

Skeena Region

**MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
STATEMENT**

November 2003



**for Sustut Provincial Park
and Sustut Protected Area**



Ministry of Water, Land and
Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship
Division

Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area

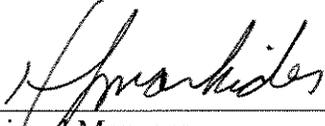
Approvals Page

Forward

This management direction statement for Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area provides management direction until Environmental Stewardship Division revises the plan or prepares a more detailed management plan. Ongoing consultation between Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may require changes to this management direction statement. Aboriginal traditional activities and uses are honoured and respected within the provincial park and protected area.

Implementation of strategies identified in the management direction statement (MDS) will be dependent on available funding and Environmental Stewardship Division priorities.

Approvals



Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division



Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Environmental Stewardship Division developed this management direction statement through direction received from the Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP)

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Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements describe protected area values, management issues and concerns, a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies, and direction from other planning processes. While the MDS identifies strategies, the completion of all these strategies is dependent on funding and funding procedures. All development associated with these strategies is subject to the BC Parks and Protected Areas Impact Assessment Process.

Context

The provincial government established Sustut Provincial Park as a Class A provincial park on January 25, 2001 by Order in Council 63/2001 under the *Park Act*. The park is presently named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*. Sustut Protected Area was established as a protected area on April 18, 2001 by Order in Council 523/2001 under the *Environment and Land Use Act*. The provincial park covers 75,037 hectares and the protected area 2,242 hectares, for a total of 77,279 hectares. Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area are two of several new protected areas resulting from the Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The provincial government applied protected area status to part of the area, mostly on the west bank of the Sustut River, to allow for the possible construction of a road through the protected area to gain access to natural resources. The Gitxsan First Nation, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council – Takla Lake First Nation, and Tsay Keh Dene Band identified Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area as within their traditional territory.

Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area lay along the Sustut River within the watersheds of the upper Skeena and upper Omineca rivers. The provincial park and protected area are located about 150 kilometres north of Smithers, and 80 kilometres northwest of Takla Landing. The provincial park and protected area contain extremely scenic, undisturbed wilderness, characterized by mountainous terrain, including the Connelly and Hogem mountain ranges and special volcanic features, including an active fumarole. (A fumarole is a vent, usually volcanic, that emits gases and vapours). The main volcanic feature is “The Thumb”, a basaltic escarpment on the top of the Connelly Range that contains basalt cliffs used by mountain goats. The provincial park and protected area protect a high quality representative portion of the Englemann Spruce-Sub-alpine Fir (ESSFmc) Biogeoclimatic Zone, and the Eastern Skeena Mountains Ecosession. They also conserve nearly 3,000 hectares in the under-represented Manson Plateau Ecosession. Large mammals, including caribou, grizzly and black bear are common. The Asitka and Sustut rivers contain important salmonid habitat, including habitat for three salmon species, steelhead trout, bull trout and Dolly Varden. The volcanic formations and subalpine terrain provide wilderness recreation opportunities.

Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area lie northwest of some small protected areas located on several of the numerous lakes, including Nation, Takla and Stuart lakes, in the Fort St. James area. Babine River Corridor Provincial Park, which protects the high fisheries values of the Babine River, is located about 50

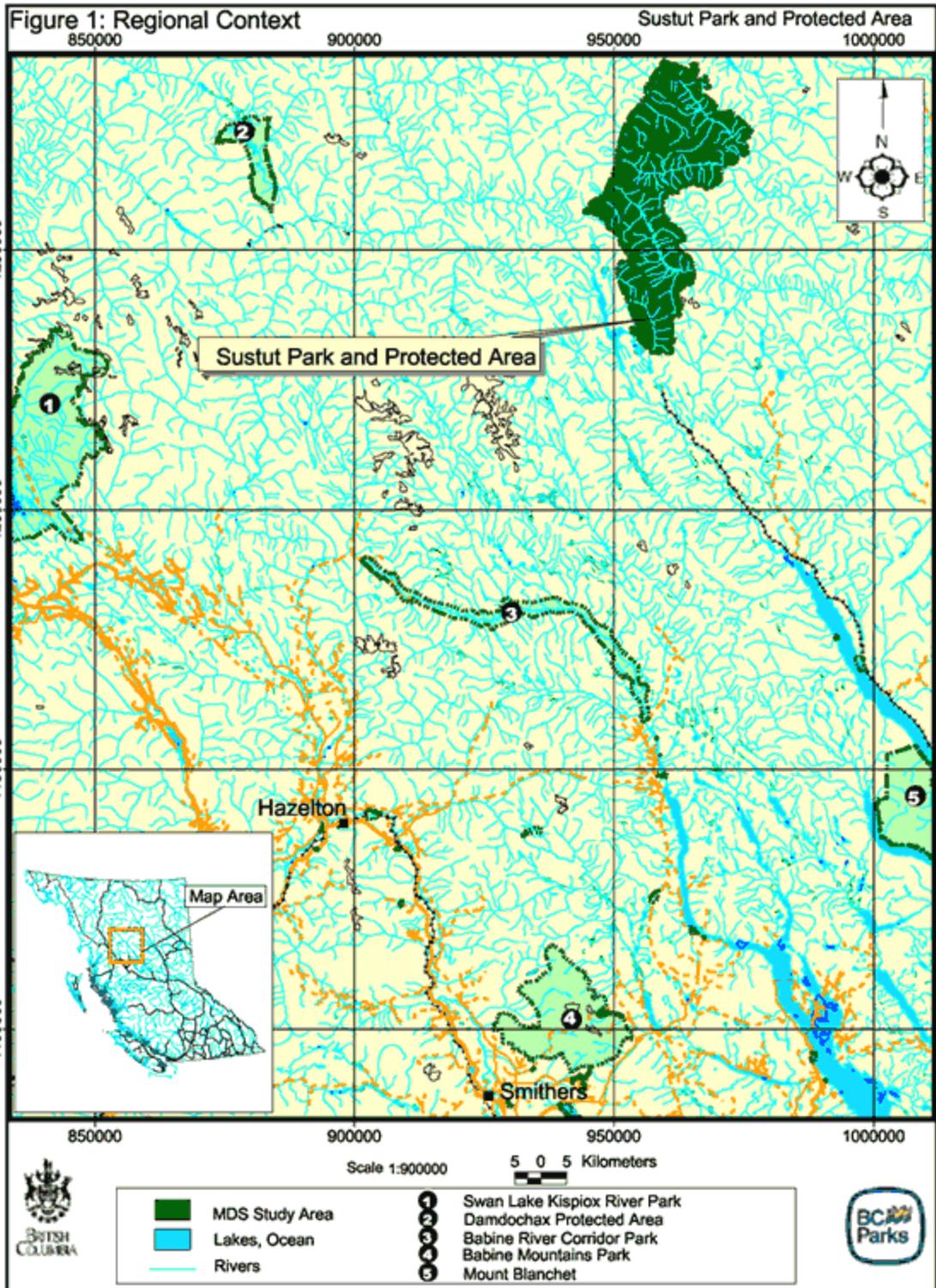
kilometres to the south. Other parks in the area are mostly large backcountry parks, with difficult or no road access, that provide backcountry recreation opportunities. Mount Blanchet Provincial Park protects high value caribou habitat and an excellent representation of alpine flora 80 kilometres to the south. Damdochax Protected Area conserves high value wildlife and fisheries habitat 70 kilometres to the west. Omineca and Chase provincial parks to the east protect important caribou habitat along with other wildlife and fish species. To the northwest lie the superb wilderness landscapes protected within Tatlatui, Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness, and Stikine River provincial parks and Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve.

Provincial Park and Protected Area Attributes

Conservation

- Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area make a significant contribution to the representation of the Eastern Skeena Mountains Ecosection. 9% of the Eastern Skeena Mountains Ecosection is protected. Sustut Park and Sustut Protected Area are the largest contributors to this representation, contributing 88% of the overall protected area representation of the ecosection. The park and protected area also contribute 10% of the overall protected areas system representation of the under-represented Manson Plateau Ecosection.
- Contributes to the representation of 5 biogeoclimatic subzone/variants:
 - ESSFmc (Engelmann Spruce – Sub-alpine Fir , moist cold subzone): 8% of the overall protected areas system representation of this subzone (~22,100 hectares);
 - ESSFmv3 (Engelmann Spruce – Sub-alpine Fir moist very cold subzone – Omineca variant): 22% of the protected areas system representation of this subzone (~17,800 hectares);
 - SBSmc2 (Sub-boreal Spruce zone moist cold subzone – Babine variant): (~ 10,850 hectares); SBSwk3 (Sub-boreal Spruce zone wet cool subzone – Takla variant): (~ 300 hectares); and
 - AT (Alpine Tundra zone): (~26,800 hectares).
- Contains over 90% of the protected ESSFmc, ESSFmv3, SBSwk3 and AT in the Eastern Skeena Mountains Ecosection.
- Second greatest contributor to the representation of the under-represented Engelmann Spruce-Sub-alpine Fir moist very cold subzone, Omineca variant (ESSFmv3). 7% of ESSFmv3 is protected. Sustut Park and Sustut Protected Area contribute 22% of the overall representation of this variant behind Omineca Park and Omineca Protected Area which contribute 59%.
- Protects extremely significant high fisheries values within the Sustut watershed and contains populations of Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*) (blue-listed) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) (blue-listed), steelhead trout, and chinook, coho, and sockeye salmon. Some of these fish stocks have inherently small populations and exist at the edge of their range because of the high elevation habitat they occupy. Thus, the fish are vulnerable to disturbance and fishing pressure. The Sustut River and its tributaries contain important rearing habitat for anadromous fish species that have an extended freshwater residency period (chinook and steelhead) and resident species (bull trout and Dolly Varden). Migratory species also use the river for transit to spawning areas beyond the park.
- Grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), a red-listed species in this area, likely occur in the park in the Omineca River, though the closest recorded presence being 3 kilometres downstream of the park.
- Protects part of the Sustut River and its tributaries; one of five Class 1 waters in the province for steelhead.

- Protects part of the Southern Mountains National Ecological Area caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) (blue-listed) herd that is listed as threatened by the Committee on the Status on Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC); the local population is part of the Chase/Sustut herd.



- Likely contains wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) (blue-listed) and fisher (*Martes pennanti*) (blue-listed) populations.
- Contains high wildlife values for mountain goat, caribou, grizzly and black bear throughout, especially for bear in the extensive subalpine wetlands and lakes in the headwaters of the Omineca River. Also contains valuable spring habitat for grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*), a blue-listed species, and some Stone's sheep habitat.
- Protects special volcanic features of the Connelly Range, including basalt cliffs, volcanic plugs and "The Thumb," a scenic volcanic peak.
- Protects Big Kettle Fumarole, the only active fumarole in British Columbia. This fumarole occasionally vents carbon dioxide gas.

Recreation and Tourism

- Provides regionally significant wilderness recreation opportunities for hiking, climbing, backcountry skiing and wildlife viewing.
- Offers spectacular wilderness whitewater kayaking opportunities in the Sustut River.
- Presents good angling opportunities in the Omineca River watershed portion of the park. The Sustut River and all tributaries above the BC Railway Bridge at Bear River, including all those within the park, are closed to all fishing.
- Contains some trails maintained by guide-outfitters.

Commercial Business Opportunities

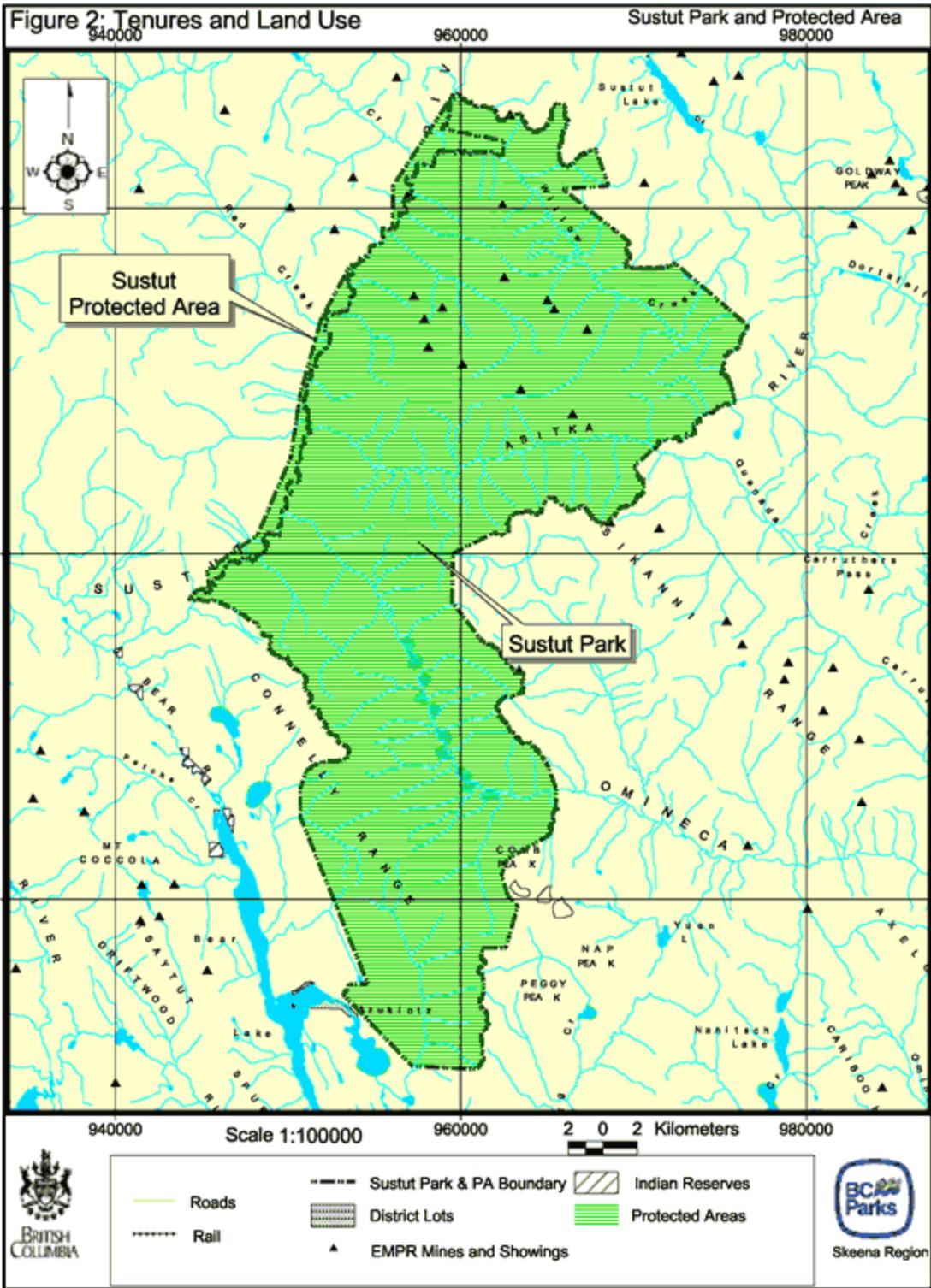
- Provides moderate commercial business opportunities for guided hunting and fishing activities. (See Appendix 1 for activities allowed in this park and protected area).
- Provides low to moderate commercial business opportunities for guided interpretation based tour groups focused on the scenic, volcanic, wildlife viewing and wilderness special features of this park and protected area. The remote location of the park and protected area is a major obstacle.

Cultural Heritage

- Contains a portion of a historical First Nations trail that the Royal North West Mounted Police also used during the Klondike gold rush.
- The Archaeological Inventory Data Centre has no records of archaeological sites within the boundaries of the park and protected area.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- Conserves an extremely scenic mountainous wilderness landscape with regionally significant volcanic formations and sub-alpine terrain features.
- Contains high wildlife values, including valuable spring grizzly bear habitat, and sub-alpine wetlands and lakes used by many species.
- Protects part of a high value fisheries river in the Sustut River; one of only five Class 1 waters for steelhead trout in British Columbia.
- Protects habitat for several species at risk, which could be subject to population declines if not managed appropriately.
- Provides the best representation of the Eastern Skeena Mountains Ecoregion within the protected areas system.



Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Aircraft provide the sole method of access to Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area. Only one small lake, Saiya Lake, in the park is suitable as a floatplane access point. The BC Railway, Takla Extension, is located about 100 metres from the southwest border of the park. This railway, however, is only used for industrial purposes. Some unmapped and unmarked trails and routes maintained by guide-outfitters exist within the park and protected area.

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

- Contains portions of three guide-outfitter territories: 700G360, 618G001, and 618G002; no specific harvest allocations exist for the park and protected area. Environmental Stewardship Division requires park use permits to authorize those guide-outfitters operating in the park and protected area.
- Contains portions of five trapline territories: 618T003, 727T010, 738T007, 738T012, and 739T006. Environmental Stewardship Division requires park use permits to authorize those trappers actively operating in the park and protected area.
- Contains a camp with cabins belonging to a guide-outfitter on upper Willow Creek.
- Includes two mineral claims (tenure #303151, Cisco 4 and tenure #353057, Willow 1) in the Sustut Protected Area. These claims have been excluded from the protected area and see little activity to present.
- The Order in Council establishing the Sustut Protected Area states the following about new roads:
 - 1) “Subject to the completion of a process acceptable to the minister to assess the impacts of and to determine mitigation requirements for building a road through the protected area, the minister must approve on terms and conditions acceptable to the minister the construction, use and maintenance of a road through the protected area for the purpose of providing access to resource land beyond the protected area.
 - 2) The minister may require that the cost of the process referred to in subsection (1) be borne in whole or in part by the person or persons requesting permission to construct the road referred to in that subsection or by the person or persons who will use and maintain the road.
 - 3) The terms and conditions referred to in subsection (1) may include, but are not limited to, a requirement that the person or persons who construct, use or maintain the road must be authorized to do so by park use permit, which permit may be issued despite sections 8, 9 and 30 of the *Park Act*.”

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- Land use activities restricted to activities compatible with a natural wilderness environment.
- No public facilities have been developed by Environmental Stewardship Division.
- Contains some trails maintained by guide-outfitters and a camp with cabins belonging to a guide-outfitter on upper Willow Creek.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- The BC Railway, Omineca extension, passes within 100 metres of the southwestern boundary of the park.
- Road construction through the area (the Stewart Omineca Resource Road, and formerly the Sloane Connector) has been proposed. This road would connect Kemess Mine in the north to the BC Railway railroad line and to the town of Stewart. The Sloane Connector road had previously been approved for construction along the west side of the Sustut River but was never built. The exact placement of this road has not been finalized, but based on maps of the Sloane Connector, it would be just outside the Sustut Protected Area.
- Logging is occurring west of the park along the Bear and Sustut rivers, and is planned for the west side of the Sustut River, next to the park.
- High potential exists for the development of a new mine adjacent to the park and protected area at the Sustut copper property on Two Lake Creek west of the park. Numerous other mineral claims exist near the park.
- Several fly-in fishing lodges are located along the Sustut River downstream of the park.

First Nations Interests

- Gitx̱san First Nation, Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council – Takla Lake First Nation and Tsay Keh Dene Band identify Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area within their traditional territory.
- The Gitx̱san First Nation has expressed a strong interest in this area and wish to be involved in the management and operations of the park. In addition, the Gitx̱san have expressed an interest in participating in all economic activities within the park including activities such as guide-outfitting.
- The Gitx̱san would like to prepare tourism plans for the park that would identify tourism opportunities within the park and to have these tourism opportunities incorporated into the management direction for the park.
- The Gitx̱san First Nation indicated that they have names for some park and protected area features and they would like traditional names identified and used where appropriate.
- The Gitx̱san First Nation would also like consultation to occur in a manner consistent with the Gitx̱san Tradition System of Wilps (Houses).

Other Agency Interests

- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has an interest in the migratory salmon species in the park.
- The Ministry of Water, Air and Land Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section manages several sites for the purpose of indexing the abundance of juvenile steelhead on the Sustut River and tributaries.
- The Ministry of Water, Air and Land Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section has an interest in the wildlife, and the species at risk within the park and protected area.
 - The park and protected area are within Wildlife Management Units 6-18 and 7-38.
- The Ministry of Energy and Mines has an interest in the allowance of road construction through Sustut Protected Area.

- The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC) has an interest in the species at risk in the park and protected area.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- The Northern British Columbia Tourism Association has an interest in the park and protected area because of their potential for attracting more tourists to the region.
- Local residents and communities, including Bear Lake, Takla Landing and Fort St. James, have an interest in the protected areas because they conserve significant natural, cultural heritage and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- The Federation of British Columbia Naturalists is interested in the conservation of natural, cultural heritage and wilderness values protected by park and protected area status.
- The British Columbia Wildlife Federation is interested in the fish, wildlife and wilderness conservation afforded by protected area status as well hunting and angling outdoor recreation opportunities.
- The Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia has an interest in the guide-outfitting operations in the park and protected area.
- Skeena Resources, the mineral claim owners, have an interest in the Sustut Protected Area because of the potential road access and an existing mineral claim within the protected area.
- The British Columbia/Yukon Chamber of Mines has an interest in the protected area because of the potential road access issue.
- Existing tenure holders, including guide-outfitters and trapline holders, have an interest because the park and protected area require the application of the *Park Act* and Park and Recreation Area Regulation governing the operation of such businesses.

Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area Role Statement

The primary role of Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area is to conserve a large tract of largely undisturbed wilderness containing provincially significant wildlife habitat for caribou, mountain goat, grizzly and black bear. In addition, the park and protected area protect outstanding salmon, steelhead and char habitat in the Sustut and Asitka watersheds. Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area also preserve important volcanic features including “The Thumb” and Big Kettle fumarole and provide the best representation of the Eastern Skeena Mountains Ecosection within the protected areas system

Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area perform an extremely important secondary recreation role to provide provincially significant non-motorized wilderness backcountry outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, angling, hunting, whitewater kayaking, wildlife viewing, nature appreciation, ski touring and horseback riding tours.

The park and protected area also present a tertiary role for research and education concerned with the volcanic, vegetation, wildlife and fisheries values protected within their boundaries.

Management Commitments and Issues

Management Direction from Previous Planning

The Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) provided management direction for Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area. Some direction described here comes from direction for the Upper Omineca, Upper Sustut, and Sustut resource management zones. The direction for these management zones applies to the park and protected area because the Sloane Connector Road may pass through the Sustut Protected Area or it specifically mentions the park and protected area. The full General Management Direction Statement for Protected Areas from the Fort St. James LRMP is contained in Appendix 2.

The Fort St. James LRMP provides the following direction:

- Manage forest health within Protected Areas.
 - Preclude all commercial timber harvesting (including salvage operations) in Protected Areas. In the event of a severe forest health situation, Environmental Stewardship Division should consult with the Ministry of Forests to develop management strategies considering all other values identified in this LRMP.
 - Continue to monitor forest health by the Ministry of Forests in co-operation with Environmental Stewardship Division.
 - Future park management planning processes are expected to provide further clarification to forest health management strategies during the implementation of this plan.
- Manage existing mineral tenures within Protected Areas.
 - Mineral claims that lie within proposed Protected Areas will be excluded from the protected area and will remain open for exploration. These areas, upon forfeiture of the claim(s) will then be included in the Protected Area.
 - Only other uses compatible with Protected Areas will be recommended.
 - Preliminary exploration activities should continue to be access by helicopter or non-roaded methods.
 - Road and other linear development proposals to access mineral properties excluded from Protected Areas designated by the *Environment Land Use Act* should minimize impacts on Protected Area values. Access control, to allow the use of roads by mineral tenure holders only, is necessary. If mines are developed on tenures excluded from Protected Areas, full compliance with the mine development review process will be required. The BC Environmental Assessment and Federal Environment Review Processes should recognize the identified values in the Protected Areas.
- Manage access adjacent to the Upper Sustut-Thumb Protected Area (now called Sustut Provincial Park and Protected Area).
 - Consider Protected Area values such as conservation, recreation and visual quality in managing access adjacent to Protected Areas.
- Manage access on the proposed Sloane Connector Road if and when it is constructed.
 - Design and construct the Sloane Connector Road to minimize long-term environmental impacts.
 - Consider utilizing gates to manage non-industrial access.
 - Define responsibility for access management and maintenance of the Sloane Connector Road by licensed resource users.

- Co-ordinate access management for resource extraction throughout this zone, while maintaining the integrity of wildlife movement corridors, fish spawning/rearing habitat, water quality, remote recreational experiences, local community interests and tourism requirements.
 - As a priority, develop a coordinated access management plan (including public and stakeholder participation) that addresses the interests of all resource users, for the Upper Sustut-Omineca and adjoining zones for use in resource development planning.
- Upper Birdflat Willow Caribou Management Area – No resource development activities within this Caribou Management Area where it overlaps the Upper Sustut/Thumb Protected Area (now called Sustut Provincial Park and Protected Area).

Management Issues

Environmental Stewardship Division identified the following management issues.

Theme	Issue
Protecting ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish species are at the edge of their habitat range and vulnerable to disturbances from activities such as sedimentation from road building, mineral exploration and mining, sport fish stocking and from illegal harvesting. • Fish and wildlife species may be at risk because their population status is not determined regularly. • The park and protected area's flora, fauna, and important habitats, especially species at risk, ungulate natal and winter range, rare plant species and plant communities may be vulnerable to damage because no inventories and mapping exists of these values. • Lack of park fire, vegetation and wildlife management plans. • Wildlife may be placed under severe stress during sensitive periods (e.g., kidding season) because aircraft fly too close. • Park and protected area values, such as wildlife and fisheries, may be damaged by forest management activities next to the park if not managed properly concerning intensity, timing, and methods. • Invasive plants and noxious weeds pose a threat to the park and protected area's vegetation because of weed infested horse feed. • Fish and wildlife populations, rare plants and plant communities could be damaged if facility developments occur in an inappropriate location, such as near high quality wildlife habitat, fish holding pools or rare plant communities.
Protecting geological features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fumarole cone is composed of calcium deposits that make this feature extremely vulnerable to damage from human foot traffic.
Protecting outdoor recreation and tourism values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural and cultural heritage values may be at risk because of increasing public outdoor recreation use, especially if the road through the protected area is constructed.
Protecting cultural heritage values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural heritage values may be at risk because no inventory of these values exists.
Providing information about the park and protected area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public is largely unaware of this new park and protected area because of its recent designation and remote location.

Themes	Issue
Protecting wilderness values and access management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish species that live in the Sustut River or use the river as a migration corridor will be at risk if improper industrial road construction occurs. • Fish and wildlife species are vulnerable to disturbance and increased angling and hunting pressures because of easier access created by new industrial road construction. • Roads and industrial use activities such as logging pose a threat to the park and protected area wilderness values if they take place nearby or in an inappropriate location. • Low flying and frequent aircraft flights will damage the park and protected area's wilderness visitor experience because of visual and noise pollution. • Incompatible permanent buildings and structures could lessen the wilderness experience.
Visitor safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park and protected area visitors may be at risk if facilities are located in an inappropriate location, such as near high quality bear habitat

Management Direction

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

These objectives and strategies generally refer to both the park and protected area except as noted.

Objective	Strategy
To protect the park's geological features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that any use that occurs at the fumarole does not affect the integrity of the cone and associated deposits in the park.
To protect the park and protected area's cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and collect information on cultural heritage values, and work to protect these values. • Investigate and seek opportunities to work with First Nations on the use and depiction of First Nations words and language related to the park and protected area's place names and interpretation.
To protect First Nations values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work cooperatively with the First Nations to build positive working relationships, and identify opportunities for First Nations to be involved in the management and operation of the park and protected area. This will facilitate the protection of cultural values and interests, and promote effective management and operation of the park and protected area. • Follow ministry consultation guidelines and seek to identify effective and workable mechanisms for First Nations involvement and consultation consistent with First Nations interests.
To protect the park's recreational and tourism values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate new permit applications for consistency with other values in this plan with a particular emphasis on those related to ecological, geological and cultural heritage values. • In conjunction with First Nations, investigate and seek opportunities to develop a tourism plan that identifies opportunities for and barriers to tourism development within the park. Seek to facilitate and support outside initiatives (e.g. by the Gitksan First Nation) to develop tourism plans consistent with this Management Direction Statement and with First Nations and community values.
To provide information to park visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide accurate and current information about Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area on the official Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection web site. • Emphasise the park and protected area's conservation role rather than outdoor recreation themes.

Objective	Strategy
To ensure access does not unacceptably impact wildlife or wilderness recreation values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibit ATV and vehicle use within the park and protected area. • Monitor aircraft access carefully, including designated helicopter access points, to safeguard wilderness values. If necessary, implement guidelines or restrictions to protect park values. • Strictly control facility development in the park and protected area to maintain the wilderness environment.
To bring existing commercial business tenures under valid permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the trapline owners to place their trapping operations in the park and protected area under valid park use permits. • Contact guide-outfitter operators (includes hunting, fishing and tour guiding) using the park and protected area to place their operations under valid park use permits.
To protect visitor safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete bear-human risk assessments before approving facility developments in the park.
To protect the park and protected area's ecological values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an inventory of fauna and flora in the park and protected area with a priority on values that may be affected by potential road construction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Focus the highest priority on an accurate survey of fish populations and their habitats; ➢ Direct the second priority to compiling data on grizzly bear populations and their habitat; ➢ Concentrate third priority on documenting ungulate natal and winter range; and ➢ Centre the fourth priority on rare plant species and plant communities and environmentally sensitive habitats . • Investigate potential impacts on the protected area's natural environment should industrial interests propose road development through the protected area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Work cooperatively with the BC Environmental Assessment Office, the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section), Ministry of Energy and Mines and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to document and mitigate the effects of road development within the protected area. • Ensure that any commercial activities in the area do not make it easier for illegal harvesting of the Sustut River watershed's vulnerable fish stocks. • Collaborate with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section to regularly monitor fish and wildlife species populations, especially species at risk, and take management actions as needed to conserve them. • Develop fire, vegetation and wildlife management plans to ensure appropriate management is applied. • Encourage aircraft operators to follow Guidelines for Mitigating Impacts of Commercial Backcountry Recreation on Wildlife, and inform them about avoiding critical lambing and kidding areas during sensitive periods (generally between April 15 and June 15). • Work with the appropriate government agencies and industry to ensure that adjacent forestry activities operate with minimal impact on park and protected area values. • Allow packhorse owners to use only weed free feed for their horses to prevent the introduction of weed and invasive plant species to the park and protected area.

Objective	Strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Ministry of Forests to monitor the park and protected area's forest health. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ If a forest health problem occurs, develop interim management strategies, excluding salvage operation, which considers other park and protected area values. ➢ Work towards developing long-term forest health management strategies that address all potential forest health problems. • Implement the BC Parks and Protected Areas Impact Assessment Process, reference the Guidelines for Mitigating Impacts of Commercial Backcountry Recreation on Wildlife, comply with Park Facility Standards and Park Design Guidelines, etc. before approving facility developments in the park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ This process will identify high wildlife and fish habitat values, rare plants and plant communities, and other values, and determine the potential harm to these values.

Consultation and Future Planning

Environmental Stewardship Division will work to involve and inform First Nations on the management and planning of Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area. Further input from First Nations may result in changes to this management direction statement. As further substantive information is received from First Nations, this document may need to be revised to reflect increased information sharing, increased goodwill and further insight on cultural heritage values and interests related to economic/tourism opportunities. Environmental Stewardship Division will consult with the appropriate government agencies regarding possible impacts to the park and protected area relating to forest harvesting in adjacent areas and from any road building or mineral exploration activities in the Sustut Protected Area.

Zoning Plan

This management direction statement applies two management planning zones to Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area which entail the following:

Wilderness Recreation Zone

Objective: To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designated sites

Zone Description: This zone covers all of Sustut Provincial Park and Protected Area not contained within the Special Feature Zone.

Management Guidelines: Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.

Special Feature Zone

Objective: To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

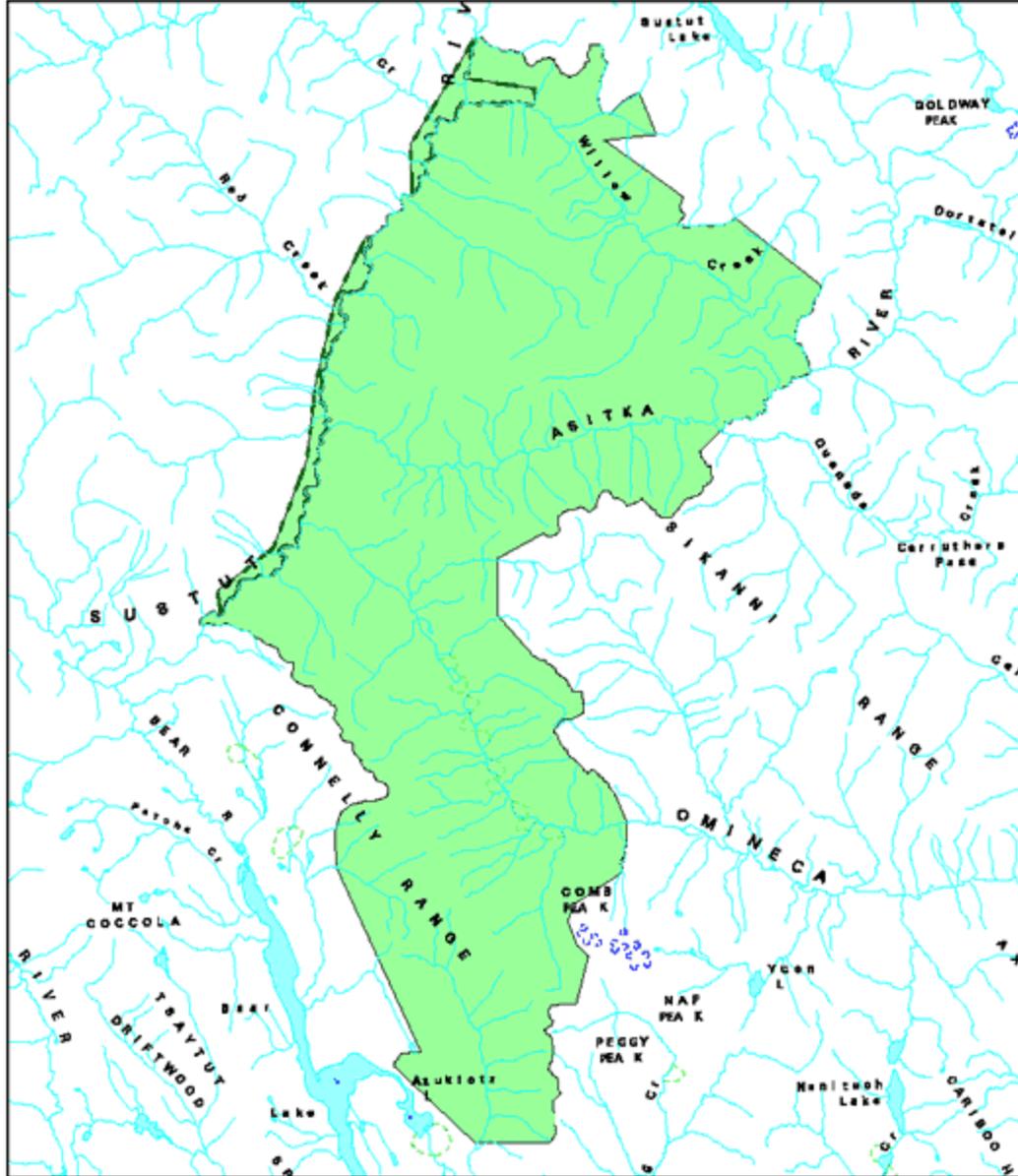
Zone Description: This zone focuses on Big Kettle Fumarole, a volcanic landform feature (to be mapped following air photo analysis and field confirmation).

Management Guidelines: High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate, a high quality recreational and interpretative experience. Active or passive management depending on the size, location, and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.

If a road is located in the Sustut Protected Area, a Natural Environment Zone should be considered for the road corridor.

Figure 3: Zoning

Sustut Park and Protected Area



Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83



 Wilderness Recreation
 Protected Area Boundary

Addition of Special Feature Zone upon air
photo analysis and field verification



Produced in Mar 2003 for Ministry
of Water, Land and Air Protection

This is a visual representation
only and should not be used for
legal purposes.

Appendix 1. Sustut Provincial Park and Sustut Protected Area

Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses, and Facilities

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability	
	Sustut Provincial Park	Sustut Protected Area
Aboriginal traditional activities and uses	Y	Y
Hunting	Y	Y
Fishing	Y	Y
Trapping	Y	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N	N
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N	N
Utility corridors	N	N
Communication Sites	N	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	Y	Y
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y	Y
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	N	N
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	Y	Y
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	Y	Y
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N	N
Ski Hills	N	N
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N	N
Commercial Recreation (non-facility based)	M	M
Backcountry Huts	M	M
Water Control Structures	N	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	M	M
Road Access – subject to LRMP direction	N	Y
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N	N
Off-road Access (motorized)	N	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N	N
Motorized Water Access	N	N
Aircraft Access – May designate landing sites for helicopters	Y	Y
Fire Management (suppression)	M	M
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	N1	N1
Fire Management (prevention)	N1	N1
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1	N1
Noxious Weed Control	N1	N1
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	N1	N1
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M	M

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed

Appendix 2 – General Management Direction: Protected Areas (from Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan)

Protected Areas

The Fort St. James LRMP Working Group direction is consistent with direction provided in the Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) and by the Land Use Coordination Office (RMD). In June of 1995 RMD directed the seven LRMP tables in the Prince George Forest Region and the Mackenzie Planning Table to recommend an aggregate 9% of the region for Protected Area status. The Fort St. James LRMP was later directed to work towards a figure of 5.8% (184,000 hectares), refining the original areas of interest put forward by the Prince George Regional Protected Areas Team (RPAT). Prior to completion of the Fort St. James LRMP only 0.023% (732 hectares.) of the land base was protected in four Provincial Parks.

The Protected Areas system comprises a family of protected areas. The system, rather than individual areas, provides for the diversity of ecosystems, special features and outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences sought. As such, not all uses are appropriate or compatible within every Protected Area.

An individual activity, service or use may not be appropriate within all areas of a Protected Area. Individual Protected Areas may be zoned to provide optimum protection to Protected Area values. Zones within Protected Areas will range from areas which exclude public access in order to protect fragile and vulnerable ecosystems and sensitive, rare or endangered species, to zones which accommodate and/or enhance recreational and cultural opportunities and experiences.

Protected Areas are established in perpetuity so that the ecological systems they encompass can continue to evolve with a minimum of intervention. Active management/habitat manipulation may be acceptable when the structure or formation of ecosystems is seriously altered, and manipulation is the only possible or best alternative available to restore ecological integrity.

Use of Protected Areas will be encouraged where appropriate and where consistent with the principle of maintaining ecological integrity, in order to realize the recreational, educational, cultural, tourism and health benefits that Protected Areas can provide. Compatible activities and uses should draw their meaning from association with, and direct relation to, the natural and cultural resources of the Protected Area. All uses of Protected Areas must be assessed in regard to their impact on the ecological systems and the key natural, cultural and recreational values of particular interest.

Land use activities and traditional cultural uses that have changed a landscape and have acquired significance in their own right will be recognized and respected.

The Protected Areas Strategy respects aboriginal rights and interests that exist in British Columbia. Aboriginal peoples may use Protected Areas for sustenance activities and traditional ceremonial and spiritual practices, subject to conservation objectives.

Developments within Protected Areas should be fully compatible with the principles of maintaining ecological integrity and minimum intervention with natural processes. Developments should directly complement and be integral to the opportunities being provided and complement the purpose, objectives and role of the particular Protected Area. Intensive recreational and tourism developments should occur in adjacent areas outside of Protected Area boundaries, wherever possible.

Recognition and special consideration will be given to existing tenures, licences, authorizations, and public use where uses are compatible with the objectives for which the area was established. Uses which have been approved for continuation in Protected Areas will be fully respected.

Protected Areas are not islands. They exist as part of larger ecosystems and cultural landscapes. Therefore management decisions, both inside and outside of Protected Areas, should be co-ordinated and integrated to the greatest extent possible while recognizing that resource development activities outside of Protected Areas are appropriate and necessary.

Protected Areas are a public trust and opportunities for the public to provide input into the planning and

management of the Protected Areas system and individual Protected Areas must not be abridged. Planning and management should be done in partnership with key public stakeholders and government resource agencies, with Environmental Stewardship Division being the lead agency.

Protected Areas management plans will be established through an open public process, with Environmental Stewardship Division co-ordinating the consultative process. Table 6 details many of the activities that are compatible with Protected Areas.

Once the LRMP has been approved by Cabinet, the Protected Area boundaries are approved as well. Legal designation occurs through a Cabinet Order-in-Council and is then proclaimed by the Lieutenant-Governor. Jurisdiction is then transferred to Environmental Stewardship Division. There can be a time lag from Cabinet approval to proclamation.

When the Park Act is next debated in the Legislature those Protected Areas which have been designated as Provincial Parks will be converted from Order-in-Council status to Legislated status. This strengthens their protection for the long term.

The following recommendations have been developed by the Working Group to provide General Management Direction for Protected Areas in the planning area:

Objective — Manage Forest Health within Protected Areas.

- Preclude all commercial timber harvesting (including salvage operations) in Protected Areas. In the event of a severe forest health situation, Environmental Stewardship Division should consult with the Ministry of Forests to develop management strategies considering all other values identified in this LRMP.
- Continue to monitor forest health by the Ministry of Forests in co-operation with Environmental Stewardship Division.
- Future Parks management planning processes are expected to provide further clarification to forest health management strategies during implementation of this Plan.

Objective — Manage existing mineral tenures within Protected Areas.

- Mineral claims that lie within proposed Protected Areas will be excluded from the Protected Area and remain open for exploration. These areas, upon forfeiture of the claim(s) will then be included in the Protected Area.
- Only other uses compatible with Protected Areas will be recommended.
- Preliminary exploration activities should continue to be accessed by helicopter or non-roaded methods.
- Road and other linear development proposals to access mineral properties excluded from Protected Areas designated by the Environmental Land Use Act should minimize impacts on Protected Area values. Access control, to allow the use of roads by mineral tenure holders only, is necessary.
- If mines are developed on tenures excluded from Protected Areas, full compliance with the mine development review process will be required. The BC Environmental Assessment and Federal Environmental Review Processes should recognize the identified values in the Protected Areas.

In areas adjacent to Protected Areas, the intent of this LRMP is to manage resource development to recognize and consider the intended objectives of the adjacent protected area and any Park Management Plans for that area

Table 6: Compatibility of Activities, Services and Facilities in Protected Areas		
Activity/use/facility	Compatibility	Comments
Logging	Not allowed.	As approved by Cabinet (PAS).
Mining	Not allowed.	As approved by Cabinet (PAS).
Hydroelectric Development	Not allowed.	As approved by Cabinet (PAS).
Grazing	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	As approved by Cabinet. Existing tenures are normally replaceable and transferable. No new tenures to be issued except for expressed management purposes as defined by a Protected Area Management Plan.
Hunting	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Fishing	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	The use of species or stocks not native to the watershed will not be permitted.
Trapping	Existing tenures grandfathered.	May be permitted for expressed management purposes as defined by Protected Area Management Plan. Existing tenures are renewable and transferable.
Horse Use	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Limited to designated zones and/ or trails.
Pack Animal Use	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Limited to designated zones and/or trails.
Water Control Structures	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Only in intensive recreation zones to enhance recreational opportunities or for expressed management purposes as defined by Management Plan. Infrastructure existing at the time of area establishment normally permitted to remain.
Powerline/Transmission Line and other Rights-of-Way	Not allowed.	Allowed if there are no practical and feasible alternatives. If present at time of area establishment, normally allowed to continue.
Commercial Guiding (Hunting, Fishing, Nature Tours, River Rafting)	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Permits from managing agency will be required.
Lodges /Cabins / Guest Ranches / Backcountry Huts	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Roads within Protected Areas	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	New road developments must be identified in Management Plans.
Off-Road Activities:		
Snowmobiling	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Limited to designated zones and/or trails.

Mechanical Activities (vehicles which are not motorized (i.e. mountain bikes))	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Limited to designated zones and/or trails.
Water: Motorized Activities	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Aircraft Access	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	For destination access purposes.
Heli-Skiing	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Heli-Hiking	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Cat-Assisted Skiing	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Fire Management:		
Wildfire Management	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Wildfires are a naturally occurring ecological process. Policy recognizes the need to protect public safety/facilities/values on adjacent lands, etc.
Prescribed Fire Management	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Only for expressed management purposes as defined by a Protected Area Management Plan.
Fire Prevention and Preparedness	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Only for expressed management purposes as defined by a Protected Area Management Plan.
Forest Health	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Tourism Related Infrastructure:		
Resorts	Not compatible	Facilities existing at time of area establishment will remain.
Exotic Organisms Control	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Scientific Research	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	Manipulative activities normally not permitted. Specimen collections only permitted if results in information providing increased scientific knowledge (i.e. geology, forestry, etc.) or protection and/or understanding of protected area values. Permits from managing agency will be required.
Ecosystem and Habitat Restoration	Compatible subject to the Management Plan	
Communication Sites	Normally not compatible	May be considered if essential for Protected Area Management Communication needs or if there are no practical or feasible alternatives. If present at time of establishment, normally allowed to continue.