beaches where the activity is most important to the Island community.
- The management plan provides strong guidance for involving the Haida Nation and the public in the stewardship of Naikoon. For example, a local volunteer group (e.g. Naikoon Advisory Committee) will be formed in order to formalize a link between BC Parks and the public in the on-going stewardship of Naikoon.
- Increasing awareness and understanding of Naikoon's natural, cultural, spiritual, and historical values is a high priority. This information and communication initiative can encourage a wider understanding of the reasons for avoiding recreation activities in sensitive areas, such as a bird habitat. In this way, information can lead to a greater involvement in Naikoon's stewardship by people who use the area.
- To deal with Naikoon's private property inholdings, BC Parks will examine the opportunities for removing areas of Naikoon with low conservation and

recreation values for the purpose of land exchanges for inholdings with higher conservation or recreation values.