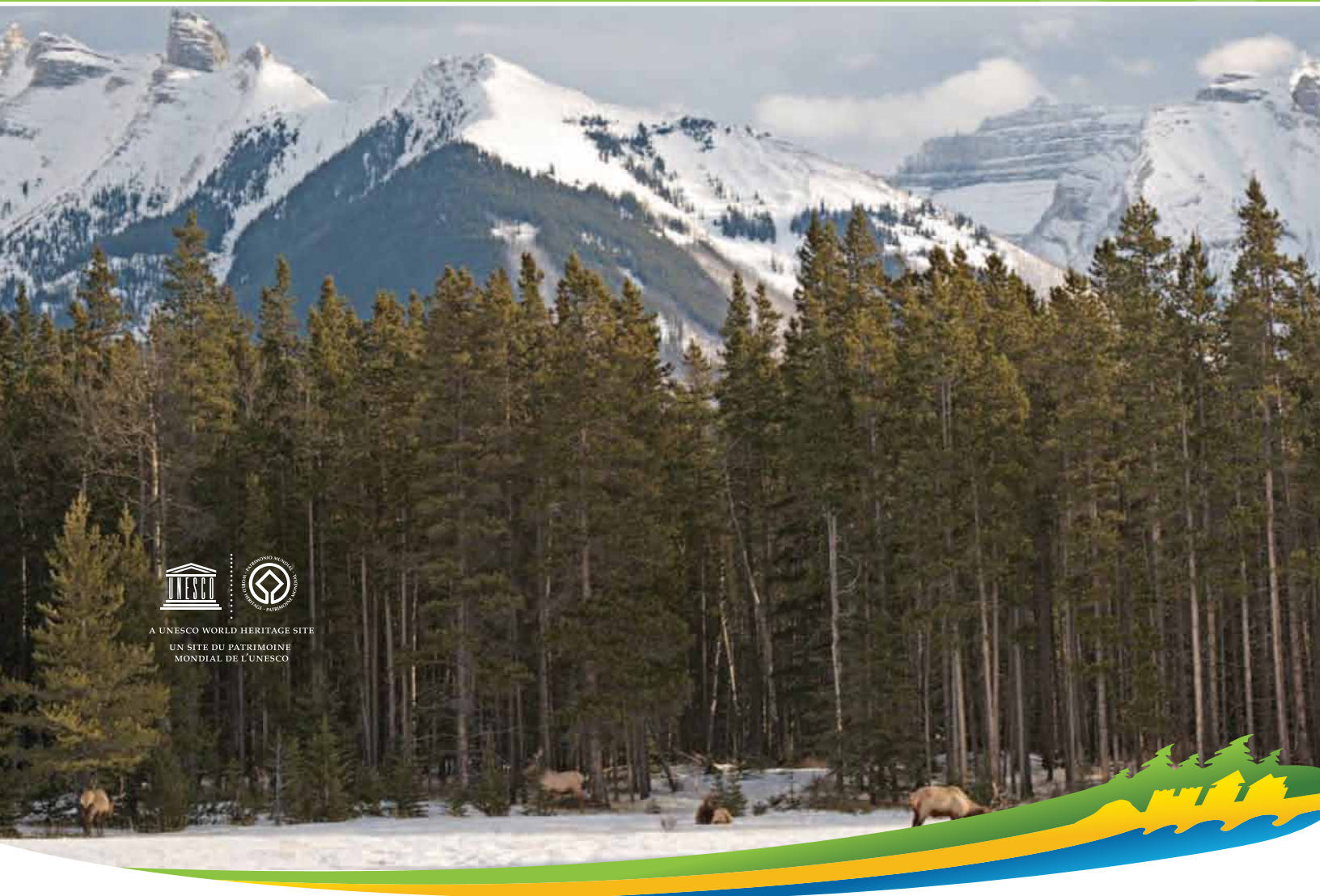


# Banff

National Park of Canada

## Management Plan

2010



A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE  
UN SITE DU PATRIMOINE  
MONDIAL DE L'UNESCO



# ***Banff National Park***

## Management Plan

**June 2010**

Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan

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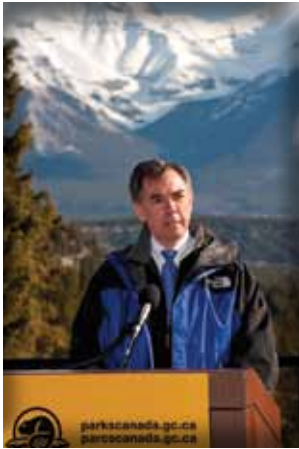
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## FOREWORD



Canada's national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas offer Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast unique opportunities to experience and understand our wonderful country. They are places of learning, recreation and inspiration where Canadians can connect with our past and appreciate the natural, cultural and social forces that shaped Canada.

From our smallest national park to our most visited national historic site to our largest national marine conservation area, each of these places offers Canadians and visitors several experiential opportunities to enjoy Canada's historic and natural heritage. These places of beauty, wonder and learning are valued by Canadians—they are part of our past, our present and our future.

Our Government's goal is to ensure that Canadians form a lasting connection to this heritage and that our protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

We see a future in which these special places will further Canadians' appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of Canada, the economic well-being of communities and the vitality of our society.

Our Government's vision is to build a culture of heritage conservation in Canada by offering Canadians exceptional opportunities to experience our natural and cultural heritage.



These values form the foundation of the new management plan for Banff National Park of Canada. I offer my appreciation to the many thoughtful Canadians who helped to develop this plan, particularly to our dedicated team from Parks Canada, and to all those local organizations and individuals who have demonstrated their good will, hard work, spirit of co-operation and extraordinary sense of stewardship.

In this same spirit of partnership and responsibility, I am pleased to approve the Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan.

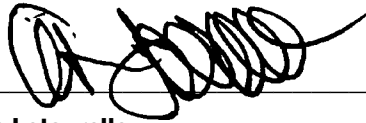


Jim Prentice

*Minister of the Environment*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

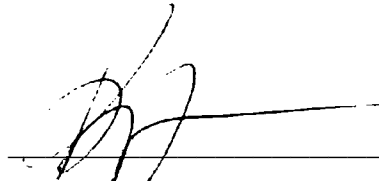
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**Alan Latourelle**

*Chief Executive Officer*

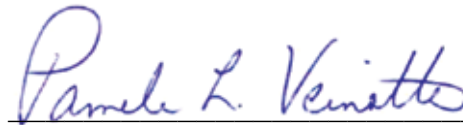
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This updated management plan for Banff National Park provides strategic direction for the integrated delivery of Parks Canada's mandate for heritage resource conservation, visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding. It sets out a vision for the future that seeks to protect the unique natural and cultural heritage of the park and provide memorable experiences that allow Canadians to connect in meaningful ways with their mountain heritage.

The management plan includes five key strategies that describe the overarching management approach to the park, as well as nine area concepts which provide more detailed direction for specific geographic areas. In all, approximately 200 implementation actions are listed. The plan also includes key performance indicators that will allow Parks Canada to measure and report on progress over time. The development of the plan included an extensive public participation program that provided opportunities for Aboriginal people, stakeholders, community residents, park visitors and the general public to share their views and aspirations for this special place.

The key strategies and highlights of management actions that will be implemented during the life of this plan are summarized below.

### *It All Starts Here*

As Canada's first national park and a flagship for Parks Canada's system of protected areas, all programs, services and communications in Banff National Park will include a focus beyond the park, to introduce visitors to the many places managed by Parks Canada across the country. The park will continue to provide leadership in the development and application of protected-area policy and in sustaining a national dialogue about the unique conservation model embodied by Canada's protected heritage areas. The long history of public involvement will continue by:





- Helping stakeholders connect with the park through structured opportunities to participate in decision-making and direction setting processes;
- Taking into account the multiple, diverse interests and concerns of stakeholders and the public in decision-making and operations; and
- Promoting long-term support for and stewardship of Banff National Park by fostering co-operation and joint action.

### *Connecting – Reconnecting*

Mountain landscapes are naturally fragmented by rock, rivers and ice. The development of national transportation routes, the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Trans-Canada Highway, created additional fragmentation, especially for wildlife and aquatic ecosystems. For much of the 20th Century, Banff National Park was a place of debate between proponents of the tourism economy and proponents of conservation that drew people apart and limited future possibilities.

The second century must be about connecting and reconnecting in ways that create new meaning and possibilities for the future. Strengthening connections among people and reducing fragmentation in the landscape will become increasingly important as a strategy for adapting to future pressures by:

- Recognizing and working to correct the past disconnections in the natural environment and in human relationships to the landscape;
- Managing the park as an inter-related part of a much larger regional ecosystem;
- Sponsoring shared endeavours to build community among people of diverse perspectives;
- Managing transportation corridors as much to connect ecosystems as to connect people to their travel destinations; and
- Working with Aboriginal communities to honour and restore cultural connections to the land and to encourage the gathering and sharing of knowledge about how Aboriginal people understand the land.



### *A Model of National Park Stewardship*

Managing protected areas in a changing world is challenging and complex. Strengthening the culture of co-operation, learning and stewardship in the park is a priority. The level of development in Banff National Park is unconventional in a national park context and has come to define the park almost as much as do the unparalleled mountain scenery, healthy ecosystems, mountain culture, opportunities for wilderness adventure and its role in Canada's history. The anomalies offer opportunities to enlarge on the significance of this place and its national park status by turning the exceptions into the exceptional: making Banff's conservation successes a part of the national park visitor experience and of the story we tell the world, so that they influence thinking and offer hope for the future beyond the park's borders.

The park will share the excitement of science and stewardship by involving as many Canadians as possible in the monitoring and study of mountain ecosystems and by ensuring that regional stakeholders, park visitors, park businesses and broader communities are fully engaged in the creative dialogue and learning opportunities associated with the development of new conservation solutions.

Banff National Park will manage for healthy ecosystems by:

- Building on the successes of recent years, continuing to protect and, where necessary, restore ecosystems e.g. through prescribed fire, achieving 50% of the long-term fire cycle throughout the park, and restoring aquatic connectivity; maintaining high habitat quality through managing and minimizing disturbance in identified wildlife movement corridors;
- Prioritizing for restoration and intensive management of those ecosystem components that are most rare (including those legally designated as "at risk"), are of exceptional ecological significance, and/or are most vulnerable, including keystone species; this includes maintaining and improving grizzly bear habitat security and re-introducing extirpated species; and
- Incorporating meaningful opportunities for visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding into ecosystem management and restoration programs by designing a citizen science program around core ecological



monitoring programs and other ecosystem studies and by sharing the stories of citizen scientists widely.

### *Welcome....to Mountains of Possibilities*

Increasing both the number of visitors and the quality of their experiences are important priorities in ensuring the continued relevance and effectiveness of Banff and other national parks. Parks Canada will market the park to regional visitors and other Canadians, especially urban, new (recently immigrated) and/or young Canadians (under 22 years of age). The park will develop and promote new programs and services that facilitate “*virtual experience*” and “*drive through awareness*” experiences and will enhance facilities that support “*view from the edge*” experiences.

Visitors will be welcomed to nature, beauty, culture and adventure by ensuring that “welcome” is a recurring theme at each stage of the trip cycle for visitors. They will be connected to exceptional experiences by offering a comprehensive range of recreational, leisure and learning opportunities and by continually reviewing and refreshing the visitor experience product offer. This will include actively attracting “voluntourists” and engaging park visitors in stewardship activities, making the protection and management of the park an enriching source of meaningful experiences. Other initiatives will include:

- Revitalizing the park’s camping offer by investing in infrastructure for first-time campers, recreational-vehicle users and those seeking hassle-free or comfort-enhanced camping;
- Reserving dedicated bicycle lanes on parkways such as the Minnewanka Loop;
- Creating a spectacular cycle route from Canmore to Jasper that enables cyclists to avoid using the TCH;
- Improving wastewater treatment, energy and water conservation and recycling facilities at visitor facilities such as campgrounds, washrooms and visitor centres;



- Renewing the park's extensive and varied network of 1,500 kilometres of trails, with a priority on the heavily used day-use trails in the Bow River watershed;
- Linking national historic site stories to the broader mountain park landscape and to contemporary visitor experiences and providing a range of innovative and engaging learning opportunities to keep their stories alive and relevant;
- Increasing the profile of the North Saskatchewan Heritage River and of the World Heritage Site status of Banff National Park;
- Bringing the mountains to people where they live by using social media, modern technology and outreach programming to bring current, lively and engaging content and park experiences into homes, schools and communities;
- Developing, supporting and promoting special events and new recreational activities that promote public understanding and appreciation of Rocky Mountain ecosystems and history, and Parks Canada's mandate; and
- Maintaining a consistently high standard of heritage interpretation provided by Parks Canada and by businesses operating in the park.

### *Managing Development and Commercial Activities*

Banff National Park's long history and popularity have resulted in extensive development and developed areas are essential staging areas for visitors to experience and learn about the national park. Limits to development in Canada's national parks were established in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a result of extensive analysis and public review.

Parks Canada will maintain limits to commercial development in Banff National Park while encouraging creative redevelopment to enhance visitor experiences and the quality of the built environment. The park will support the town of Banff and the park community of Lake Louise in their primary roles as centres for visitors to Banff National Park and as sustainable mountain communities and will maintain limits to the size, additional commercial development and land use for the two communities.



A stronger Parks Canada presence will be established in the town of Banff through development of visitor facilities on Banff Avenue, renewal of national historic sites and enhanced interpretive programming in the town centre.

New or relocated trails, campsites and roofed overnight shelters will be considered, subject to environmental assessment, where these contribute to high-quality visitor experiences consistent with area concepts and align with ecological integrity priorities. Site guidelines will be developed with each ski area and will include negotiated permanent limits to growth. New commercial activities may be considered where they clearly enhance Parks Canada's ability to manage the amount, timing or nature of human activity.

Previously disturbed landscapes will be restored to high-value Rocky Mountain habitats such as grassland, aspen parkland, open Douglas fir savanna and wetlands. The park will build on recent successes in reducing non-renewable fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from national park operations.

### *Area Concepts*

The park has been divided into nine distinct geographic areas in which the overarching concepts will be applied according to local conditions. Areas in and adjacent to the Bow Valley have high levels of use and development, in contrast to the remote wilderness areas away from the transportation corridors. Highlight actions include:

- Continued implementation of approved strategies for:
  - The Icefields Parkway: refurbishment of facilities including the entrance gates, enhanced interpretive opportunities focused on climate change and improved stewardship practices;
  - The Lake Louise area: continued improvements to wildlife habitat and corridors, enhanced frontcountry trails, expanded interpretive opportunities; and
  - The Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff: continued trail improvements to enhance visitor opportunities and reduce wildlife habitat fragmentation, better integration between the town and adjacent park lands, redevelopment of the Cave and Basin National Historic Site.



- Revitalization of the East Gate as a place of welcome;
- The establishment of a stronger Parks Canada presence in the town of Banff;
- Renewing existing visitor infrastructure and pursuing opportunities to enhance services in ways that also support ecosystem goals;
- Pursuing methods to reduce wildlife mortality along the railway and roads in the park; and
- The continuation of high-quality wildlife habitat in the East Slopes area and continued opportunities to enjoy remote wilderness.

### *Performance Measurements*

Seventeen national indicators, supported by 37 measures, will provide a means by which to monitor and assess progress in implementing the management plan. The next State of the Park Report will be prepared in 2014.



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# 1 A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF BANFF NATIONAL PARK

*Banff National Park reveals the majesty and timelessness of the Rocky Mountains –from the high peaks of the Continental Divide to the alpine meadows and quiet valleys of the Front Ranges, from headwater glaciers to the hot springs at Sulphur Mountain. This is a place where nature flourishes and evolves for all time.*

*People from around the world feel welcomed into the life of the park, finding inspiration, enjoyment, well-being and understanding.*

*Canadians celebrate and renew Banff's mountain heritage—the natural rhythms of the land and its wildlife; the art and literature it inspires; and the traditions of wilderness adventure and ecosystem conservation that evolved here. Visitors are transformed by their own personal experiences of mountain ecosystems and culture, and inspired to become part of the shared enterprise of sustaining and presenting all that is authentic and valued about the Canadian Rockies.*

*Banff National Park is, above all else, a place of wonder, where the richness of Canada's mountain heritage is appreciated, respected and celebrated by all.*

*These mountains are our sacred places.*  
– Chief John Snow, Wesley Band of the Nakoda First Nations

## 2 A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BANFF NATIONAL PARK

National parks occupy the very heart of humankind's landscape of hope and renewal. The enduring values of these special places anchor the human spirit and preserve ecological functions in a world of change. These are among the most carefully protected places on the planet, valued not least for the simple fact of their existence, but also as places where visitors are welcomed to renew themselves in surroundings that celebrate Canada's nature and history. In national parks, people find renewal and inspiration through personal experience of the real places and stories that define Canada.

### 2.1 Mandate and Direction for the Plan

This management plan will guide the overall direction of Banff National Park for the next 10-to-15 years and will serve as a framework for all planning and decisions within the park.

#### **Parks Canada Mandate**

*On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.*

The *Canada National Parks Act* requires that each of Canada's national parks have a management plan. These plans reflect the policies and legislation of the Government of Canada and are prepared in consultation with Canadians. Parks Canada reviews and updates management plans every five years.

Parks Canada's corporate outcome statement, which frames all program activities is:

*Canadians have a strong sense of connection, through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations. (Corporate Plan 2009/10–2013/14)*

Parks Canada's corporate priorities include:

- *Parks Canada will continue to lead active management projects in national parks to improve key ecological integrity indicators. Investments will be made in a strategic manner to achieve results on the ground;*
- *A greater percentage of Canadians will report awareness and understanding of the heritage places managed by Parks Canada. As well, more Canadians will be aware of the increasing number of opportunities created for their involvement; and*
- *Targeted Parks Canada initiatives will attract a greater number of visitors to national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas as experiential travel destinations through a Parks Canada - focused approach on the creation of visitor experience opportunities.*

In implementing its core mandate that integrates heritage resource conservation, visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding, the Parks Canada Agency gives first priority to maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity. This ensures that national parks will remain unimpaired for the benefit, education and enjoyment of future generations.

## 2.2 Planning Process

In 1994, at the request of the Government of Canada, the Banff-Bow Valley Task Force provided recommendations for the long-term management of Banff that would maintain ecological integrity while allowing appropriate levels of development and continued access for visitors. The independent task force

comprised five people from the academic and private sectors with expertise in ecological sciences, tourism, public policy and management. Public involvement was a key component of the task force's work. A round table, consisting of representatives from 14 sectors with interests in the area, crafted a vision, principles and values to guide the management of the Bow Valley and Banff National Park.

The 1997 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan, approved after four years of scientific study, analysis and public consultation, incorporated many of the round table's recommendations.

The 1997 plan has proven important in, and effective at, improving the ecological health of Banff National Park. It has also provided guidance for investments and decisions that support the continued relevance and attractiveness of Banff National Park as Canada's best-known national park and a global visitor destination. The first five-year review of the management plan in 2004 led to the incorporation of a Human Use Management Strategy, including the Lake Louise Area Strategy. The most recent amendment was the addition of an action plan for the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff in 2007.

Parks Canada's approach to management planning has evolved over the years. In 2008, Parks Canada finalized new national Management Planning Guidelines. These guidelines require, among other things, that management plans should provide strategic direction, as opposed to specific prescriptive measures, and that their content should more effectively integrate the three elements of Parks Canada's mandate: heritage resource conservation, visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding.

The current review of the amended 1997 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan provided an opportunity to build on a strong foundation of policy direction while aligning the plan with the new planning guidelines and corporate priorities. This is not a new plan; it is a rewritten plan that carries forward existing policy direction for the ecological integrity of Banff National Park and incorporates new content relating to visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding.

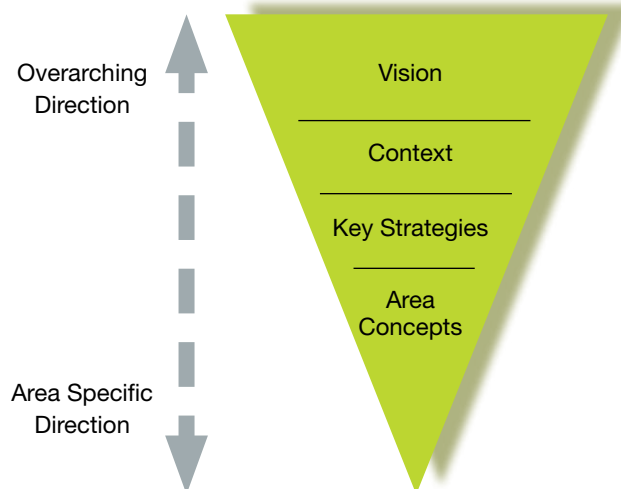
The seven mountain national parks—Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Jasper, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Lakes—share many features and issues in common. Visitors travel from one park to another, and stakeholders often have interests in several parks. Consequently, Parks Canada has reviewed and amended the management plans for the seven parks concurrently, through a common process.

The seven management plans share an overall mountain park vision and closely related common thematic strategies (key strategies), to ensure coordinated approaches.

Each management plan contains:

- A specific park vision;
- Contextual information on policy and regulatory considerations;
- Key strategies that provide direction for the park as a whole; and
- Area concepts that provide more specific direction to achieved desired future conditions for distinct geographic areas within each park.

Policy and regulatory considerations, key strategies and specific direction to advance the area concepts, collectively provide management direction for the park and should be considered as an integrated whole.



## 2.3 Measuring Success

Parks Canada's protected areas measure performance by using common, consistent national indicators. These are shown in Annex 1. The indicators are supported by both national and local measures. Parks Canada has developed national indicators and measures for public appreciation and understanding and for visitor experience which replace those used in the 2008 State of the Park Report (SOPR).

One of the implementation tasks for this management plan is to work with stakeholders to develop focused, achievable and robust local measures where these do not already exist.

Parks Canada will continue to publicly account for its performance by preparing annual reports and by publishing, every five years, a SOPR giving a synopsis of the current condition of the park based on key indicators and assessing performance in advancing Parks Canada's mandate.

## 2.4 Regulatory and Policy Context

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* and the *Canada National Parks Act* establish management authorities and accountabilities for national parks. The park management plan provides strategic direction for a national park and is mandated by Section 11 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. The legal framework that defines Parks Canada's accountabilities also includes other important pieces of legislation and the regulations established under the *Canada National Parks Act*. For example:

- The *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and the Government of Canada's *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* ensure thorough, science-based consideration of potential environmental effects, as well as appropriate public review, in advance of any development, licensing and policy decisions;

- Parks Canada has specific obligations under the *Species at Risk Act*. In addition to being the lead federal agency for recovery of the Banff Springs snail, Parks Canada works with other lead agencies for listed species with ranges that span multiple jurisdictions. For example, Parks Canada is working with the lead agency, Environment Canada, and with adjoining provincial agencies in the preparation of recovery plans for caribou;
- Specific limits to community and ski area development are registered under Schedule 4 and 5 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. *The Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement* and this park management plan establish the authorities and direction for land-use planning and development in the town of Banff; and
- Large areas in the mountain parks are legislatively protected by regulation as Declared Wilderness areas in order to preserve their natural character and the unique opportunities associated with it.

Parks Canada is accountable for ensuring that national parks will remain unimpaired for the benefit, education and enjoyment of future generations. A primary tool in achieving this is the application of strategic direction in the park management plan. Additionally, operational and business planning decisions are subject to legislation, policies and guidelines that frame Parks Canada's approach to all national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. Laws, regulations and policies that provide overriding direction on the management of Banff National Park include:

- *Canada National Parks Act*;
- Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies;
- Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management Policy;
- Mountain Parks National Historic Site Management Plans;
- Ski Area Management Guidelines;
- National Parks of Canada Aircraft Access Regulations;
- National Parks Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations;

- Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountains National Parks; and
- Management Bulletin 2.6.10. Recreational Activity and Special Event Assessments.

## 2.5 Collaborative Planning and Management

Banff National Park is privileged to have a very large number of partners to help in the management of the park. Partnering and public involvement are fundamental to Parks Canada's success.

### 2.5.1 First Nations

The Siksika and Stoney/Nakoda First Nations both have long relationships with the lands now included within Banff National Park. Parks Canada and the First Nations are working on initiatives that will welcome Aboriginal people to reconnect with their heritage and enable them to more fully participate in and benefit from the park. The Government of Canada and the Siksika First Nation are also negotiating the resolution of a specific land claim near Castle Mountain.

### 2.5.2 Neighbouring and Internal Jurisdictions

Parks Canada actively collaborates with other jurisdictions that share the responsibility for managing this Rocky Mountain landscape and for serving the people who value it. Adjoining Banff National Park, these include Alberta and British Columbia (B.C.) government ministries, the Town of Canmore and the Municipal District of Bighorn. Within the park, there are particularly close working relationships with the Town of Banff, the Lake Louise Advisory Board and Improvement District 9.

Parks Canada is a member of the Central Rockies Ecosystem Interagency Liaison Group, along with many B.C. and Alberta agencies that collectively manage the regional ecosystem. There are also close associations with neighbouring



management teams in Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and B.C. Parks. The park is also part of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, together with three other national parks and three B.C. provincial parks.

### 2.5.3 Individuals and Organizations

Several hundred volunteers each year contribute thousands of hours of time to a wide variety of work – resource monitoring, trail repairs, litter clean-ups, providing information to visitors, and serving on management advisory groups. More than 14,000 people participate as members of the ParksListens survey panel.

Parks Canada works closely with numerous organizations, such as the Friends of Banff National Park, Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation, the Interpretive Guides Association and Banff Lake Louise Tourism to promote heritage tourism and high-quality national park experiences.

### 2.5.4 The Town of Banff and the Park Community of Lake Louise

Two communities located in the park provide services, support and accommodation and serve as staging areas for visitors to Banff National Park: the town of Banff and the park community of Lake Louise.

The town of Banff, administered by the federal government for more than a century, was incorporated as an Alberta municipality in 1990 through an Incorporation Agreement between Canada and Alberta. Although the town is administered similarly to comparable communities elsewhere in Alberta, it remains fully a part of Banff National Park and is subject to the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations. The federal government retains ownership of all land in the town and, under the Incorporation Agreement, has ultimate approval authority for planning, land use, development and environmental issues.

The Town of Banff completed its third Community Plan in 2008, and the Minister responsible for Parks Canada approved the plan in 2009. The Community Plan lays out the community's vision for the town of Banff and, along with this park management plan, provides policy direction for the town. The Incorporation Agreement requires that Land Use Bylaws in the town of Banff be consistent with the park management plan. The town is the subject of its own section in this plan.

The Lake Louise community serves park visitors in the western side of the park. Parks Canada administers Lake Louise with advice from a community advisory board. The Lake Louise Community Plan, approved in 2001, provides direction for development and use. The Lake Louise community is also the subject of its own section in this park management plan.

## 2.6 The Mountain National Parks

Seven mountain parks – Banff, Glacier, Jasper, Kootenay, Mount Revelstoke, Waterton Lakes and Yoho – together represent the Columbia Mountains and Rocky Mountains Natural Regions. Canadians have chosen, through these national parks, to preserve a large part of their mountain heritage in a natural condition so that future generations can continue to find inspiration in the experiences offered by Canada's mountain environments. Visitors, passers-through, residents and all Canadians benefit from and can contribute to this heritage.

Aboriginal people have used these lands for more than 10,000 years, as evidenced by countless archaeological sites and cultural artifacts, the narratives of early travellers, and the oral traditions of contemporary Aboriginal communities. These parks also contain 15 national historic sites representing major themes in Canadian history.

Two UNESCO World Heritage sites encompass five of the seven parks, reflecting the global community's recognition of their outstanding universal value. Given the shared importance of these parks as core protected areas in western Canada, their management strategies must be both coordinated and contemporary.

While much of the direct management of these parks is the responsibility of Parks Canada, the advice and support of others is critical to success. Many hundreds of stakeholders, area residents and volunteers contribute countless hours through consultation groups, partnering initiatives and voluntary stewardship projects.

Thousands of Canadians contribute their views during consultations on draft management plans. Parks Canada shares with others the leadership and challenge of perpetuating Canada's mountain heritage in order to enrich the experience and understanding of generations to come.

All seven mountain national parks share a common vision that aligns with, and frames, each national park's specific vision.

### **The Mountain Park Vision**

*Canada's mountain national parks are renowned living examples of all that is best in the conservation of mountain ecosystems and history, facilitation of authentic nature-based experience, shared initiative, meaningful learning and Canadian heritage. Visitors to these places feel welcomed into experiences that exceed their expectations.*

*The silent peaks, forest mosaics, living waters, wildlife, people, clean air and endless capacity to inspire bring rejuvenation, hope and self-discovery to future generations, just as they have for the many generations that came before.*





### 3 THE IMPORTANCE OF BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Banff National Park was Canada's first national park and the third (after Yellowstone in the U.S.A. and Royal in Australia) in the world. Visitors continue to find inspiration in its unique blend of mountain nature, mountain beauty, mountain culture and mountain adventure. Other places on the planet offer exceptional examples of one or more of these elements, but none surpasses Canada's Banff National Park for its combined excellence in all four aspects.

The Bow and North Saskatchewan River valleys have been important east-west travel corridors and places of residence for human beings for at least 10,000 years. The first park reserve was established as part of a young nation's efforts to connect Canada by rail through one of these travel corridors, and the Bow Valley continues to be a key continental movement corridor today.

The original reserve around the Sulphur Mountain hot springs was established in 1885, contributing to the emerging national park ideal of protecting heritage places for the benefit, education and enjoyment of all. The success and popularity of the national park idea has since become a national and a global phenomenon, with over 8,500 protected areas in Canada today and more than 106,000 around the world.

As one Banff historian-writer has suggested, one of Canada's greatest cultural achievements may have been the establishment of parks in the Rockies:

*It is not what we built that truly makes us unique as a culture,  
but what we saved.*

—R.W. Sandford (*The Weekender Effect*, 2008)

Banff National Park is renowned for its long history of wildlife research and conservation, its innovations in the applied science of ecological restoration, its role in the Canadian tourism industry, its iconic status as a global symbol of Canada and its contributions to the ongoing evolution of both the theory and practice of protected areas management. Delegations from around the world come to Banff to learn.



Banff National Park, with Yoho and Glacier national parks, is the birthplace of Canada's mountaineering and alpine skiing heritage. It has long been an inspiration to artists and writers who continue to add to a rich body of work that embodies the spirit of the mountains and the connections of people to mountain landscapes. It remains a centre of mountain culture and outdoor adventure where Canadians build relationships with nature, adventure and one another.

There are eight national historic sites within Banff National Park. Seven of them are under the direct management of Parks Canada and have current management plans that were approved in 2008. Implementation of these plans will ensure the continued commemorative integrity of these sites, while direction in this management plan will expand the relevance and reach of their programming and enhance their contribution to contemporary visitor experience.

#### **National Historic Sites in Banff National Park**

Cave and Basin  
Banff Park Museum  
Sulphur Mountain Cosmic Ray Station  
Banff Springs Hotel  
Abbott Pass Refuge Hut  
Skoki Ski Lodge  
Kicking Horse Pass  
Howse Pass

The park contributes significantly to representation of the Rocky Mountains Natural Region. The park protects the headwaters of the Bow River (a major tributary of the South Saskatchewan River) as well as the headwater reaches of the North Saskatchewan, formally designated a Canadian Heritage River. Banff is famous for its towering limestone mountains and cirque lakes, and for its large expanses of wilderness and natural wildlife habitat in close proximity to major centres of human population. It provides important habitat for predator species such as wolves, wolverines and grizzly bears and for native fish species such as bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Rare and sensitive wildlife, including important predators, are more common and widespread today than in the 1970s, and range freely through more of the landscape than in the past.

Features that make Banff unique include:

- The birthplace of Canada's system of national parks: the Cave and Basin National Historic Site;
- The northern limit in Canada for alpine larch, westslope cutthroat trout and other species;
- Readily seen, healthy wild populations of bighorn sheep, mountain goat, elk, mule deer, golden eagles, dippers and other Rocky Mountain wildlife;
- Iconic landscape features, including: Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Peyto Lake and Vermilion Lakes, mounts Rundle and Temple, Cascade Mountain and Bow Falls;
- The hydrological apex of North America (the Columbia Icefield), where water drains to three oceans;
- The North Saskatchewan River and Howse Pass National Historic Site, both of which played key roles in Canada's historic fur trade. The North Saskatchewan is designated a Canadian Heritage River;
- One of Canada's longest caves: Castleguard Cave, 20-kilometres long and extending under the Columbia Icefield;
- Canada's southernmost roadless wilderness areas large enough for multi-day travel;
- The spectacular Bow Valley and Icefields parkways;
- The town of Banff, with its unique array of visitor services, museums, galleries, heritage buildings and the world-renowned Banff Centre; and
- Three world-class downhill ski areas.





## 4 CURRENT SITUATION

Because of its iconic profile and enduring values, Banff National Park is a source of great pride for Canadians, accounting for 25% of all visits to the national parks. Park visitation, while variable from one year to the next, has shown a sustained growth-trend over time. The park now welcomes more than three million visitors each year, has close to 8,000 permanent residents, is bisected by the Trans-Canada Highway (TCH) and the Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway, and has a large number of facilities for visitors. The park operates year-round, with approximately 25% of visits during the winter months. The three ski areas are the cornerstones of winter recreation. Visitors, when surveyed, consistently rate their satisfaction with the park as high.

The fundamental management challenge for Banff National Park is to sustain both its enduring heritage values and its continuing social relevance in a changing world where neither can be taken for granted.

### 4.1 Sources of Information

Parks Canada evaluates programs and activities to ensure that they are meeting the objectives outlined in the management plan for heritage resource conservation, visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding. A major tool for assessing and reporting on the condition of the park and the effectiveness of Parks Canada's management actions is the SOPR.

Prepared every five years, these reports are based on the results of ongoing monitoring of natural and cultural resources, and on social science data gathered from visitors and other Canadians. They play an important role in identifying deficiencies in current park management approaches, in recognizing emerging issues and information gaps, and in determining the scope of management plan reviews.

The most recent SOPR for Banff National Park, released in 2008, assessed ecological integrity to be in fair condition, with a stable trend. Cultural resources



were also rated in fair condition, with a stable-to-improving trend.

Fewer data were available to quantify the state of visitor experiences, public awareness and understanding of the park and partner and stakeholder engagement. Park visitor experiences and learning opportunities were rated fair, with an improving trend. Since then, several visitor surveys on specialized topics (e.g. camping trends, attitudes toward special events and backcountry use) have increased our knowledge of visitor experience. Qualitative visitor experience assessments and analysis of existing data by a consultant augmented the resources available to develop this plan's key strategies for visitor experience.

Plan content is also shaped by ongoing dialogue with the public and stakeholders, both in this plan's revision process and through other planning processes.

The following section summarizes the findings of the SOPR and other work that provide some of the context for this management plan.

## 4.2 State of the Park Report Summary

The 2008 SOPR included the following key findings:

- The condition of ecological integrity indicators is fair overall, with varying trends. Individual measures of most concern are Species at Risk (notably caribou), water quality, aquatic connectivity, non-native plants and grizzly bear population stability;
- There has been success in management of the elk population, the restoration of wildlife corridors, reducing the fragmentation impacts of the TCH through installation of crossing structures, protection measures for the endangered Banff Springs snail, and the restoration of fire through prescribed burns;
- The rapidly growing regional population continues to create pressures, with changing uses on surrounding lands, impacts on migratory wildlife and increasing traffic volumes. The significant increase in provincial park protective status in both Alberta and B.C. has helped to offset these pressures, providing complementary buffer areas and absorbing some recreational demand away from the national park;



- The impact of changing climate is measured by increasing temperatures, lower winter precipitation and glacier recession, and may be a contributing factor to forest insect outbreaks; the long-term ecological impacts are difficult to predict;
- Cultural resources are still secondary in profile to ecological resources; because of data limitations, including lack of recent inventories and evaluation, trends are not reported;
- Indicators for visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding are being developed nationally. Existing data are used to report on most indicators, but there are gaps for connection to place, facilitating understanding and influencing attitudes;
- Total visitor numbers continue to slowly and steadily increase, but camping has declined by about 20% in the last five years. There has been a noticeable shift in markets, with a decline in international visitors replaced by an increase in regional visitors; the majority of park visits are made by people from the surrounding region. Significant opportunities remain to reach a broader cross-section of urban Canadians;
- Visitor satisfaction remains high and visitors participate in a wide-range of activities, with driving and townsite-related activities (shopping, restaurants) the most popular. About 65% of visitor facilities are in fair condition. Because of its reliance on existing information sources, the SOPR reflects the historic emphasis on facilities and activities rather than quality of experience; and
- The effectiveness of public education programs is not well measured. Better knowledge of markets and the use of new technology are opportunities for reaching more visitors. Many visitors are repeat visitors, requiring different methods of contact from those traditionally used – notably the challenge of reaching them at home before they arrive at the park. The growth of resorts, second-home communities, provincial parks and access to last-minute tourism “deals” via the Internet has broadened the choice of recreational destinations for regional visitors.

### 4.3 Visitation Trends

Visitation to Banff grew at a compounded annual growth rate of almost 5.5% after World War II, from about half-a-million in 1950 to almost five million by the mid-1990s (Banff Bow Valley: At the Crossroads, 1996, page 42; counts in this period included through traffic, which is no longer included in the park visitor tally). The rate of annual increase has moderated in the last 20 years from 1.4% in the 1990s to 1.0% by the end of the first decade of the 21st Century. Visitation levels fluctuate from year-to-year, depending on various economic and market factors. The highest number of park visitors, 3,348,632, was in 2007–2008. Each year, more than four million additional travellers pass through Banff National Park on the TCH without stopping to visit.

The growth in visitation to Banff National Park, however, has not kept pace with regional population growth. This suggests a relative shift of public interest away from visiting Banff, and in that sense reflects a broader phenomenon that has seen visitation stagnant or falling off in national parks and national historic sites across Canada in recent years. A primary consideration in the management of Banff National Park must be to ensure its continued relevance in a changing, more urban Canada. For Banff to achieve its full potential as a national park, a key priority is to renew and reinvent visitor experience in ways that respond to the motivations and interests of the full-range of Canadians. Meeting this challenge will promote increased visitation and, through that, the deep personal connections that arise through personal experience of real, inspiring places. Those connections are the basis for continually renewing the constituency for heritage conservation that is essential to sustain Canada's protected areas legacy into the future.

In preparation for the 2009–2010 management plan review, Parks Canada undertook visitor experience assessments, market analysis and focus group sessions. Visitor satisfaction levels remain high for the quality and range of park services, although visitors perceive congestion at some locations as a problem. Ratings are lowest for visitors' perception of value for money in lodgings and retail facilities. People with an interest in natural and cultural features represent a higher proportion of the park's visitors than of Canada's population as a whole.

## 4.4 Management Priorities and Challenges

Management priorities for Banff National Park include:

- Adapting to the future impacts of global climate change on ecosystems, tourism and hydrology;
- Sustaining progress toward restoring ecosystem health and minimizing risk to sensitive species and habitats;
- Enabling bears, wolves and other carnivores safely to use important habitat areas and movement corridors;
- Sustaining biodiversity in the face of such stressors as climate change and the spread of non-native species;
- Restoring the connectivity, function and natural biota of streams and lakes;
- Building more meaningful engagement with Aboriginal people;
- Improving the sense of welcome and orientation at the points of arrival in the park;
- Minimizing congestion, delays and potential for user conflict among various visitors, especially during peak times and peak seasons;
- Strengthening the perception of value among current visitors while providing more services and connections to through travellers;
- Offering improved information via modern technology to prospective visitors and non-visitors alike;
- Renewing visitor experience products in ways that take into account people's diverse motivations and interests, in order to keep the national park relevant to a full-range of Canadians and international visitors;
- Responding in a timely and meaningful way to changing travel and recreational trends;
- Using Banff's iconic profile to introduce people to other protected areas in the national system;

- Managing special events, new recreational activities, guide business licences, and commercial access to wilderness in ways that strengthen Parks Canada's brand;
- Providing long-term certainty for Banff's internationally acclaimed ski areas, as a cornerstone of winter tourism.
- Providing more efficient and coordinated engagement of volunteers; and
- Raising the profile and enhancing the appreciation of national historic sites and cultural heritage features.



## 5 GUIDING CONCEPTS AND KEY STRATEGIES

The following guiding concepts and associated key strategies summarize Parks Canada's overall approach to delivering its mandate in the unique context of Banff National Park.

### 5.1 It All Starts Here

Canada's entire system of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas owes its origins to the Government of Canada's 1885 decision to reserve the area around the Sulphur Mountain hot springs for public benefit. A place of spiritual renewal and healing to the Aboriginal people who travelled the mountain valleys of western Canada became, because of the visionary leadership of the government of the day, Canada's first protected park.

From its beginning in Banff, Canada's system of protected heritage places has grown to become one of the greatest in the world: 42 national parks, 167 national historic sites and three national marine conservation areas from sea-to-sea-to-sea. Canada's idea of national parks combined resource protection and tourism to create a unique model of conservation – protection achieved through and with visitor experience and learning. That idea has also continued to grow and evolve, giving rise to remarkable successes as diverse as the reintroduction of plains bison to Grasslands National Park in southern Saskatchewan in 2007 and the protection of ancestral homelands and lifeways with the expansion of Nahanni National Park in 2009.

Parks Canada has come to be recognized globally as a leader in protected-area conservation.

More than three million Canadians and international tourists now visit Banff National Park each year, making it the most popular and heavily visited park in Canada. Because of its location on the TCH, many millions more pass through the park on their way to other destinations.

Parks Canada will continue to take advantage of the popularity and profile of Banff National Park to tell its national story to visitors from across Canada and around the world. Visitors to Banff will be encouraged to experience Parks Canada's spectacular array of protected heritage places throughout the country – places that continue to build our nation by connecting Canadians with the ecosystems and histories that define us.

### 5.1.1 Key Strategy

***Embrace Banff National Park's role as Canada's first national park and a flagship for protected-areas policy by:***

- *Ensuring all programs, services and communications include a focus beyond the park to the greater ideal of protected-area conservation in Canada that arose here, and to the growing system of protected heritage areas that Parks Canada manages on behalf of all Canadians; and*
- *Providing exemplary leadership in the development and application of protected-area policy and in sustaining the national dialogue about the unique conservation model embodied by Canada's protected heritage areas.*

#### Direction:

- 5.1.1.1 Interpret Banff National Park's significance not just in the context of the ecology and history of the Rocky Mountains Natural Region that it represents, but also in the context of Canada's system of protected-areas conservation and of the park's global significance as part of a World Heritage Site; and
- 5.1.1.2 Develop and host demonstration projects, policy colloquia and other ways of contributing to policy development or leading its implementation.



### 5.1.2 Key Strategy

***Share opportunities to shape and lead the management of Canada's first national park by:***

- *Helping stakeholders connect with the park through structured opportunities to participate in decision-making and direction-setting processes;*
- *Taking into account the multiple, diverse interests and concerns of stakeholders and the public in decision-making and operations; and*
- *Promoting long-term support for, and stewardship of, Banff National Park by fostering co-operation and joint action.*

**Direction:**

**5.1.2.1 Ensure that all public engagement activities and processes:**

- Have clear objectives and desired outcomes;
- Are inclusive, accessible and effective for the task at hand; and
- Respect participant time, needs, capacity and contribution.

**5.1.2.2 Affirm and expand the central role of the Banff National Park round table by amending its membership and terms of reference to ensure balanced representation of stakeholder (constituent) groups and continuing involvement in policy implementation discussions.**

**5.1.2.3 Establish new advisory groups only when doing so addresses a management plan priority and alternative approaches do not exist. Link the work of all park advisory groups to the round table and implementation of the park management plan.**



## 5.2 Connecting - Reconnecting

Mountain landscapes are naturally fragmented by rock, rivers and ice. Travel can be challenging and dangerous for both people and wildlife. Mountains have always served to isolate cultures and populations, making the few connecting corridors through these landscapes critically important.

The establishment of Banff National Park resulted, in large part, from early government efforts to connect a young nation from coast-to-coast by means of a transcontinental rail line. The Bow Valley was one of the few parts of Canada's mountain landscape that people could traverse with relative ease. Aboriginal people had been using the Kicking Horse and Vermilion passes for many thousands of years as trade and travel routes, and modern rail and highway development naturally followed their existing trails.

The establishment of a park had the effect of disconnecting First Nations from ways of life they had known for many years. The construction of the CP Railway in the 1880s, followed in the 1960s by the TCH, had the effect of connecting Canada from east-to-west but also fragmented wildlife populations in the Rocky Mountains by creating both barriers to movement and sources of mortality. Transportation construction and later lake-stabilization and hydro projects had the further effect of disconnecting waterways, cutting fish off from spawning grounds and impairing the natural processes of annual flooding. While Banff National Park's first century helped connect Canada, in many ways it disconnected and fragmented the landscape.

For much of the 20th Century, Banff National Park was a place of contentious debates between proponents of the tourism economy and proponents of conservation. By the late 1980s, consequently, the divisions in the landscape seemed mirrored by the divisions in the human community. The Banff Bow Valley Study process and Heritage Tourism Strategy were visionary, concerted efforts to address the problems of fragmentation – both ecological and social.



If the hallmarks of the first century of Banff's existence were fragmentation and divisiveness that shrank the landscape of possibilities for Canada's Rocky Mountains, its second century must be about connecting and reconnecting in ways that create new meaning and possibilities for the future. Strengthening connections among people and reducing fragmentation in the landscape may become increasingly important as a strategy for adapting to future pressures.

### 5.2.1 Key Strategy

***Make Banff National Park a place of connecting – and reconnecting – people, landscapes, wildlife populations and waterways by:***

- *Recognizing and working to correct the past disconnections in the natural environment and in human relationships to the landscape;*
- *Managing the park as an inter-related part of a much larger regional ecosystem;*
- *Sponsoring shared endeavour to build community among people of diverse perspectives; and*
- *Managing transportation corridors as much to connect ecosystems, as to connect people to their travel destinations.*

#### Direction:

- 5.2.1.1 Use consultation processes and advisory boards to forge connections among stakeholders of diverse perspectives and interests.
- 5.2.1.2 Work with Aboriginal communities to honour and restore cultural connections. Encourage the gathering and sharing of knowledge about how Aboriginal people understand the land. Incorporate this information into management decision making in ways that are respectful of cultural traditions and intellectual property.

- 5.2.1.3 Participate in regional and national initiatives to coordinate land-use planning, pursue common goals for resource protection and visitor experience and improve decision-making in the regional ecosystem.
- 5.2.1.4 Maintain and restore secure wildlife corridors within the park (e.g. the Cascade, Fairview and Whitehorn corridors) and collaborate to assist the protection of larger-scale corridors (e.g. Yellowstone to Yukon, Bow Valley–Vermilion Valley corridor) by maintaining or improving habitat quality and minimizing displacement of wildlife.
- 5.2.1.5 Where feasible, restore connectivity of streams, wetlands and lakes where they have been impaired by dams, culverts and linear developments. Prioritize based on ecological benefit, opportunity and cost.
- 5.2.1.6 Maintain safe through transportation for Canada while designing and maintaining highways and the railroad in ways that enhance the ability of animals to move safely through the mountain landscape.
- 5.2.1.7 Work with helicopter companies to develop and implement flight corridors and best practices for overflights in order to minimize disturbance to wildlife and humans using wilderness valleys and passes.

### 5.3 A Model of National Park Stewardship

Managing protected areas in a changing world is challenging and complex. Canada's mountain national parks have long been at the forefront of research, involvement and innovation to rethink and redesign the way in which people interact with landscapes, sharing these places with the world and yet ensuring that they remain unimpaired for future generations. As part of a community of protected areas, Banff National Park has benefited from experience gained in other places and from the fresh thinking of knowledgeable people who share an interest in these special places.

To achieve the intended results of the management plan, the park must involve people in finding solutions to challenges large and small, by learning and doing, and working together.



Strengthening the culture of co-operation, learning and stewardship in the park is a priority. While resolving management challenges, the park can create visitor opportunities, as evidenced in recent work on wildlife monitoring, prescribed fire, invasive weed management, bird monitoring and trail planning. Through innovative programs, Parks Canada will continue to increase participation in park stewardship and to strengthen relationships and will reach urban and youth audiences as the way into the future.

Parks Canada is mandated to ensure that parks remain unimpaired for the benefit, education and enjoyment of future generations. Canadians place a high value on the ecological well-being and cultural heritage of their mountain national parks. These factors focus research attention, innovation and investment on the conservation challenges that the mountain parks share with many other mountain landscapes in the world. As a result, the mountain parks have repeatedly led in developing new ways to solve conservation problems.

### 5.3.1 Key Strategy

#### ***Turn the exceptions into the exceptional by:***

- *Continually exploring new ways for Banff National Park to turn what might appear as challenges or anomalies in a national park context into opportunities to connect Canadians to their Rocky Mountain heritage;*
- *Promoting and sustaining the critical analysis, collegiality and creative thinking that can resolve conservation challenges through innovation;*
- *Leading in the development and implementation of new conservation techniques; and*
- *Making Banff's conservation successes a part of the national park visitor experience and of the story we tell the world, so that they influence thinking and offer hope for the future beyond the park's borders.*

Banff is not only Canada's first national park; it has long been its most controversial. Since its origin, it has been a focus of debates over the kinds of

development and use that are most fitting in a national park context. These have ranged from arguments in the early 1900s about whether automobiles should be allowed in the park, to debates in the 1940s and 1950s about whether predators should continue to be killed, to the development controversies of the late 20th Century involving highway expansion and commercial growth in the town of Banff and ski areas.

A major transcontinental highway, a railway, three ski resorts, a golf course, hydro power development and a thriving town with a permanent resident population approaching 8,000 are unconventional in a national park context. These, however, have come to define Banff National Park almost as much as do the unparalleled mountain scenery, healthy ecosystems, mountain culture, opportunities for wilderness adventure and a role in Canada's history.

Each of these anomalies offers unique and important opportunities for Parks Canada and its partners to enlarge on the significance of this place and its national park status. Indeed, this is exactly what Parks Canada has been doing in Banff for the past 125 years. Banff will continue to change the story of what is possible in conservation and tourism, simply by taking advantage of the fact that it is Banff—a national park of challenging and exciting contradictions.

#### Direction:

- 5.3.1.1 Approach each conservation challenge as an opportunity to engage a diverse community of interested Canadians in sharing information, developing options and collaborating. Move beyond mitigating the effects of developments to finding opportunities to advance the practice of ecosystem conservation and to produce new stories of conservation successes.
- 5.3.1.2 Actively support the work of the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation, the Interpretive Guides Association, the Friends of Banff National Park, the non-profit recreation sector and tourism operators to create examples of tourism innovation that enhance the role of Banff as an exceptional national park.



- 5.3.1.3 Collaborate with ski areas, resorts, visitor service providers and attractions to develop and promote sustainable tourism products rooted in the ecological and cultural heritage of the Rocky Mountains.
- 5.3.1.4 Work with an ecosystem science committee and advisory group as a primary means to synthesize science findings and develop new adaptive management strategies. Consider the greater park ecosystem, while retaining a primary focus on the highly significant Bow River montane landscapes.
- 5.3.1.5 Develop and implement approaches that enable keystone species such as grizzly bears and humans to share the landscape in ways that ensure the safety of both.
- 5.3.1.6 Expand and improve the use of environmental technologies (such as renewable energy, waste diversion, composting and water and energy conservation) in campgrounds, day-use areas, backcountry huts and lodges and Parks Canada operations and, through development review, in commercial facilities. Communicate these initiatives to visitors.
- 5.3.1.7 Ensure that conservation measures such as highway crossing structures, prescribed fires, historic building restoration, salvage archaeology and trail relocations are also designed and implemented to enhance experience and learning opportunities.
- 5.3.1.8 Implement restrictions on use where no other effective measures exist to protect sensitive resources or to ensure public safety. Communicate the rationale and need to those affected by these closures. Where restrictions are required, strive to provide meaningful alternatives (see also 5.4.2.7).

### Conservation Leadership

The challenge of a major highway fragmenting the Rocky Mountain landscape and taking a continuing toll on wildlife led to Parks Canada's successful innovations with highway fencing, wildlife underpasses and wildlife overpasses. Because of these pioneering ecosystem restoration experiments in Banff, the use of fences and wildlife crossing structures is increasingly common in many important wildlife areas around the world. Without the Trans-Canada Highway, this contribution of Parks Canada to the applied science of ecosystem restoration would not have originated in Banff. In this sense, the presence of a highway in a national park served to increase the conservation significance and role of the park by extending its reach to many other places where roadkills and ecosystem fragmentation need effective solutions.

Similarly, Banff was the first place in Canada to close its garbage dumps and develop bear-proof garbage containers. Systems pioneered in Banff have since been adopted as a standard in national parks and many other jurisdictions, and are protecting bears and people in many parts of Canada.

Banff National Park will continue to pioneer new or improved approaches to mitigating the impacts of development and innovative ways to restore ecosystem functions.

### 5.3.2 Key Strategy

#### ***Share the excitement of science and stewardship by:***

- *Involving as many Canadians as possible in the monitoring and study of mountain ecosystems, and in the synthesis and evaluation of results, while maintaining a high degree of scientific rigour and statistical validity; and*
- *Ensuring that regional stakeholders, park visitors, park businesses and broader communities are fully engaged in the creative dialogue and learning opportunities associated with the development of new conservation solutions.*



Parks Canada continues to seek new ways to engage interested stakeholders, park visitors, businesses and community members in monitoring programs, research data collection and the integration and application of science findings. This approach – delivering science activities in ways that create meaningful opportunities not just for the scientists involved but for visitors and the regional community – has become characteristic of Banff National Park and will remain a key strategy in the management of the park.

Ecosystem science provides not just insights and advice, but valuable opportunities for individual experience and collective learning. As our understanding of mountain ecosystems continues to evolve, science findings will help shape the stories shared through interpretation and outreach programs.

Many Canadians are committed to, and passionate about, sustaining the health of park resources and the quality of park facilities. Parks Canada will actively engage volunteers and park visitors in as many stewardship activities as possible, making the protection and management of the park an enriching source of meaningful experiences.

Direction:

- 5.3.2.1 Establish priorities for applied science programs, ecosystem monitoring, science partnering and science communications in collaboration with academic institutions, interest groups, stakeholders and the interested public.
- 5.3.2.2 Increase the involvement of volunteers in scientific research and monitoring programs. Design a citizen science program around core ecological monitoring programs and other ecosystem studies. Share the stories of citizen scientists widely through the Internet and new media.
- 5.3.2.3 Collaborate on an ongoing basis with stakeholders and commercial operators to integrate science findings into the stories they share with park visitors.



- 5.3.2.4 Ensure that park visitors are aware of, and understand, conservation initiatives, particularly those that may restrict their use of the park, and that this awareness contributes to their park learning experience.
- 5.3.2.5 Share the continuing excitement of discovery and science adventure by feeding ongoing research and monitoring findings through the Internet and new media to high-visitor-use locations in the national park and beyond, to schools and to homes around the world.
- 5.3.2.6 Create public spaces (physical and virtual) where scientists, volunteers and visitors can intermingle, sustaining intellectual ferment about park ecosystems and facilitating a diversity of learning and experience opportunities.

### 5.3.3 Key Strategy

#### ***Manage for healthy ecosystems by:***

- *Building on the successes of recent years, continuing to protect and, where necessary, restore ecosystems;*
- *Prioritizing for restoration and intensive management of those ecosystem components that are most rare (including those legally designated as “at risk”), are of exceptional ecological significance, and/or are most vulnerable, including keystone species; and*
- *Incorporating meaningful opportunities for visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding into ecosystem management and restoration programs.*

Successful implementation of this strategy will support the capacity of the park’s ecosystems to adapt to climate change, while enabling Canadians to continue enjoying and learning about healthy, intact ecosystems and wild places. It will protect, in perpetuity, our common natural heritage.

Vibrant scenery, abundant wildlife and healthy ecosystems are at the heart of visitors’ ongoing attraction to Banff National Park and are the foundation and



prerequisite for a sustainable tourism industry. As well, the park maintains and enhances public support for ecological integrity by welcoming increasing numbers of visitors into opportunities to connect with, and learn about, mountain ecosystems.

Visitors to Banff National Park find a wide range of natural systems, from virtually pristine glacial headwaters and alpine meadows to montane lakes, streams and grasslands. Grizzly bears and other predators occupy most of their historic range in the park. Bighorn sheep, mountain goats, elk and other large mammals are widespread; only bison and possibly caribou are missing today from the historic Rocky Mountain fauna.

The lower Bow Valley and Lake Louise area are places where high ecological value and high-use overlap. They are affected by transportation corridors, manmade disturbances, high levels of human activity, fire suppression and invasion by non-native plants. Wildlife populations range across park boundaries, and co-ordinated regional responses are required for effective management of issues such as human-caused mortality.

As it has during the last 10 years, Parks Canada will continue to focus on:

- Restoring disturbed ecosystems and the role of fire;
- Understanding interactions among predators, prey and people in the montane ecosystem;
- Improving habitat security for wary carnivores in critical wildlife corridors and seasonal habitat areas;
- Contributing to healthy regional landscapes by working with regional neighbours; and
- Providing visitors with opportunities to learn about and contribute to park resource management efforts.

Banff National Park contains the pristine headwaters of the Bow, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan rivers – rivers that are vital to people living east of the mountains. The park participates in the Bow Basin Watershed Management Plan.

Direction:Montane ecoregion

- 5.3.3.1 Collaborate with scientists, interested community members, citizen scientists and park visitors on adaptive management experiments aimed at understanding and restoring key ecological processes (predation, fire, herbivory and dispersal) that sustain Banff's montane ecosystems. These ecosystems make up only 3% of the park's landscape, but are disproportionately important for biodiversity and wildlife wintering range.

Alluvial fans and riparian areas

- 5.3.3.2 Wherever feasible, redirect development, trails and disturbance away from alluvial fans and riparian areas through development review, recapitalization projects and visitor and stakeholder education. Prioritize these ecologically critical areas for ecosystem restoration activities and measures to mitigate existing development impacts.
- 5.3.3.3 Restore natural hydrological regimes and, where feasible, aquatic community structure (see also 5.2.1.5).

Aquatic ecosystems

- 5.3.3.4 Develop and promote new visitor experience opportunities by engaging anglers and other interested Canadians in activities to eliminate or reduce populations of non-native fish species that pose a risk to native fish populations through displacement or hybridization.
- 5.3.3.5 Maintain or improve water quality in all reaches of the Bow River in order to meet or exceed reference conditions where the river flows out of the park; maintain the highest quality in all other rivers originating in the park. Ensure all communities and outlying facilities meet or exceed Parks Canada mountain parks targets for treated wastewater effluent where it is discharged to aquatic ecosystems.
- 5.3.3.6 Complete the experimental removal of non-native fish species from, and restoration of, the Devon Lakes' aquatic ecosystem. Evaluate the project's potential for application elsewhere.



**Environmental Stewardship Leadership Targets for  
Communities and Outlying Facilities in the Mountain National Parks**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Federal Guidelines</b>	<b>Parks Canada Mountain Parks Targets</b>
Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	1	< 0.15
Fecal Coliforms (CFU/100ml)	400 (MF Method)	< 20 (end of pipe)
Solids, total suspended (mg/L)	25	<10
5-Day Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD <sub>5</sub> ) (mg/L)	20	< 10 (summer) < 20 (winter)
Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> - N) (mg/L)	N/A	< 1 (summer) <5 (winter)
Chlorine (Alberta standard)	N/A	0.10 mg/L

*Grasslands and forest savannas*

5.3.3.7 Maintain a core Parks Canada program, and enhance this with new volunteer-based experience opportunities to:

- Minimize or eliminate invasive non-native weed plants from areas of native vegetation;
- Restore the vegetation structure of fire-maintained vegetation types such as Douglas fir savanna; and
- Maintain natural population densities and distribution of elk and other species that significantly influence vegetation health.

- 5.3.3.8 Where vegetation structure has been restored, use prescribed fire on a repeated basis to maintain grasslands and forest savannas.

*Restoration and replication of ecosystem processes*

- 5.3.3.9 Fire: Through prescribed and wild fire, work to ensure that all parts of the park achieve 50% of their long-term fire cycle.
- 5.3.3.10 Predation: Minimize displacement of wary carnivores such as wolves and cougars, especially in the montane ecoregion, to ensure that predators have effective use of available habitat throughout their life cycles.
- 5.3.3.11 Hydrology: As opportunities arise, remove or modify culverts, berms and other structures to restore aquatic connectivity and natural stream and lake processes.
- 5.3.3.12 Wildlife movement corridors: Maintain high-quality habitat through managing and minimizing human disturbance in identified wildlife movement corridors.
- 5.3.3.13 Herbivory: Maintain elk populations within their historic range of variability and continue to reduce the effects of unnatural refuges from predators (such as the town of Banff) on their distribution, population growth and migration habits. To the degree feasible, restore the full range of herbivorous animals to the park's ecosystems.

*Species at Risk*

- 5.3.3.14 Integrate protection and education measures for the endangered Banff Springs snail into a renewed visitor experience at the Cave and Basin National Historic Site.
- 5.3.3.15 Complete investigation of the feasibility of restoring a breeding population of Woodland caribou. Act on the findings.
- 5.3.3.16 Collaborate with stakeholders to implement proactive measures that will keep other species from being added to Canada's list of Threatened and Endangered species.

### Species at Risk

The following species found in Banff National Park are listed in Schedule 1 of Canada's *Species at Risk Act*:

Endangered:	Banff Springs snail (endemic to Banff: found nowhere else in the world).
Threatened:	Woodland caribou (southern mountain population).
Special Concern:	Western toad. Lewis' woodpecker (Banff is at the margin of this species' natural range).

Canada's *Species at Risk Act* requires a recovery strategy, one or more action plans and delineation of critical habitat for any species listed as Endangered or Threatened. Species that are listed as Special Concern require a management plan.

Under the lead of Parks Canada, all recovery-planning requirements have been completed and approved for the Banff Springs snail. Recovery planning for all other currently listed species is being led by Environment Canada.

Other species, currently being evaluated, may be listed for recovery during the life of this management plan.

### Bison

- 5.3.3.17 Reintroduce a breeding population of the extirpated plains bison, a keystone species that has been absent from the park since its establishment. Work with stakeholders and neighbouring jurisdictions to address potential concerns through joint management strategies before reintroduction.

Grizzly bears

- 5.3.3.18 Continually improve – through critical scientific analysis, incorporation of new data and peer review – both the assumptions and the inputs used in modelling habitat security and estimating mortality rates. Develop a more robust and cost-effective method of tracking key demographic indicators and evidence-based estimates of grizzly bear population numbers.
- 5.3.3.19 Minimize or eliminate sources of unnatural grizzly mortality, notably along transportation corridors.



## Grizzly Bear Conservation

Grizzly bears are an enduring symbol of the wilderness of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. This wide-ranging species is broadly accepted as an indicator of the health and diversity of mountain ecosystems and as a measure of sustainable land use practices. Where grizzly bears are thriving, we can feel confident that the life requirements of many other mountain species are being met.

Parks Canada, along with provincial partners in British Columbia and Alberta, has established a goal of maintaining a non-declining grizzly bear population in the Rocky Mountains.

Grizzly bear research across North America has led to the development of key concepts and analytical tools for managing grizzly bears. These include ensuring habitat security, especially in core reproductive areas. The survival of reproductive females is the key factor affecting population persistence, especially in light of research findings showing that Banff's grizzly bear population has the lowest reproductive rate documented for this species in North America.

Grizzly bear habitat is considered secure when the animals have a low probability of encountering humans and can go about their activities with little human-caused disturbance. High habitat security is also a proxy for high-quality wilderness settings, so managing for habitat security also maintains the unique character of place that contributes to visitor experience and enjoyment.

Predictability of human activity helps bears avoid people. When human activity is predictable in space and time, there are fewer bear-human conflicts, fewer human injuries and fewer human-caused bear mortalities.



Banff National Park will continue to use grizzly bear habitat security targets as a key decision-making tool in managing development and use levels, based on validated, current analytic models. To that end, the park has been divided into 27 landscape management units that are roughly equivalent in size to the area of a single female grizzly's home range (See Annex 2 for a map of the landscape management units and their habitat security ratings). Parks Canada will strive to maintain or improve calculated habitat security in each of these landscape management units.

Management priorities for grizzly bears in Banff National Park are:

- To build public awareness and understanding of bear ecology and behaviour;
- To minimize conflict between humans and bears;
- To minimize bear mortality from unnatural causes, such as collisions with vehicles and trains; and
- To maintain safe access for grizzly bears to available habitat throughout the landscape.

5.3.3.20 Wherever possible, relocate facilities out of high-quality grizzly habitat and into settings that offer improved recreational experiences and aesthetics (e.g. relocate trails out of riparian areas and onto the slopes above, where the trail tread is better-drained and the scenic views are improved).

5.3.3.21 Develop new recreational trails that concentrate human traffic away from high-quality grizzly habitat, in order to maintain habitat security by minimizing off-trail travel.

5.3.3.22 Minimize risk to grizzlies and to people by educating visitors on safe enjoyment in bear country, eliminating access to unnatural food

attractants, modifying infrastructure and, where necessary, seasonally closing or regulating recreational use of areas important for grizzlies when feeding and travelling. The priority will be to intensively manage the park's four known core reproductive areas for grizzlies in order to optimize the ability of bears to safely use all available habitat in:

- Pipestone/Baker/Skoki watersheds;
- Flints Park/upper Cascade watersheds;
- Red Deer/Panther watersheds; and
- Middle Spray and Bryant Creek watersheds.

5.3.3.23 Work with adjacent land managers to maintain and, where possible, improve habitat connectivity through secure high-quality corridors, allowing genetic exchange and population connectivity between adjacent wildlife populations.

5.3.3.24 In managing for prescribed and wild fires, incorporate as a consideration, their contribution to improving grizzly bear habitat and influencing grizzly bear distributions and movements.

## 5.4 Welcome...to Mountains of Possibilities

Visitors to Banff National Park discover dynamic and healthy mountain ecosystems and enjoy memorable experiences shaped by the nature, beauty, culture and adventure of Canada's Rocky Mountains. For Aboriginal people, the park is a place to reconnect. For urban Canadians, the park offers contrast, renewal and restoration. For the young, it provides discovery, social networking and adventure. Those new to Canada, or experiencing a Canadian national park for the first time, are introduced to the stories that define our country.

No matter what their background or interest, visitors find in Banff National Park the opportunity to create meaningful and rewarding experiences that deepen their awareness and understanding of the natural heritage and cultural history of Canada's Rocky Mountains.

For any of this to happen, however, the first requirement is a visit to the park. Not all Canadians have discovered their national parks or have thought of them as places worthy of a visit. Urbanization, travel costs, competition from other ways of spending leisure time – many factors can disconnect Canadians from their heritage places. Increasing both the number of visitors and the quality of their experiences are important priorities in ensuring the continued relevance and effectiveness of Banff and other national parks.

There are both challenges and opportunities associated with the size of the park, its popularity, the range of year-round activities, and the need to integrate tourism and recreation with ecosystem protection. Banff National Park's diverse public and commercial visitor facilities and visitor nodes are platforms for offering and enhancing park opportunities. Recreational and leisure opportunities – ranging from camping, hiking and nature study to downhill skiing, luxury accommodations and urban shopping – can take on a distinctive flavour and meaning in a world-renowned protected mountain landscape.

Park visitors vary greatly in their needs and expectations. For this reason, Parks Canada and its tourism industry partners rely on ongoing research to understand social trends and visitor needs. This information helps improve and renew the range of visitor experience products. One way in which Parks Canada plans for differing visitor experiences is by managing for five types of engagement (see accompanying box, pgs 46 & 47).

Memorable visitor experiences are also very much founded on the quality of communications – the ability of visitors to obtain accurate, timely and useful information, especially in person from knowledgeable local people. Parks Canada staff cannot personally connect with each of the over three million annual visitors. For many, the primary contact is with service industry workers and tour company guides, many of whom are short-term and recently arrived employees. A key challenge is to establish and maintain consistently high standards of information services and relationship management skills among the front-line staff who serve park visitors.



### 5.4.1 Key Strategy

***Welcome visitors to nature, beauty, culture and adventure by:***

- *Ensuring that “welcome” is a recurring theme at each stage of the trip cycle for visitors; and*
- *Welcoming visitors not only to the mountain ecosystems and history of Banff National Park, but to Parks Canada’s entire family of protected areas and the diversity of Canada that those protected areas represent and celebrate.*

A sense of unqualified welcome to this protected mountain landscape will be reflected in the visitor infrastructure, local ambassadors, Parks Canada staff and other service providers.

As Canada’s busiest and best-known national park and a place of iconic scenery, inspiring human stories and dynamic mountain ecosystems, Banff is uniquely positioned to introduce Canadians and international visitors to the other mountain national parks and to the entire national parks system.

**Direction:**

- 5.4.1.1 Renew the Banff East Gate experience to emphasize welcome and orientation to Banff and the other mountain national parks, to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site and to Parks Canada’s family of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas throughout Canada.
- 5.4.1.2 Renew the Cave and Basin National Historic Site as an exciting, must-see attraction that animates and celebrates the story of the park system that grew from the original Hot Springs Reserve and the remarkable successes in conservation and tourism that were made possible by the unique national park idea that originated there. Welcome visitors who are inspired by this premier example of Canada’s heritage to explore other protected places across Canada.

- 5.4.1.3 Refresh the Icefields Parkway experience, highlighting Canada's premier scenic drive, welcoming visitors to outstanding glaciated landscapes along the Continental Divide and to a defining aspect of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.
- 5.4.1.4 With tourism and community partners, create a communications and learning strategy around the concept of welcome and employ it throughout the park so that it is echoed by all who work and live there, welcoming newcomers and visitors to Banff, Canada and the national park system.

## 5.4.2 Key Strategy

### ***Connect visitors to exceptional experiences by:***

- *Systematically planning for opportunities for enriched visitor experience, at several levels of engagement, within the context of a protected area;*
- *Increasing awareness of Banff National Park as a high-value, year-round destination for visits by a wider array of Canadians;*
- *Ensuring that visitors are aware of the full-range of opportunities available to them for enjoying Banff National Park and the surrounding region and can readily access those that best suit their interest;*
- *Offering a comprehensive range of recreational, leisure and learning opportunities for visitors by continually reviewing and refreshing the visitor experience product offer;*
- *Increasing knowledge of the park's visitors and target markets, and measuring success in facilitating memorable visitor experiences and increasing their connection to place;*
- *Actively attracting "voluntourists" and engaging park visitors in stewardship activities, making the protection and management of the park an enriching source of meaningful experiences; and*
- *Maintaining a consistently high standard of heritage interpretation provided by Parks Canada and by businesses operating in the park.*



### Five Types of Engagement for Visitor Experience

The “**virtual experience**” is targeted to people with an interest in mountain ecosystems, culture, history and recreation, anywhere in the world within reach of technology. For these people, Parks Canada will provide brief, intense, visual and/or auditory experiences of mountain life, delivered through electronic or print media. For reluctant travellers, these experiences may be the visit; for others, they may be instrumental at the imagining/wishing stage of the trip cycle and may provoke a subsequent visit.

Travellers who journey through the park without stopping are targeted for “**drive through awareness**”. To date, these visitors have been largely ignored. Given their significant volume on transportation routes, however, they present a tremendous opportunity for connection to place and environmental stewardship. For this group, a drive along the Trans-Canada or other highways – complete with wildlife fencing, overpasses, underpasses and complementary signage – will offer a contrasting experience to that outside the park. Although their experience will still be primarily visual, subtle interpretation will promote understanding of and support for this ever-protected panorama and encouragement for a return or a longer stay.

Those who prefer to stay close to civilization and park communities represent the second-largest visitor segment and make the most use of park programs, facilities and services. They may come for a day or spend a few days in the park as part of a longer vacation or conference visit. For visitors stopping to snap a picture, have a picnic, go for a short stroll, downhill ski, or take in a festival or special event, the stage will be set for a deeper connection to place. Meaning and value will be added to this “**view from the edge**” experience through entertaining programming with heritage themes and through provision of media that bring the wilderness to the hotel room, day lodge, campsite or gathering place. This will be particularly appealing for those seeking hassle-free travel, rejuvenation and relaxation, or freedom and excitement in outdoor settings.

**“A step into the wild”** experience is for visitors who stay in the park with a primary focus on experiencing the place, but who seldom venture far, physically or perceptually, from civilization. They may visit attractions or take advantage of commercial guiding and transportation services to venture further from the road in relative safety. This smaller visitor segment has more time for personal reflection, in-depth learning and possibilities of memorable moments with wildlife. Their park experience will give them renewal, a sense of freedom and authentic connection to nature and mountain culture. Special care will be taken in the development and maintenance of facilities and services that support this level of experience, as meeting the needs of this type of visitor will not only serve them, but will also go far in establishing a standard of service excellence for all levels of experience that stop in the park.

Visitors who seek **“Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure”** have an inherent affinity for nature or an interest in adventure, challenge and discovery in mountain settings. These visitors become immersed physically and/or perceptually. Their carefully planned, intensely personal experiences may include long day-hikes, outfitted horse travel in remote valleys, expedition travel or lengthy, unguided backpacking trips. Their already strong connection to the park will be maintained through the provision of off-site trip planning information and unobtrusive assistance, and, when desired, contact with certified guides. They will be encouraged to deepen their relationship with the park as ambassadors or stewards.

Connecting Canadians to inspiring and authentic park experiences is integral to the successful delivery of Parks Canada’s mandate. A renewed focus on experiential tourism based on Banff’s distinctive heritage – the nature, beauty, culture and adventure of Canada’s Rocky Mountains – will set the stage for visitors to have the best national park experience possible through the effective collaboration of Parks Canada, the non-profit recreation sector, the tourism industry and the broader Banff community. This effort will be evident in every program and activity and in every aspect of service delivery.



In focusing experience on the unique heritage values of Banff National Park, Park's Canada's brand – *Real. Inspiring.* – will be a unifying theme for product development, promotion and service delivery.

Refreshing, enhancing, expanding and promoting the existing family of visitor experience products will be Banff National Park's priority. In collaboration with external proponents and stakeholders from all sectors, and subject to an assessment process at the national and local levels, however, Parks Canada will also introduce new recreational, leisure and learning activities that support Parks Canada's mandate.

Direction:

- 5.4.2.1 Increase awareness of Banff National Park among a broad spectrum of Canadians as a destination for actual or virtual visits and as a place of conservation leadership. Place priority on marketing the park to regional visitors and other Canadians, especially urban, new (recently immigrated) and/or young Canadians (under 22 years of age).
- 5.4.2.2 Refine and renew visitor facilities, information and promotions, based on visitor experience planning and opportunity development that provides for five types of engagement (see inset box, pgs 46 & 47). Incorporate this approach into all stages of the visitors' trip cycle, from imagining and planning a trip through to sharing post-trip memories.
- 5.4.2.3 Develop and promote new programs and services that facilitate "*virtual experience*" and "*drive through awareness*" experiences. Enhance, and maintain to a high standard, facilities that support "*view from the edge*" experiences.
- 5.4.2.4 Position "*view from the edge*" experiences as an introduction to the park and an invitation to explore further.
- 5.4.2.5 Continually re-evaluate and renew programs, services and promotion associated with "*view from the edge*," "*a step into the wild*" and "*Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*" for opportunities to:



- Align them with ecological goals and area concepts;
- More effectively meet visitor needs and expectations; and
- Enhance interpretation of park heritage themes.

5.4.2.6 Support the efforts of the tourism industry in attracting international visitors by promoting awareness of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

5.4.2.7 Work with partners (such as Travel Alberta, Banff Lake Louise Tourism, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and B.C. Parks, park communities, other mountain national parks and tourism operators) to help visitors become aware of the full range of opportunities available to them for enjoying the Rocky Mountains in the region. This includes municipal and provincial parks and recreation facilities in Alberta and B.C. Help visitors to access the ones that best align with their interests by:

- Developing promotions, programs and services that cater to a range of interests and levels of engagement, help people to tailor their expectations and provide a memorable experience from the moment a trip is contemplated through to post-trip memories;
- Directing visitors to opportunities that best align with their interests, support ecological goals and address capacity issues in the busy summer season;
- Providing them with the information they need in order to ensure their personal safety and to protect park wildlife and ecosystems;
- Using market-sensitive communications to build anticipation for openings in areas that experience periodic restrictions and to explain restrictions or limits in ways that reinforce the special nature of parks, offer alternatives and engage the visitor in learning and shared stewardship;
- Building on the success and strength of existing programs and services for visitors seeking authenticity, cultural exploration and a



sense of freedom, as well as those seeking recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation, offer a comprehensive range of recreational, leisure and learning opportunities for visitors by continually reviewing and refreshing the visitor experience product offer; and

- Working with the Interpretive Guides Association, Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation and others to establish and maintain training and certification standards for staff who work directly with, and provide information to, visitors.

5.4.2.8 Prioritize the renewal and maintenance of front-line services and park assets in locations accessible to the largest numbers of visitors by:



- Clustering and improving reception and orientation facilities as well as picnic and day-use areas, with special emphasis on those that meet the needs of several types of visitor engagement, from large or social family gatherings to quiet contemplation of nature;
- Enhancing interpretation of the park's key heritage themes and stewardship messages;
- Reviewing and revitalizing the park's camping offer by investing in infrastructure for first-time campers, recreational-vehicle users and those seeking hassle-free or comfort-enhanced camping;
- Improving wastewater treatment, energy and water conservation, and recycling facilities at visitor facilities such as campgrounds, washrooms and visitor centres and ensuring visitors are aware of these improvements and their benefits;
- Reserving dedicated bicycle lanes on parkways such as the Minnewanka Loop, as part of a broad approach to building a cycling experience product-line and reducing the energy and greenhouse gas costs of visits;
- Completing a safe and spectacular bicycle touring route, connecting Canmore and Jasper; and

- Renewing the park’s extensive and varied network of 1,500 kilometres of trails, with a priority on the heavily used day-use trails in the Bow River watershed, by relocating existing trails and creating new trails in ways that enhance visitor experience, address ecological integrity objectives and align with area concepts (below).
- 5.4.2.9 Develop a strategy for enhancing winter opportunities in addition to downhill skiing through visitor experience product renewal (ski, snowshoe and walking trails, nature viewing, etc.) and provision of a wider range of educational and experiential products.
- 5.4.2.10 Adopt and use evolving communication technologies to facilitate and enhance the visitors’ experience and promote connections to place.
- 5.4.2.11 Continually re-evaluate all program activities to identify and advance, in collaboration with interest groups and tourism businesses, the development of “voluntourism”, products and volunteer opportunities for those who wish to learn about, and participate in, stewardship activities, thus making the stewardship of the park an enriching source of meaningful experiences and life-long learning.
- 5.4.2.12 Increase knowledge of the park’s visitors, and measure success in facilitating a memorable visitor experience for them as well as increasing their connection to the park and Canadian heritage by:
- Creating and regularly updating a comprehensive profile of the park’s visitor population;
  - Monitoring trends and shifts in visitation; and
  - Sharing market intelligence with municipal and commercial tourism providers.
- 5.4.2.13 Strengthen the market position of the mountain national parks and enhance the sense of value and stewardship for park visitors by actively interpreting ecosystem conservation and stewardship initiatives and using them to help define the mountain parks.
- 5.4.2.14 Develop, support and promote special events and new recreational activities that:



- Promote public understanding and appreciation of Rocky Mountain ecosystems and history and Parks Canada's mandate;
- Involve a diverse range of the park's partners and stakeholders in their development and delivery;
- Facilitate opportunities for outstanding visitor experience;
- Align with the park's character (section 3) and area concepts (section 6);
- Support relevant ecological (section 5.3) and cultural resource protection (section 5.4.3) goals; and
- Provoke visits in seasons and locations that have available capacity and sufficient ecological resilience.

Proposals will be evaluated periodically through a structured public review process that emphasizes inclusiveness and timely decision-making.

### 5.4.3 Key Strategy

#### ***Celebrate history, culture and world heritage by:***

- *Linking visitor opportunities to the rich, still-evolving cultural heritage of the mountain parks so that the national historic sites and cultural resources within the parks become integral to contemporary visitor experience and connection to place; and*
- *Integrating history, culture and world heritage into the ways in which people are invited to experience and understand Canada's mountain parks today.*

Since long before parks were established, the Canadian Rockies have been settings where new activities and mountain traditions have merged to shape and enrich human culture. The stories that help to define the mountain parks are products of early and contemporary Aboriginal use, European exploration and fur trade, railway and nation-building, the emergence and continuing evolution of recreation and tourism and the unique communities that have come to people these places.

The rich cultural heritage of these national parks allows visitors to experience a vivid sense of the past and to personally connect with, and contribute to, this continuing human legacy.

The park contains eight national historic sites, of which the best known is the Cave and Basin. The North Saskatchewan River is a designated Canadian Heritage River. There are many other cultural features, such as archaeological sites, historic buildings, the remnants of the Bankhead mining community and the railway stations in Banff and Lake Louise. In addition, the town of Banff contains a number of municipally designated heritage buildings.

The mountain parks protect important cultural resources in large part by encouraging our relationship with them while protecting their authenticity and historic character.

UNESCO World Heritage sites are outstanding global examples of the common heritage of all people. They are chosen in accordance with the guidelines of the World Heritage Convention. Designation commits the responsible management agencies to maintaining in perpetuity the outstanding universal values for which the sites have been chosen. Currently, 176 sites worldwide are inscribed for their natural values.

Five of the mountain parks belong to two of these sites. Waterton Lakes National Park is part of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site. Banff, Yoho, Kootenay and Jasper national parks are part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, together with Mt. Robson, Hamber and Mt. Assiniboine provincial parks in B.C. The site is inscribed for its exceptional natural beauty and for its significant ongoing geological processes, including the fossil record of the Burgess Shale in Yoho National Park.

The World Heritage Committee has encouraged Canada to propose an extension to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site because of the globally significant extent of the protected landscape. Any such extension would be at the discretion of, and initiated by, the provinces of Alberta or B.C., as they have jurisdiction over neighbouring provincial parks.



### Direction

- 5.4.3.1 Prepare and implement a Cultural Resources Management Plan that outlines how Banff National Park will manage and profile cultural resources located outside of its national historic sites.
- 5.4.3.2 Invite strengthened involvement of Aboriginal people in documenting and presenting their cultures and relationships to park landscapes. Develop a working protocol on consultation with elders as part of the review process for any activities that require new landscape disturbance.
- 5.4.3.3 Implement the approved National Historic Sites of Canada Management Plans for national historic sites in the park.
- 5.4.3.4 Link national historic site stories to the broader mountain park landscape and to contemporary visitor experiences; provide a range of innovative and engaging learning opportunities to keep their stories alive and relevant. In particular, focus on the Cave and Basin and the Banff Park Museum because of their easily accessible locations.
- 5.4.3.5 Increase opportunities to connect visitors with history by providing roving interpretation and portable exhibits, focused where visitors concentrate, with programming that links the history of Banff National Park to contemporary experiences and key attractions.
- 5.4.3.6 Continue to work with local museums, heritage associations and the tourism industry and pursue new collaborations to:
  - Provide more learning opportunities for visitors related to the history of the park; and
  - Plan and stage cultural heritage-themed events or festivals.
- 5.4.3.7 In collaboration with partners, increase the profile of the North Saskatchewan Heritage River and of the World Heritage Site status of Banff National Park.
- 5.4.3.8 Collaborate with Alberta and B.C. should they choose to nominate adjacent provincial parks as additions to the World Heritage Site.

#### 5.4.4 Key Strategy

***Bring the mountains to people where they live by:***

- *Using social media, modern technology and outreach programming to bring current, lively and engaging content and park experiences into homes, schools and communities, so that Canadians can choose to make the mountains part of their daily lives.*

To promote, beyond our boundaries, an ongoing dialogue and life-long passion for parks, Parks Canada will bring stories of mountain culture, science, recreation and park management to people who may not otherwise have an opportunity to learn about, visit, or become involved in our national parks and national historic sites.

Almost 80% of Canadians live in urban centres and more than 20% were born outside Canada. Parks Canada will reach out to these audiences through innovative communications programming. Outreach initiatives such as environmental education programs at schools, extension events for special groups, real-time content on Parks Canada and partner websites, publications, mass media contacts and community events will bring the mountain parks into people's homes and communities. Wherever they may live, work or gather, Canadians will be introduced to their nation's remarkable mountain heritage. Canadians will understand and value Banff National Park and be able to connect with wild places, culture and history.

Direction:

- 5.4.4.1 Target youth, urban Canadians and new Canadians with programming that links them to park settings, stories and experiences, researchers, managers and the dynamic environments of the park.
- 5.4.4.2 Collaborate with heritage-based agencies, schools and festival organizers to bring outreach education programming (e.g. Mountain World Heritage Interpretive Theatre) into small communities and larger urban centres in western Canada on a regular basis, with a priority on the Calgary metropolitan region and the Bow Corridor.



- 5.4.4.3 Continually refresh and renew content for an enhanced Banff National Park web presence that provides learning, sharing and experiential opportunities for Canadians and others so that they can experience the excitement of virtually “being there.”
- 5.4.4.4 Collaborate with provincial education organizations in the development of curricula and relevant learning opportunities for teachers and students to bring mountain national park themes, the story of the system of protected areas that has grown from its origins in Banff and mountain safety messages into the classroom.

## 5.5 Managing Development and Commercial Activities

Banff National Park’s long history and popularity have resulted in extensive development: roads, visitor infrastructure, tourism attractions, utilities and communities. The TCH and CP Railway are national transportation routes.

Developed areas are essential staging areas for visitors to experience and learn about the national park. In addition, the design of buildings, facilities and signs can directly reinforce the history of the park and the aesthetics of the mountain landscape and can directly contribute to perceptions of value. Some of the park’s most famous views integrate the built environment and nature, such as the view along Banff Avenue to Cascade Mountain, the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel set into the Spray Valley, or Num-Ti-Jah Lodge on the shores of Bow Lake.

If not managed carefully, however, development and associated activities can compromise the natural and cultural attributes valued by Canadians. Most development is in valley bottoms, which also include much of the most productive wildlife habitat.

Limits to development in Canada’s national parks were established in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a result of extensive analysis and public review. They are prescribed within the *Canada National Parks Act*, national park and community plans, national park zoning, and land-use agreements. A large part of the park is legislated as Declared Wilderness.



The national park communities of Banff and Lake Louise form an important part of Banff National Park's history. Both were established shortly after the completion of the CP Railway as service centres for visitors. While that remains their primary role, they have grown into living communities of residents with strong attachments to place.

The town of Banff and the Lake Louise community, in the coming years, will face the common challenge of managing sustainably within established growth limits, while at the same time, offering visitors the products and services they need to enjoy the park. This means that residents and visitors must understand the impact of the communities and their tourism on the park's resources. Both communities have approved community plans that define their roles as centres for visitors and ensure that the sense of community character is maintained.

The town of Canmore, a community of approximately 18,000 permanent and seasonal residents just outside the park's east gate, has a strong influence on park operations. It provides services for park visitors, allowing more travellers to stay in the Bow Valley and visit the park during the day. As well, a number of people employed in the park have chosen to live in Canmore. Parks Canada will continue to work collaboratively with the Town of Canmore on tourism, recreation and environmental stewardship initiatives that strengthen the connections of visitors and residents to the mountain landscape. The park and the town will work to manage the impact of park use on the town and the effects of community growth on the park and the Central Rockies Ecosystem.

### 5.5.1 Key Strategy

***Manage development and commercial activities to protect and celebrate national park heritage values by:***

- *Striving for meaningful and sustainable connections between national park communities and surrounding landscapes;*
- *Maintaining limits to development and commercial activity in Banff National Park while encouraging creative redevelopment to enhance visitor experiences and the quality of the built environment;*



- *Demonstrating leadership in the development of innovative stewardship practices; and*
- *Implementing development review and architectural guidelines that ensure that the built environment respects its setting in a World Heritage Site.*

Direction:

- 5.5.1.1 Support the town of Banff and the Lake Louise community in their primary roles as centres for visitors to Banff National Park and as sustainable mountain communities:
- Work with elected representatives of each community to protect its sense of place as a small mountain community scaled to the mountain park setting and to improve orientation and wayfinding to visitor opportunities throughout the national park;
  - Maintain limits to the size, additional commercial development, and land-use for the two park communities (see area concepts, pg 63);
  - Establish a stronger Parks Canada presence in the town of Banff through development of visitor facilities on Banff Avenue, renewal of national historic sites and enhanced interpretive programming in the town centre; and
  - Enhance the appearance of the park community of Lake Louise through improved aesthetics at the community entrance.
- 5.5.1.2 Deepen existing connections to Banff National Park for residents and visitors in communities in the Bow Valley:
- Support, to the greatest extent feasible, the work of municipalities and regional partners as they develop a regional transit system for the Bow Valley. Priority for Parks Canada is to reduce traffic congestion and parking requirements outside the park communities and to enhance access to trailheads, campgrounds, parkways and day-use areas;
  - Continue to implement the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff Strategy (see Annex 3);

- Continue to implement the Lake Louise Area Strategy (see Annex 4);
- Collaborate with communities inside and adjacent to the park in order to improve wayfinding and interpretive media; and
- Continue to participate actively with the Province of Alberta and the Town of Canmore on regional outdoor recreation and conservation planning.

5.5.1.3 Outside the town of Banff and the park community of Lake Louise, manage commercial accommodation in accordance with the 2007 Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations (OCAs) in the Rocky Mountain national parks. New commercial accommodation facilities will not be permitted.

5.5.1.4 New or relocated trails, campsites and roofed overnight shelters will be considered, subject to environmental assessment, where these contribute to high-quality visitor experiences consistent with area concepts and align with ecological integrity priorities identified in key strategy 5.3.3.

5.5.1.5 With each ski operator, develop site guidelines that include negotiated permanent limits to growth in a manner that:

- Builds on and enhances Banff's international reputation for unique national park skiing experiences;
- Supports the maintenance or restoration of the park's ecological integrity;
- Facilitates memorable national park visitor experiences and educational opportunities; and
- Provides ski area operators with clear parameters for long-range and business planning in support of an economically healthy operation.

As part of the ski area planning process, a permanent lease boundary for Sunshine ski area will be determined and legislated.

5.5.1.6 Outside park communities, OCA facilities and ski areas, proposals for new facilities to support new outdoor recreational activities may be



considered, subject to criteria in 5.4.2.14 (above) and based on the following principles:

- Mitigation of any potential site-specific, park-scale or regional impacts, including potential conflicts between user groups; where feasible, use existing disturbed sites; and
- No net increase in landscape disturbance or wildlife displacement at a park scale.

5.5.1.7 Existing business licences for approved activities at current use-levels may continue to be issued for:

- Zone 1 areas;
- Vermilion Lakes Environmentally Sensitive Site (ESS);
- The East Slopes area, with the exception of the Fairholme ESS; and
- The North Saskatchewan area.

In the East Slopes and North Saskatchewan areas, new business licences may be considered for guided day horse trips originating along the eastern boundary of the park, with the exception of the Clearwater Zone 1 Area and the Fairholme ESS.

5.5.1.8 Parks Canada may use licenced business activities as part of a strategy to control the amount, timing or nature of human activity in:

- Ecologically sensitive areas such as wildlife corridors, wetland and riparian areas and important habitat for grizzlies, wolves or listed Species at Risk; and
- Locations where crowding or potential user conflict issues require careful management.

5.5.1.9 Parks Canada will work with recreation and youth-oriented organizations through guide certification, business licensing and other measures to optimize opportunities for youth and for less-experienced backcountry travellers to experience Rocky Mountain wilderness safely and responsibly.

- 5.5.1.10 Previously disturbed landscapes will be restored to high-value Rocky Mountain habitats such as grassland, aspen parkland, open Douglas fir savanna and wetlands.
- 5.5.1.11 Develop a long-term plan for obtaining aggregate material for highway construction and maintenance purposes. Subject to a full accounting of financial and environmental costs, the first choice is to acquire material from outside the park. Sources within the park will be considered when outside sources are not available or feasible or when the environmental benefits outweigh the costs.

When aggregate sources inside Banff National Park are required for highway purposes, their use will be based on a long-term strategy that:

- Prohibits development of gravel sources under rare plant communities, archaeological resources or locations of high aesthetic importance for visitor experience;
  - Ensures active restoration of existing and new gravel sources on an ongoing basis throughout the life cycle of the source; and
  - Ensures that full rehabilitation costs are included in all highway construction and recapitalization budgets.
- 5.5.1.12 Permit changes to the existing system of utilities and communications services when those changes will improve efficiency and safety, yield environmental benefits and provide aesthetic improvements that improve the visitor experience.
- 5.5.1.13 Apply leading-edge environmental stewardship principles and architectural and sign guidelines to all development proposals.
- 5.5.1.14 Improve environmental management, including waste diversion/recycling facilities at campgrounds and continued initiatives to enhance water and energy conservation at all national park facilities.
- 5.5.1.15 Build on recent successes in reducing non-renewable fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from national park operations by:
- Continuing to upgrade to more fuel-efficient fleet vehicles and heating systems in park facilities;



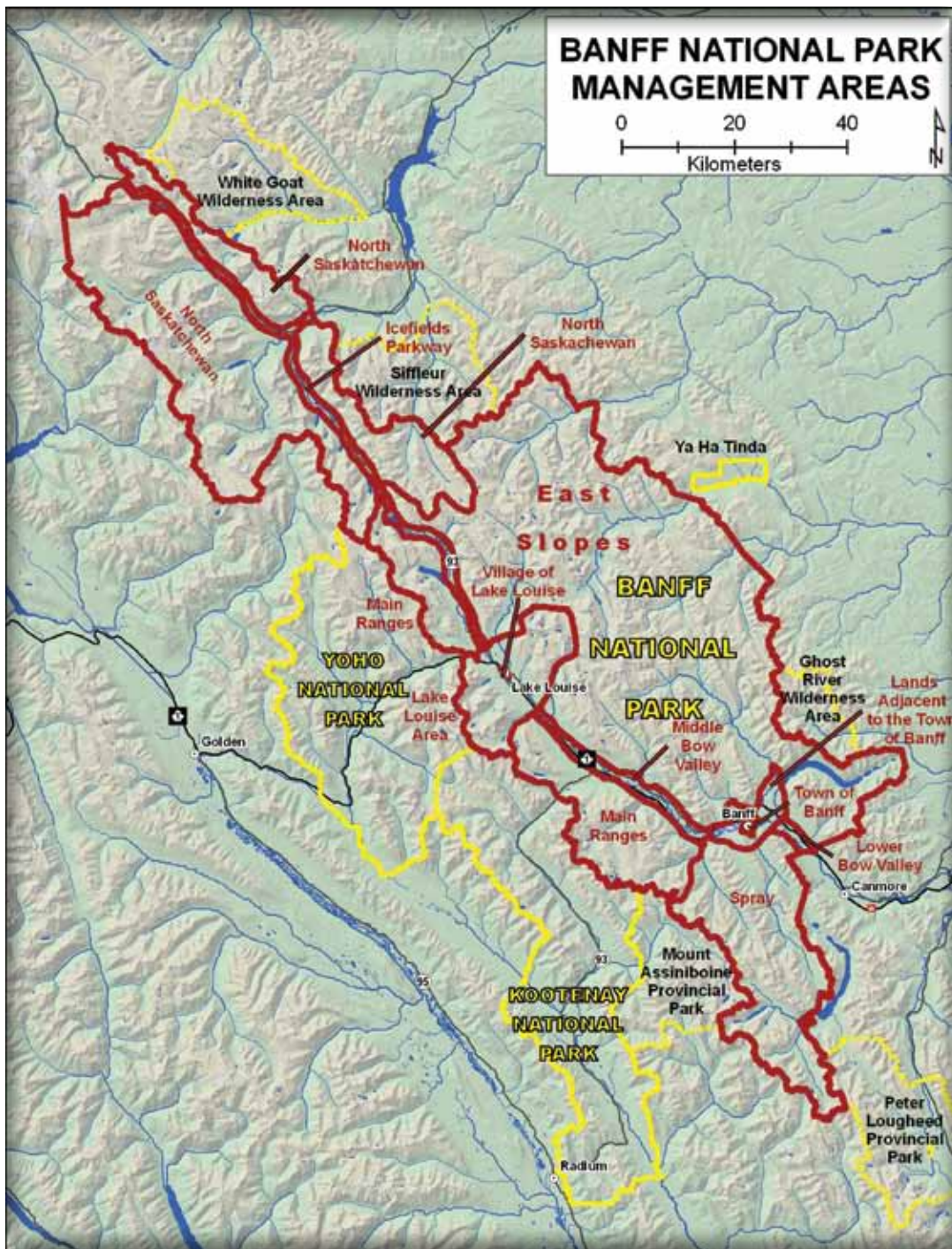
- Conducting energy efficiency audits and addressing issues in a timely manner;
- In the East Slopes and North Saskatchewan areas, restricting Parks Canada helicopter use to that required for fire operations, search and rescue and emergencies;
- Upgrading video and computer conferencing facilities to minimize Parks Canada's long-distance travel requirements; and
- Consider options for alternative-energy infrastructure at lodges and huts in Zone 2 and Declared Wilderness areas where renewable-energy sources can replace existing use of non-renewable energy; approve only infrastructure that is designed and operated to preserve the wilderness aesthetic and the experience of visitors.

5.5.1.16 In the event that future revisions to Declared Wilderness Area boundaries need to be considered (e.g. for alternative backcountry energy sources), specific proposals will receive full public review prior to recommending any regulatory change.





## 6. AREA CONCEPTS



## 6.1 Lower Bow Valley

### 6.1.1 Intended Future Condition

The welcome to Parks Canada and the mountain national parks begins at the East Gate, where staff provide a wide-range of personalized orientation and information on current events and opportunities to visitors, most of whom have already obtained passes and information online or through third-party providers. Visitors proceed into the park with few doubts about where to go next or what possibilities await them there.

Wild montane landscapes occupied by, and accessible to, the full-range of naturally occurring wildlife species immediately surround visitors as they enter the national park. The fenced highway demonstrates that this is a place with an elevated standard of management. The dramatic ramparts of Mt. Rundle to the south and the open Douglas fir savannas interspersed with aspen and riparian spruce sweeping off to the north, frame an unfolding vista that comes to a peak with the cliffs and waterfalls of Cascade Mountain.

The arrival experience is one of welcome and growing certainty that this is the best possible place to be for those who seek mountain nature, beauty, culture or adventure. The landscape is pristine and wild, yet accessible. From the highway, visitors can already see the potential in their visit as they watch cyclists enjoying the Banff Legacy Trail or elk grazing on the other side of the highway fence. Those travelling through, en-route to or from British Columbia, are welcomed into the iconic scenery of the Rockies, introduced to the significance of the wildlife crossings and encouraged to return for a longer stay.



### 6.1.2 Current Situation

- Approximately eight million people enter the park each year, of whom 4.7 million are passing through to destinations beyond Banff National Park;
- The East Gate is primarily a fee-collection point; at peak periods there are long line-ups to enter the park;
- No visitor facilities are provided and the sense of welcome is limited;
- The bypass lane is not always apparent to through travellers who do not need to stop to purchase a park pass;
- Once inside the park, no further information is provided until the off-ramps for the town of Banff;
- A combination of mechanical thinning and active use of prescribed fire is restoring a more natural vegetation mosaic and reducing the wildfire risk for Harvie Heights and Canmore;
- Wildlife use the underpasses to move through this area of montane habitat. However, highway fences are not sealed at the bottom and wildlife sometimes penetrate onto the highway;
- The Banff Legacy Trail, from the East Gate to the town of Banff, will be completed in 2010;
- The Rundle Riverside Trail is a popular mountain-biking route that connects with the Canmore Nordic Centre, where a major mountain-bike trail system is under development; and
- The Bow River is popular for canoeing and angling.

### 6.1.3 Objectives

- The East Gate becomes a point of arrival, welcome and orientation, rather than primarily a fee collection point;
- Both park visitors and through travellers are welcomed to the park and provided with the current information and basic orientation that they need to make the most of their time in the park;

- Traffic line-ups are eliminated, or, to the extent that they persist, are incorporated into the national park experience through innovative media and personal service approaches;
- Montane ecosystem structure and function are restored;
- Ungulates and large carnivores have unhindered access to habitats throughout the area;
- Wildlife mortality is eliminated on the TCH and reduced along the CP Railway line; and
- The Banff Legacy Trail forges stronger connections between Banff and Canmore and becomes a popular anchor to an expanded bicycling product-line for the park.

#### 6.1.4 Key Actions

- Collaborate with other levels of government, the private sector and non-profit organizations to initiate a phased approach to revitalize the arrival experience at the East Gate starting with a welcome service area that includes staff to provide orientation and basic services. The welcome service area will:
  - Enable research on the feasibility, scale, scope, sustainability and need for a larger welcome and orientation facility at this location. This research will include investigating partnership possibilities with the different levels of government and the private sector;
  - Incorporate the design and footprint needs to anticipate and provide for a reasonable full-service welcome centre if required;
  - Include elements that can be transferable to other park entrance areas;
  - Be designed to environmental leadership standards;
  - Utilize already disturbed land and have a minimal environmental footprint;
  - Redesign the entrance area to promote intuitive traffic flow and decrease congestion in drive-through lanes. Designate specific lanes

for different vehicle types and consider a dedicated lane for first-time visitors;

- Design and install signage that is more visible, frequent and further in advance of the gates and clearly distinguishes between Banff townsite and Banff National Park. Include “Welcome to Banff National Park” and “Leaving Banff National Park” signs;
- Provide options for visitors to purchase their passes before arriving in the park, or after their arrival;
- Restore Douglas fir savanna vegetation structure through a combination of volunteer projects and contracted mechanical thinning and maintain montane vegetation diversity through repeated low-intensity fire;
- Enhance wildlife fences and improve the functionality of wildlife crossing structures along the TCH between the East Gate and the Minnewanka interchange. Develop new “drive through awareness” products; and
- Register the Banff Legacy Trail as part of the Trans-Canada Trail and work with members of the Regional Mobility Partnership to complete the trail to Harvie Heights and Canmore.



## 6.2 The Montane Heart of the National Park

### 6.2.1 Intended Future Condition

The montane heart of the park is a meeting of wild mountain valleys, where the alluvial fans of the Spray and Cascade rivers block the Bow River Valley to create a rich montane mosaic of grassland, spruce forest, backswamp wetlands and aspen forest. The Bow River, slowed by its encounter with these physical barriers, meanders through forest, willow grove and sedge meadows before thundering free at Bow Falls, to run swift and clean towards its distant rendezvous with Hudson Bay.

This has been a gathering place for travellers and a place of spiritual renewal and inspiration since well before the establishment of Banff National Park, and today's visitors and residents feel a conscious bond to past travellers who stopped here to hunt, gather and celebrate their cultures, drawing strength and inspiration from the setting. It is home to a community that celebrates its unique Canadian mountain heritage and takes pride in welcoming and hosting visitors from around the world.

The ecological diversity and the gentle climate of the Rocky Mountain montane define this place. Familiar outlines of Cascade Mountain, Mount Rundle, Sulphur Mountain and Mount Norquay frame the horizons in four directions. The town of Banff occupies the Bow Valley without dominating it. Views, landscaping, architectural motifs, green spaces, human scale and nearby wildlife all convey the message that the town is a truly unique community – a small, sensitive enclave within the wilds of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. In many ways, the national park is made more real by the rich mountain culture of the community at its heart, and that community is made more real by virtue of its intimate relationship with nature. Grizzly bears forage within hearing distance of cello music; artists strive to capture the ever-changing quality of mountain light on canvas, oblivious to passing cougars.

Because of its concentration of visitor facilities and an integrated transportation system that includes bicycle, horse and foot trails, as well as convenient regional mass transit, the heart of the Bow Valley is the base from which most of Banff National Park's visitors view, experience and come to understand the park. The Cave and Basin National Historic Site is a focal attraction, inspiring visitors not just with the story of Banff's origins and orientation to its contemporary opportunities, but with exciting connections to all the other national parks and national historic sites that now exist across Canada. Aboriginal people renew their cultures and share their stories and traditions with visitors. All who spend time here share in stewardship of the national park legacy.

The montane heart of the national park provides secure habitat corridors for wildlife that link more distant areas of Banff National Park with the ecologically vital montane landscape and with places beyond. The mixed forest and grassland patches that provide food and shelter for wildlife are renewed by prescribed fire that safely mimics natural fire cycles and sustained by the dedicated effort of community volunteers and "voluntourists." Visitors are delighted by the promise of seeing elk, deer and mountain sheep and the tracks of martens, elk and wolves may be encountered on trails and quiet places anywhere outside the town.

Most visitors and local residents form their most enduring personal attachments to Banff National Park here. This is both a place to gather and, for those seeking it, a place where solitude may easily be found. From multiple access points, including a world-class trail network, day-use areas, roads and campgrounds, nature is always at hand and even the wariest of Rocky Mountain animals continue to thrive.



## 6.2.2 The Town of Banff

The **Town of Banff Community Plan**, developed by residents of the community and approved in 2008 by the Mayor and Council of Banff and in 2009 by Canada's Minister of Environment, sets priorities both for Parks Canada and for the municipal administration of the town. The Community Plan establishes the following **vision** and **priorities**:

*The Town of Banff is set in a glorious mountain landscape, creating a sense of place that has a powerful effect on those who live and visit here. People come here to be inspired – and often, it's why they come back. We will cultivate Banff's uniqueness while embracing opportunities to enhance our economic health, diversity of lifestyles, and ecosystem. And above all, we will continue to build on our town's rich heritage as a place of enchantment and renewal for others ... always; and*

*The Town of Banff has an opportunity and obligation to be a sustainable national park community, which means we want to encourage exploration while preserving the park for future generations. We want to be a model for environmental management, sustainable development and tourism.*

### **Community**

As residents, we share a common desire to live in a mountain community. We value our safe and caring town and want businesses and organizations to flourish while respecting our limits to growth.

### **Heritage**

We respect that others have lived before us and honour them by preserving and celebrating their memory and legacy. We value our unique culture and will forever find ways to engage residents and visitors in education and interpretation opportunities that reinforce our community's authentic heritage.

### **Stewardship**

It is a privilege to live in this wondrous mountain community and we take this privilege seriously. We value our natural environment and will demonstrate global leadership by living in harmony with this precious landscape.

**Partnerships**

We rely on our relationships with partners within the town of Banff, regionally, provincially and internationally, to achieve mutual goals. We value these partnerships and the opportunity they present for mutual consultation and information-sharing.

**Inspiration**

The primary purpose of the town is to welcome visitors to Banff National Park. We are inspired by our home environment and, in turn, hope to inspire others about theirs.

### 6.2.2.1 Current Situation

- The Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement sets out the purposes and objectives for the town:
  - To maintain the townsite as part of a World Heritage Site;
  - To serve, as its primary function, as a centre for visitors to the park and to provide such visitors with accommodation and other goods and services;
  - To provide the widest range of interpretive and orientation services to park visitors;
  - To maintain a community character that is consistent with and reflects the surrounding environment; and
  - To provide a comfortable living community for those who need to reside in the townsite in order to achieve its primary function.
- There are three national historic sites in or immediately adjacent to the town: the Cave and Basin National Historic Site and the Banff Park Museum National Historic Site, both operated by Parks Canada, and the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel;
- Situated between the Spray River and Vermilion Lakes, the town of Banff is home to roughly 7,000 permanent residents. The town is a visitor service centre for Banff National Park, with an economy based primarily on tourism and park administration;



- The town is the most visited part of the park, with at least 80% of park visitors spending some time in the community. A wide range of visitor services is available, and at peak periods there are thousands of visitors at any one time;
- Residential leases in the town require that all occupants be eligible residents;
- To manage the town's impact on surrounding park lands, Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act* sets the municipal boundary in legislation and limits commercial space to a maximum of 361,390 square metres, which is the total of actual and approved commercial development as of June 1998, plus an additional 32,516 square metres (350,000 sq. ft.). Some of the additional potential has yet to be allocated. The town's permanent population is intended not to exceed 8,000 (Federal Census estimates the 2006 permanent population at 6,700);
- There is little tangible connection between Banff Avenue and the rest of the national park. The Parks Canada visitor centre was not designed for the number of visitors it receives during peak season and most visitors in town cannot readily locate park staff;
- Elk using the townsite area have higher calf recruitment than those in areas distant from the townsite. This suggests that the elk are successfully using the town as a refuge from predators and/or are benefiting from improved browse. While elk numbers have been reduced, highly habituated individual elk can become aggressive towards people. Elk calving and rutting seasons are times when the potential for conflict is particularly acute;
- Wastewater from the town and many outlying facilities is treated at the municipal wastewater treatment plant, which discharges into the Bow River. Stormwater from the community also runs into the river. The quality of wastewater discharge from the town's treatment plant is far higher than the Parks Canada standards for all parameters except phosphorus;



- The Banff Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw provide detailed guidance for implementation of the Incorporation Agreement and provide the administrative tools to implement the commercial space, building height and other land-use controls prescribed in this park management plan, which help to ensure that the town remains in harmony with its national park setting; and
- The adjacent community of Canmore also provides a full-range of visitor and resident services and provides an alternative for additional visitor and resident needs that cannot be accommodated within the town of Banff.

#### 6.2.2.2 Objectives

- The town of Banff serves, as its primary function, as a thriving centre for visitors to Banff National Park and the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site;
- The town provides an inspiring environment from which visitors can safely enjoy the surrounding natural areas of the park;
- The town is a global model of sustainable development and an example of living harmoniously in a natural environment;
- Commercial development is proactively managed within legislated limits to minimize population growth pressures;
- Parks Canada and the Town of Banff work closely together to achieve these objectives;
- Visitors are very satisfied with all aspects of their visit; and
- Visits to national historic sites and cultural heritage features increase.



### 6.2.2.3 Key Actions

- Enhance interpretive and educational opportunities in the town, in co-operation with the Town of Banff and heritage tourism partners, by:
  - Continuing the assembly of lands on the east side of the 200 block of Banff Avenue for national park purposes, specifically the development of facilities that enhance the connection of visitors in downtown Banff to the rest of the national park, and that foster knowledge and understanding of the ecology and human history of Banff National Park and the larger regional ecosystem. Parks Canada will work with the Town of Banff to ensure that redevelopment enhances the streetscape and sense of place in downtown Banff;
  - Bringing more remote areas of the park and seldom-seen wildlife into town via webcams, interactive technology, interpretive media and events;
  - Providing integrated trails between the town, the Tunnel Mountain campground and adjacent areas of montane habitat;
  - Developing a ring trail around the town that is fully wheelchair-accessible;
  - Periodically refreshing interpretive media in the existing transit buses and including such material in the expanded transit system; and
  - Increasing the profile of the World Heritage Site, the national historic sites and the many cultural heritage features throughout the town, so that visitors stay longer and include them in their itineraries.
- Assist in making the town a hub for a regional mass transit system that serves both park visitors and residents and enhances options for visitor experience;

- It is anticipated that the permanent population (Federal Census) will not exceed 8,000; all decisions of Parks Canada and the Town of Banff, including business licensing, shall proactively take into account this policy objective;
- In order to reflect the town's setting and to blend with surrounding natural landscapes, existing green space within the town will retain its designation as public park and environmental protection land;
- Development in the commercial downtown districts will retain sightlines to the surrounding landscape and will not include new commercial development above the second storey;
- Commercial development in the town of Banff is limited to development that already existed in the commercial districts of the town of Banff as of June 1998, or that Parks Canada had approved prior to that date, plus an additional 32,516 square metres (350,000 sq. ft.) of commercial floor space in the town. Developed commercial space, when it is removed from the 200 block of Banff Avenue, may be added to the unallocated pool for future commercial development in the commercial zones of the town of Banff;
- The use of lands within the Public Service (PS) district shall be limited to non-commercial uses of an institutional, government, educational or community service nature that are required to meet the needs of eligible residents of the town. Commercial uses will be limited to the commercial districts, except as they may be ancillary to the primary PS district uses listed above. Non-conforming land uses in the PS district that existed as of June 1998 are grandfathered;
- The Town of Banff shall require that all new development and redevelopment incorporate high-quality environmental design (which may include building standards that exceed the minimum construction requirements otherwise applicable) and be complementary to the town's unique location and surrounding context;
- In anticipation of the town approaching both the permanent commercial floor area cap and the intended limit to its permanent resident population, Parks Canada and the Town of Banff will jointly develop proactive strategies to guide



the town's future as both a sustainable community and an authentic national park visitor service centre that welcomes Canadian and international visitors and provides them with memorable experiences;

- Work with the Town of Banff to ensure that stormwater, potable water and wastewater treatment infrastructure is monitored, maintained and improved as necessary to accommodate future demand while maintaining the leadership standards that the town currently achieves; and
- Parks Canada facilities and activities in the town and in adjacent areas that use the town's services will be models of stewardship and will meet or exceed the town's leadership standard for environmental stewardship.

### 6.2.3 Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff

#### 6.2.3.1 Current Situation

- The area surrounding the community of Banff is a primary platform through which visitors interact with and experience the park and its wildlife; approximately 80% of park visitors visit the town of Banff and the area immediately surrounding it. Residents of the community also use this area intensively for recreation;
- Adjacent to the town are campgrounds, historic visitor attractions – such as the Upper Hot Springs pool and spa, Mount Norquay ski area and the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel Golf Course – and many kilometres of hiking, horse-riding and mountain-biking trails as well as low-speed scenic drives such as Vermilion Lakes Drive and the Minnewanka Loop;
- The Cave and Basin hot springs are the birthplace of Canada's national park system and a national historic site;
- The Vermilion Lakes wetlands are the park's largest and most diverse; hot springs along the base of Sulphur Mountain provide specialized habitat for numerous species, including the endemic Banff Springs snail, and the water flowing from the springs has created a unique warm water marsh;

- The clear, turquoise Bow River bisects the area; it provides important riparian wildlife habitat, especially for waterfowl, as well as aquatic habitat for a number of fish species. It is also a focal scenic and recreation feature for visitors, especially in the section through the town;
- Given its location in the montane (the most ecologically productive ecoregion in the park) and at the intersection of several major valleys, the area is important for a variety of wildlife. Many species of amphibians, birds and mammals are found only in the montane. The montane is critically important for wintering ungulates and their predators. In addition, its major east-west and north-south wildlife movement corridors are essential for the long-term genetic diversity and migration of many species, as well as for the ability of the larger Rocky Mountain ecosystem to adjust to climate changes through dispersal of various species;
- Two major national transportation corridors, the TCH and the CP Railway, bisect the area. They also create ecological challenges – posing obstacles to wildlife movement, fragmenting terrestrial and aquatic habitats and contributing directly to wildlife mortality and habituation. Significant progress has been made in recent decades both in reducing road mortalities and in improving the ability of wildlife to cross the highway safely;
- A grass airstrip located north of the community and adjacent to the TCH, had been identified for closure and decommissioning. For reasons of aviation safety, the Government of Canada determined in 2008 that the Banff airstrip will be re-listed, for emergency and diversionary use only, in the National Parks Air Access Regulations;
- Congestion is an issue at some locations during peak season. There are opportunities to redevelop existing facilities in order to better meet the needs of visitors seeking sightseeing, strolling, picnicking and nature-study opportunities and to address new opportunities and needs;
- Fire is a natural force of renewal and disturbance. Its suppression over more than a century has altered the structure and composition of forests and grasslands, contributing to the loss of landscape biodiversity and wildlife habitat, resulting in forests that are more susceptible to forest insect and



disease, and increasing the threat of high-severity, difficult-to-control wildfires. These changes have implications for public safety, property risk and the health of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems;

- Forest thinning in and around the community and prescribed burning, are restoring vegetation communities to a more natural state and reducing the risk of uncontrolled wildfire losses;
- Non-native plants pose a significant threat in this area of the park due both to the amount of disturbed land, which is readily colonized by weeds, and to the numerous motor vehicles, trains and other vectors by which weed seeds can be carried into the park; and
- Initiatives to address disturbed sites, contaminated sites, solid-waste disposal and wastewater treatment have been implemented since the previous plan was approved and have resulted in improvements; however, more work is required to restore natural vegetation structure and patterns and to reclaim previously disturbed areas such as the Cascade Pit (gravel pit, aggregate storage area and overflow camping area).

#### 6.2.3.2 Objectives

- The area showcases all aspects of the park's natural and cultural heritage;
- Through a wide array of services and facilities provided by Parks Canada and commercial businesses, the area introduces many visitors to safe enjoyment of the outdoors and to the park's natural and cultural heritage;
- Visitors enjoy a wide variety of recreational opportunities that enrich their connection to Canada's mountain heritage;
- The vegetation diversity and predator-prey dynamics of the montane ecoregion surrounding the town, including wetland and riparian areas, are effectively restored; and
- Grizzly bears, wolves and cougars move freely throughout the area, including identified wildlife movement corridors.

### 6.2.3.3 Key Actions

- Continue to implement the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff action plan (Annex 3). Priority actions include:
  - Redevelop the Vermilion Lakes area as a premier destination close to town for introducing visitors to wetland and riparian ecosystems, providing opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of nature and mountain scenery;
  - Redesign the trail system and provide:
    - Safe crossings of the TCH and the CP Railway;
    - Loop trails around the town and the Tunnel Mountain campground;
    - Decommissioning of unsanctioned trails that create environmental impacts;
    - Reduced fragmentation of wildlife habitat; and
    - A range of bicycling opportunities.
  - Upgrade all day-use areas to improve visitor experiences, provide more interpretive media and eliminate localized environmental impacts; and
  - Collaborate with the towns of Banff and Canmore, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and the business communities to ensure seamlessness of experience for visitors to the park and the Bow Valley, to minimize human-wildlife conflicts and to protect sensitive wildlife areas.
- Collaborate with Aboriginal groups to restore cultural connections to montane landscapes and to showcase Aboriginal culture and traditions to the large number of visitors to the area;
- Explore options for helping expand a municipally led regional mass transit system to parkways and day-use areas outside the communities;
- Create a dedicated lane for bicycles and other non-motorized transportation on the Minnewanka Loop by restricting motorized traffic to one-way travel during the portion of the year when the loop is open;



- Explore the feasibility of an aerial tramway system from the vicinity of the town of Banff to the Mt. Norquay ski area to provide new visitor experience opportunities while reducing human activity in the Cascade wildlife corridor.
- In conjunction with redevelopment of the Cave and Basin National Historic Site, tell the story of the origin and current extent of the national system of protected areas and the evolution of the protected-heritage idea in Canada; enhance protection of the endangered Banff Springs snail;
- Restore the previously-disturbed area at the Cascade Pit to functioning montane ecosystem types. Consider the feasibility of developing a portion of the area for enhanced visitor experience and education opportunities;
- Manage the elk population to re-establish more natural predator-prey dynamics near the community, restore impacted vegetation communities and reduce human-elk conflicts. Experiment with fencing and other techniques to limit elk access to areas in the town of Banff;
- Implement a comprehensive program of monitoring, remediation and treatment to:
  - Prevent the spread of invasive non-native plants into more pristine park areas;
  - Control or eliminate the most aggressive species;
  - Re-establish healthy native plant communities less susceptible to invasion; and
  - Prevent further introductions of alien species.
- Work with the Town of Banff to restore Forty Mile Creek through a decommissioning plan for the aging dam between Stoney Squaw and Cascade mountains;
- Revise the National Park Aircraft Access Regulations to re-list and maintain the airstrip at its current size for emergency and diversionary purposes only, while managing the area to optimize the effectiveness of the Cascade movement corridor for wildlife;



- No commercial or recreational aircraft use is permitted;
  - Private aircraft and associated facilities, including hangars and fuel tanks, shall be removed; and
  - Strolling and other off-trail recreational uses will be directed to other nearby areas such as Cascade Ponds.
- Ensure that use of the Bow River and adjacent wetlands is managed conservatively to protect important riparian values such as nesting and rearing habitat for waterfowl and to provide uncrowded opportunities for quiet enjoyment and reflection; only non-motorized uses will be permitted, and commercial use will be managed to minimize the number of disturbance events;
  - Parks Canada's Ski Area Management Guidelines will guide all future ski area development at Mount Norquay ski area, including summer use. Work with ski area operators to complete the development of site guidelines and negotiated growth limits;
  - Make the town of Banff and existing day-use areas primary hubs for hosting new events and festivals that promote awareness of the cultural and natural heritage of the park; and
  - Change the eastern part of Johnson Lake from Zone 3 to Zone 2, to align with the boundary of the Declared Wilderness Area.



## 6.3 Spray River

### 6.3.1 Intended Future Condition

The Spray is a gentle wilderness, readily accessible and offering peaceful discovery of subalpine landscapes populated by moose, grizzlies, mountain goats and westslope cutthroat trout.

Mountain bikers and track skiers enjoy the Lower Spray Loop and the Goat Creek Trail, both close to town, as well as the lower part of Brewster Creek Trail. Horse riders sojourn at Sundance and Halfway lodges in Brewster Creek Valley, having travelled there on well-maintained horse trails.

Overnight backpackers travel into and through the Bryant and Upper Spray valleys on trails that originate on provincial lands in Mt. Assiniboine, Height of the Rockies and Kananaskis Country provincial parks. The hike to Mt. Assiniboine remains a classic of the Rockies.

Female grizzly bears find ideal conditions for raising their cubs, especially in the productive habitats of the middle Spray Valley, where they are secure from the risk of encounters with people. The lush subalpine habitats, their diversity and productivity enhanced by prescribed fire, make this area a centre of reproductivity for the region's grizzly population.

In winter, backcountry skiers can travel to backcountry lodges or shelters both in Banff National Park and in adjoining B.C. provincial parks from trailheads in Alberta's Spray Valley Provincial Park, while the middle reaches of the Spray Valley are tracked primarily by wildlife.

### 6.3.2 Current Situation

- The area extends south from the Bow Valley, between the western ridge of Brewster Creek and Mt. Rundle; much of the area is bounded by the park boundary;

- The east side is bordered by Alberta provincial parks – Bow Valley, Spray Valley and Peter Lougheed; part of the west side is contiguous with Mt. Assiniboine Park in B.C. and Height of the Rockies Provincial Park in B.C. abuts the southern boundary;
- The area is transitional to the drier southern Rockies, with open pine forests, valley bottom meadows, and larches at higher elevations. Lakes are few, the main ones being Gloria, Marvel, Owl and Leman; glaciers are mostly limited to the higher elevations adjacent to Mt. Assiniboine;
- The Bryant/middle Spray area is one of the park's four core grizzly bear reproductive areas; the middle Spray is closed to public use from early spring to late fall in order to minimize the risk of human-bear encounters and to ensure the security of grizzly families. There are seasonal travel restrictions in the Allenby Pass/upper Bryant Valley area when grizzly bears are feeding on berries;
- The Bryant Valley is a major access route to Mt. Assiniboine Park in both summer and winter, with the entry point at Mt. Shark day-use area in Spray Valley Provincial Park;
- Brewster Creek is used primarily by horse-riding guests of Sundance and Halfway lodges;
- The lower Spray, including Goat Creek Valley, is physically separate from the rest of the area and is a popular day-use area adjacent to the town of Banff; mountain biking and cross-country skiing are the main activities, with some hiking and horse-riding;
- Old logging roads in B.C. permit all-terrain vehicles access close to the park boundary in the vicinity of Leman Lake, resulting in occasional illegal vehicle entry, poaching and illegal fishing, and compromising the quality of wilderness experience available in this part of the park; and
- Backcountry lodges are located in the B.C. Rockies at several places near the Banff boundary and helicopter overflights transporting guests and gear to these lodges are increasingly common.



### 6.3.3 Objectives

- The Spray area and contiguous provincial parks are managed collaboratively as one large ecosystem and as part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site;
- Visitors enjoy a variety of superlative backcountry recreation opportunities in an accessible wilderness setting; and
- The Bryant/middle Spray area functions effectively as a major grizzly bear reproductive area.

### 6.3.4 Key Actions

- Optimize grizzly bear reproductive success by limiting the potential for contact between grizzly bears and people and by maintaining a diversity of fire-generated habitats;
- Remove or relocate the Bryant shelter to minimize the potential for conflict between bears and people;
- Encourage Sundance and Halfway lodges to investigate alternative power generation possibilities; and
- Collaborate with B.C. land managers to limit motorized access near national park boundary areas.

## 6.4 East Slopes Area

### 6.4.1 Intended Future Condition

Wide shrubby valleys beneath tilted limestone peaks, open alpine ridges, clear streams and healthy populations of a full-suite of Rocky Mountain ungulates and predators—the East Slopes of Banff National Park offer one of the last and best opportunities in southern Canada for exceptional multi-day wilderness adventures. The trails are basic, marked by boot prints, horses' hooves and the tracks of elk, bison, grizzly bears, wolves and other wildlife. Visitors expect, and find, solitude and a sense of connection to the Aboriginal people who continue to travel through these quiet places, to the early park wardens and their families who lived in isolated park outposts in these Front Range valleys and to the backcountry characters whose stories have become part of the spirit of the place.

The landscape is enduring yet dynamic, its patterns reshaped continually by fire and flooding. Visitors to this area must be self-reliant. Guided group travel introduces less-experienced travellers to the wilderness and its stories, while respecting the character of the place through low-impact camping practices and voluntary trail stewardship.

Because of the drier terrain and easy access from adjacent provincial lands, this remains the most-popular part of the park for horse riding.

Along the southern and western margins, close to park roads, popular hiking trails give many visitors a taste of the big, wild country beyond. Those enjoying the boat cruises on Lake Minnewanka catch a glimpse of the rugged wilderness that lies out-of-sight of the roads. Visitors to the more accessible parts of the national park have their imaginations stirred by the proximity of these big, wild valleys through stories, art and electronic imagery that brings the wild to the very edge of the pavement and, through new media, into the homes of Canadians across the country.

## 6.4.2 Current Situation

- The area includes almost all backcountry parts of the park that are east and north of the Bow River; Lake Minnewanka is included, except for the day-use area at the west end;
- This is the park's largest management area, reflecting the large scale of the landscape: wide valleys; lower mountains with few glaciers; extensive meadows and open ridges. Wildlife roam throughout and there is a long history of Aboriginal-use and guided outfitting;
- Visitors see animals whose behaviour is rarely shaped by people, rather than viewing habituated wildlife;
- Natural processes predominate and the area is suitable for large-scale ecosystem management such as the use of prescribed fire or the re-introduction of caribou and bison;
- Flints Park and the Red Deer/Panther area are two of four core grizzly bear reproduction areas in the park;
- The Clearwater Valley is Zone 1, Special Preservation, because of its undisturbed natural features, such as caribou habitat. The Fairholme Range south of Lake Minnewanka is an ESS because it is the largest remaining area of undisturbed montane habitat in the park;
- Many of the park's popular and well-maintained day-hiking trails, such as the Ink Pots and Helen Lake trails, enter the southern and western edges of the East Slopes between the town of Banff and Bow Lake; however, most of the area is remote, with trails of varying standards;
- Use is light in the more remote areas and includes guided hiking and horse groups; the relatively well-drained soils and drier conditions lend themselves to horse-travel and most horse-riding occurs in this area;
- An increasing number of horse riders, including groups with unlicensed guides, are entering the park from the northeastern boundary;

- Off-road vehicles can access the boundary east of Lake Minnewanka and sometimes illegally enter the park; the Province of Alberta is developing an access management plan for the area;
- Boating is popular on Lake Minnewanka and commercial boat tours enable many visitors to experience a wilder part of the park; and
- The East Slopes area is ideal for those who want to immerse themselves in the park, for a day near the roads or a week in the remote parts; others could be provided the opportunity to enjoy the area vicariously via films, books and possibly webcams.

### 6.4.3 Objectives

- This area is maintained as mountain wilderness at its best – one of Canada’s southernmost and most spectacular places for self-reliant, no-frills backcountry adventure;
- The full suite of native wildlife is restored and ranges freely through landscapes where natural forces of fire, flooding and predation are the dominant influences on their distribution and behaviour;
- The continuing presence of grizzly bears is a defining element of the entire area, and Flints Park and Red Deer/Panther areas function effectively as major grizzly bear reproductive areas;
- Visitors and non-visitors learn about the stories and personalities of those who came before – Aboriginal people, early explorers, backcountry park wardens and legendary outfitters – and deepen the sense of connection to a wild place where stories arise from people interacting with landscape, solitude and risk; and
- Most of the park’s horse-use occurs in this area.



#### 6.4.4 Key Actions

- Manage the parts of the East Slopes that lie outside the Bow River and lower Cascade watersheds for those seeking wilderness experiences consistent with wild settings, isolation and self-reliance;
- Maintain high standards for day-use trails in the Bow watershed; relocate or upgrade trails and provide new loop options to improve visitor experiences and ecological conditions;
- Bring all trails and campsites in more remote areas to a standard consistent with wilderness travel:
  - Single-track, low-maintenance trails that ford streams rather than cross on bridges; exceptions may be key crossings of larger-volume streams, where cables or simple log-construction bridges may be warranted;
  - Minimal facilities based on log-construction techniques;
  - No roofed or walled accommodation; and
  - Wheeled use limited to bicycling on a portion of the Cascade Trail and the Lake Minnewanka Shoreline Trail during seasons when trail and wildlife conditions are suitable.
- Develop non-intrusive media (annotated maps, GPS-based material, books) that link the stories of the place to the users. Collaborate on training and coaching of outfitters, guides and others who have opportunities to connect visitors to the nature and history of these wilderness valleys;
- Explore ways to link wilderness into experiences on Banff Avenue or at home, (e.g. radio-collared animals, remote-sensing stations associated with prescribed burns, etc.) feeding real-time information to websites;
- In more remote areas, permit small guided trips, especially youth groups, that are aligned with the opportunities and experiences described here and are managed so as to be compatible with ecological objectives and the quality of experience sought by others using the same areas;



- Maintain a park staff presence consistent with expectations of users (e.g. horseback patrols, foot patrols, Parks Canada operational cabins screened or set back from trails);
- Restore landscape-scale fire through prescribed burning;
- Complete investigations of the feasibility of reintroducing caribou and bison, and act on the findings;
- Manage Flints Park and the Red Deer/Panther area as two of the four core grizzly bear reproduction areas in the park, with the emphasis on minimizing displacement of female grizzly bears with cubs and preventing food habituation;
- Complete the restoration of aquatic community structure in the Devon Lakes area;
- Do not maintain trails or other infrastructure in the Clearwater-Siffleur Zone 1 area or the Fairholme ESS. Encourage visitors voluntarily to choose other areas for backcountry recreation;
- Co-ordinate with Alberta government agencies to provide suitable facilities, information and heritage interpretation for horse parties entering the park from adjacent provincial land;
- Work with horse outfitters to ensure licensing of day-trips into the park from East Slopes access points in the Red Deer, Panther, Dormer and Cascade watersheds; and
- Work with the Province of Alberta to restrict vehicle access near the east end of Lake Minnewanka.



## 6.5 Middle Bow Valley Area

### 6.5.1 Intended Future Condition

The diversity of montane habitats along the middle Bow Valley is valued and recognized as key to the ecological well-being of Banff National Park. Visitors are welcomed to opportunities to discover and experience nature and are provided with the means to share in the stewardship of wildlife and vegetation. Wolves successfully den and raise their offspring in spite of proximity to people and traffic and grizzly bears safely use all the available montane habitat along the Bow River.

The drive between Banff and Lake Louise epitomizes the scenic splendour of the Rockies. For through travellers, it is the most spectacular section of the Trans-Canada Highway in the country, with views of the Sawback Range, Castle Mountain and Mt. Temple.

Those passing through to destinations elsewhere can pause at a number of outstanding viewpoints to learn about the park and about the fencing and other measures to ensure their safety and eliminate wildlife mortality. Self-explanatory symbols tell the story of the park's renowned wildlife overpasses and the significance of this conservation success story is highlighted in interpretive media both at roadside pull-offs and through radio and other forms of electronic media.

For those enjoying the park at a more leisurely pace, the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1-A) continues its tradition of outstanding viewing of wildlife and scenery. In fact, the area is renowned for wildlife living safely in close proximity to people. The collaboration of Parks Canada and its various partners ensures that the important montane habitat of the middle Bow Valley provides secure high-quality habitat for a variety of species, including grizzly bears and wolves, and that mortality problems have been resolved. The area is a model of partners working to improve conditions for wildlife and for visitors who come to view them.

The Bow Valley Parkway is popular for cycling and part of a long-distance route connecting Canmore to Jasper through the heart of the Rockies. Bicycling and public transit have become popular transportation options, increasingly preferred by visitors over private vehicles. Many and varied opportunities entice people to stop and learn. Rustic campgrounds, a hostel and commercial accommodations allow visitors to enjoy peaceful overnight stays.

### 6.5.2 Current Situation



- The area is a broad valley on both sides of the Bow River; three roughly parallel transportation routes follow the valley – the CP Railway, the TCH and the Bow Valley Parkway;
- The area provides important low-elevation wildlife habitat year-round and especially during spring green-up for ungulates and bears. The montane habitats (grasslands, aspen stands, shrub meadows and riparian areas) along the Bow River flood plain and along the north side of the valley are notable for their diversity, productivity and relative scarcity in the park;
- Work to complete twinning of the TCH is underway, with wildlife crossing structures included. Monitoring indicates that the fencing and highway-crossing structure work have been successful for most wildlife species, changing the TCH from a major fracture zone in the international Yellowstone to Yukon mountain ecosystem, to an important part of restoring the genetic diversity and connectivity of wildlife populations;
- Large numbers of people travel through on the TCH, and there is little to indicate to them that they are in a national park;
- The Bow Valley Parkway is a very popular sightseeing route, with a variety of visitor facilities. Traffic-use has been stable in recent years; cycling use will increase with completion of the Banff Legacy Trail;
- Each spring, a voluntary travel restriction is announced along the eastern part of the Bow Valley Parkway to provide undisturbed early-morning and evening times for wildlife; compliance has been limited and monitoring indicates some displacement, especially of wolves; and
- Fencing prevents wildlife/vehicle collisions along the TCH, but wildlife mortality along the railway is a significant continuing concern; because of lower traffic volumes, wildlife mortality is lower along the Bow Valley Parkway.



### 6.5.3 Objectives

- Visitors use a variety of transportation and accommodation options to enjoy exceptional scenery and wildlife viewing along the Bow Valley Parkway;
- Travellers passing through the park on the TCH are aware that they are in a national park and of the international conservation significance of the mitigation measures that have been incorporated for their safety and to protect wildlife;
- Wildlife mortality along the highway and railway is minimized;
- Grizzly bears, wolves and other sensitive species occupy montane habitats throughout their life cycles; and
- Wildlife habitat and movement corridors are maintained or improved.

### 6.5.4 Key Actions

- With a broad-range of stakeholders, develop a detailed action plan that achieves the intended future condition of the middle Bow Valley; consider the recommended action plan as a proposed future amendment to this management plan;
- Until a stakeholder-developed action plan is approved, retain the current annual seasonal restriction to motorized vehicles on the Bow Valley Parkway between Johnston Canyon and Fireside in order to minimize displacement or habituation of wildlife during a critical season;
- Develop and install graphic media at wildlife overpasses to communicate their function. Develop an interpretive exhibit to enable through travellers to learn about the purpose and success of ecological restoration through the innovative use of fences and crossing structures. Develop and deploy new media (e.g. radio broadcasts, podcasts, etc.) with similar themes; and
- Continually monitor and maintain or enhance fences and wildlife crossings to ensure their effectiveness for all species of ungulates and carnivores.

## 6.6 Main Ranges Area

### 6.6.1 Intended Future Condition

Classic examples of alpine lakes and meadow—Bow Lake, Taylor Lake, Sunshine Meadows, Harvey Pass and many others—draw visitors into the heart of the mountains along the Continental Divide. Here they enjoy everchanging views of stratified mountains rising vertically for hundreds of metres, home to sheep and goats. Views of distant Mt. Assiniboine and the Wapta Icefield dominate vistas. Because of the wetter conditions close to the Continental Divide, lush flower meadows are everywhere and, in the fall, the brilliant gold of larch forests. This is a hiker's paradise. Well-maintained trails, free of horses, lead into the high country.

In the southern Main Ranges, a commercial summer transport service at the Sunshine ski area enables access by a wide-variety of people into the scenic wonders of the largest expanse of alpine meadows in the park. The Egypt Lake area, with its readily accessible campground and hut, is the park's most popular backcountry destination and, for many, their introduction to the backcountry. Others choose the comfort of Shadow Lake Lodge or huts managed by the Alpine Club of Canada. Despite the popularity of the trails, grizzly bears occupy all available habitats in the area and human-bear conflicts are minimal. Wildlife range freely between the west slopes in B.C. and Alberta through a regional corridor between the Bow and Vermilion valleys.

In the northern Main Ranges, many visitors enjoy close-up views of the Bow Glacier from the Bow Glacier Falls Trail, while others venture further afield to Bow Hut, experiencing some of the finest icefield and alpine exploration opportunities in Canada.

In the winter, downhill skiers and snowboarders from near-and-far are drawn to the deep powder snow, outstanding vistas and unique national park ambience at Sunshine and to high-quality cross-country ski trails. Backcountry skiers head to Egypt Lake, Bow Pass or across the Wapta Icefield. Overnight winter accommodation allows visitors to enjoy the night-time serenity in backcountry settings.

This area is timeless. A short distance from the trailheads, visitors are immersed in pristine mountain landscapes that have inspired artists, climbers and backcountry adventurers since the advent of rail travel in the late 1800s.



## 6.6.2 Current Situation

- This area consists of two units: lands southwest of the TCH between the ridge east of Healy Creek and Panorama Ridge; and, secondly, lands west of the Icefields Parkway, between the TCH and Bow Pass;
- The area is comparatively wet because of its location adjacent to the Continental Divide, with longer winters and deeper snows than the eastern part of the park; this is a major attribute of Sunshine ski area;
- The wetter conditions also support lush wildflower meadows and larch forests;
- The park's most extensive alpine meadows extend from Sunshine northwards to Healy and Harvey passes and are contiguous with alpine meadows in B.C.'s Mt. Assiniboine Provincial Park;
- Because of the wetter soils, horses are excluded from most of the area;
- The Healy Creek/Simpson Pass/Ball Pass area is an important regional wildlife-movement corridor connecting the Bow and Vermilion valleys;
- Wildlife use is expected to increase as habitat improves in Kootenay National Park as a result of the extensive forest fires in 2003;
- The Healy Creek drainage provides important seasonal grizzly bear habitat, and pockets of high-quality habitat are associated with many of the cirque basins and wet meadows along the divide;
- Because of summer bus access, the Sunshine Meadows are a popular day-hiking destination for a wide-variety of visitors; the service also provides a convenient departure point for overnight trips south towards Mt. Assiniboine and west to Healy Pass and beyond;
- Egypt Lake is the park's most popular backcountry destination, partly because of the roofed overnight shelter near the campground;
- Numerous busy day-hikes, such as those to Bourgeau, Taylor and Boom lakes, penetrate from the highway to cirque basins, but there are few loop trails; a shorter stroll around Bow Lake enables many to enjoy close-up views of Bow Glacier Falls;

- Sunshine ski area is an international destination renowned for its deep, natural snow and long season; and
- Backcountry skiing is popular at Healy and Bow passes and across the Wapta Icefield.

### 6.6.3 Objectives

- The Main Ranges are a popular introduction to the park's wilder areas and its alpine history for a broad-range of visitors;
- The roofed overnight shelter at Egypt Lake, Shadow Lake Lodge, and huts operated by the Alpine Club of Canada introduce many to overnight backcountry enjoyment;
- The regional wildlife corridor between Banff and Kootenay national parks remains completely functional;
- Grizzly bears continue to use all available habitat and human-bear conflicts are minimized; and
- Development at Sunshine ski area is sensitive to views from surrounding ridges and meadows.

### 6.6.4 Key Actions

- Maintain all trails to a high standard, with well-drained treads and simple crossing structures at streams and in wet meadows. Maintain a strong mountain-heritage aesthetic through the use of logs and rough-wood finishes, native stone and minimal cut-and-fill;
- Develop new connector and loop trails to diversify opportunities and to concentrate hiking and winter travel away from wet soils, high-quality grizzly bear habitat and other sensitive sites;
- Provide strong thematic links between contemporary experience and the stories of early exploration associated with alpinism, alpine skiing and outfitted wilderness travel;



- Replace the Egypt Lake shelter with a modern hut that is suitable for public and group use;
- Investigate options for additional hut development in the Main Ranges area, possibly to replace one or more existing backcountry campsites. Primary considerations include affordability for youth and family groups and alignment with grizzly bear management objectives;
- Limit horse use to the Red Earth Creek Trail between the TCH and Shadow Lake Lodge; and
- Parks Canada's *Ski Area Management Guidelines* will guide all future ski area development at Sunshine ski area, including summer use. Work with ski area operators to complete the development of site guidelines and negotiated growth limits.



## 6.7 The Subalpine Heart of the National Park

### 6.7.1 Intended Future Condition

The Lake Louise area is the heart of the Rockies, where history and wild nature blend. It remains the number-one scenic destination in the Canadian Rockies.

The world famous scenes of Moraine Lake, the Valley of Ten Peaks and of Lake Louise and Victoria Glacier constantly draw people from far-and-wide. Rugged nature, on an overpowering scale, is safely appreciated from high quality viewpoints and from surrounding mountain destinations. Summer visitors hike classic trails to spectacular mountain vistas, while experienced climbers test themselves on classic mountain terrain. In winter, visitors and locals alike take advantage of the long cross-country ski season, downhill skiing at the edge of wilderness at the world-class Lake Louise ski area, and backcountry skiing to historic Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site.

A wide-variety of interpretive media, provided by both Parks Canada and tourism operators, tell stories of the Aboriginal people who introduced early visitors to these mountain places; of the environmental importance of the area; of the birth of Canadian climbing, led by Swiss guides and the historic lodges and teahouses; and of the early days of skiing and the tourism promotion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The mountains tell their own stories of uplift and glaciation, short summers, long, snowy winters and how plants and animals adapt to extreme conditions.

Grizzlies still roam these mountains, because their habitat and travel corridors have been well managed; in fact, the Lake Louise area remains a critical nursery for grizzlies. Other sensitive species, both aquatic and terrestrial, effectively use the varied landscape for their equally varied seasonal and life requirements.



Vehicle congestion is addressed with the introduction of a transit system, giving visitors, whether based in Banff or Lake Louise, easy access to views from the edge of the wilderness. Those passing through enjoy glimpses of the surrounding mountains from the safety of a fenced and twinned highway and are aware of the importance of wildlife crossing structures in conserving Rocky Mountain wildlife. Visitors and residents continue to understand and accept ways their use and behaviour can contribute to keeping this place wild.

The small community of Lake Louise, surrounded by spectacular, classic Rocky Mountain scenery, blends into its surroundings, welcoming visitors, and serving as a starting point for all that the area has to offer. The small size of the community, the low profile of the buildings and the architectural motifs allow the mountains to prevail; this is a community that values and belongs in its natural setting. Commercial operators in Lake Louise demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship and contribute to the preservation of park values through their commitment to this special place. The community of Lake Louise is healthy—ecologically, culturally, socially and economically.

## 6.7.2 Park Community of Lake Louise

### 6.7.2.1 Current Situation

- The community and adjacent destinations are one of the most popular destinations in the Canadian Rockies and have the highest percentage of international visitors;
- Development in Lake Louise occurs in two distinct areas: set against the impressive backdrop of the Victoria Glacier, upper Lake Louise is an area of towering peaks, alpine meadows, and the lake itself; the park community of Lake Louise is set along the banks of the scenic Bow and Pipestone rivers;
- The community of Lake Louise is an important staging area for memorable visitor experiences and provides visitors and residents with the opportunity to develop an improved understanding of the park's heritage values;
- Facilities at upper Lake Louise and in the community offer a range of quality services for visitors, including luxury accommodations, modest hotels, a full service campground and basic retail and grocery outlets;
- Lake Louise has a number of important heritage and cultural resources. These are protected through leases and development review requirements;
- Commercial leaseholders in Lake Louise are conscious of their responsibility to safeguard national park values and offer opportunities to learn about the park to their guests, staff and clients;
- All new development and redevelopment in Lake Louise is required to meet standards related to environmental management and design and architectural, sign and landscaping guidelines. Heritage tourism and environmental management strategies are a requirement for all development, redevelopment, or lease replacement;
- The community's accessible environment encourages visits by new Canadians. Residents pride themselves in accepting their responsibility for protecting and sharing the natural and cultural heritage of the area;



- Visitor surveys indicate limited perception of value-for-money;
- The surrounding movement corridors and high-quality bear habitat require active management to reduce bear habituation and bear-human conflict;
- The boundary of the community is fixed in legislation;
- The 2001 Community Plan and Implementation Guidelines provide detailed guidance for development in Lake Louise; and
- The community is managed by Parks Canada, with the advice of a local advisory board.

#### 6.7.2.2 Objectives

- Memorable visitor opportunities and quality visitor services reflect the character of the community and reinforce connection to place;
- Upper and lower Lake Louise serve as the visitor centre for the west side of the park and for areas of adjacent Yoho National Park;
- The community provides quality basic services necessary for visitors. School and hospital services are provided in neighbouring Banff;
- Visitors to Lake Louise, as well as residents, have the opportunity to learn about national parks and how to safeguard them, through programs delivered by Parks Canada and by partners;
- The community shows leadership in heritage conservation, sustainable development and environmental stewardship;
- Residents rate the quality-of-life in Lake Louise highly;
- Responsible growth-management ensures the community retains its small scale and strong aesthetic connection to its setting. Its heritage resources are protected;
- Head lessees, groups of lessees, non-profit groups and institutions provide appropriate residential accommodation. Demand for privately owned residences will be met in neighbouring communities; and

- Parks Canada, residents and leaseholders work together to help the community remain healthy—ecologically, culturally, socially and economically.

### 6.7.2.3 Key Actions

- Retain Parks Canada management of the community;
- Continue to implement the 2001 Community Plan and supporting Implementation Guidelines;
- An additional 3,660 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space may be built, to be phased-in over a minimum of 10 years;
- The total commercial space cap is 96,848 m<sup>2</sup> and no new commercial accommodation operations are permitted;
- The limit for commercial accommodation is 2,700 overnight visitors;
- Limit residential housing to those with a need to reside. Address housing shortfalls before any permits are granted for commercial expansion in the non-accommodation sectors;
- Retain the Harry's Hill residential area and allow minor infilling. Prohibit boundary expansion;
- Establish the community as a hub for any regional transit system;
- Integrate the community even more closely into the surrounding landscapes (e.g. by providing interpretive walks in the community as an introduction to the natural environment);
- Work with local businesses to improve visitor satisfaction and perceptions-of-value;
- Undertake environmental stewardship initiatives such as expanded recycling programs and organics composting;
- Continue to work with leaseholders and business owners on the development of heritage tourism strategies for guests and staff; and
- Continue with measures to prevent wildlife habituation.



### 6.7.3 Lake Louise Area

#### 6.7.3.1 Current Situation

- This area straddles a short section of the Bow Valley surrounding the Lake Louise community. The southern part includes Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Consolation Lakes and their surrounding basins. Across the valley, it encloses the ski area and areas between Pipestone and Baker creeks north to Skoki Valley;
- Along with the community, the area is one of the most popular destinations in the Canadian Rockies and has the highest percentage of international visitors;
- Because of the iconic views, good access and safe surroundings, the area attracts visitors from every walk of life – the majority take in a “view from the edge” of wilderness;
- The area has a long winter, with the earliest access to cross-country skiing. The Lake Louise ski area is an international destination. It hosts World Cup downhill ski events in November and December;
- The Lake Louise area is one of the park’s four core grizzly bear reproduction areas; nowhere do so many people and bears occupy the same space;
- Two important wildlife corridors run along the Bow Valley north and south of the Lake Louise community;
- The Lake Louise Area Strategy was devised with significant consultation during development of the 2004 management plan. Substantial work to implement the Lake Louise Area Strategy has already been done or is underway (see the accompanying box, pg 103);
- Mortality risk on roads and the CP Railway tracks has not yet been effectively reduced;
- Traffic congestion and parking are major problems during peak summer periods at upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake; and
- A management plan for Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site has been prepared.

### Lake Louise Area Strategy Implementation

Some of the integrated actions that have made improvements for people and bears include:

- Electric-fencing around the tenting campground is well established and accepted by visitors;
- Fencing and crossing structures on the Trans Canada highway are being installed;
- Trail and campground relocations and improvements help separate people and bears;
- An improved “view from edge” strolling trail is in place at Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise;
- At upper Lake Louise, improvements to parking-lot drainage help protect Louise Creek and a new washroom is in place, incorporating important stewardship messages; and
- New welcome and orientation signs are in place at upper and lower Lake Louise.

#### 6.7.3.2 Objectives

- Grizzly bears and other sensitive species reproduce and thrive throughout the area;
- Human-bear conflict and bear mortality are minimized;
- Visitors seeking a “view from edge” experience at upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake will feel welcomed and expect high-levels of use;
- Visitor experiences and ecological conditions are improved;
- The Skoki, Pipestone and Baker areas will provide premier “*Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*” experiences for visitors and secure habitat for grizzly bears;
- Wildlife corridors north and south of the community are protected; the effectiveness of the Whitehorn corridor is maintained or improved; the Fairview corridor effectiveness is improved;



- Traffic and parking congestion are reduced;
- The history of early mountain exploration, skiing and alpinism and the ecology of the Rocky Mountain Main Ranges, are central elements of visitor experience products delivered by both Parks Canada and the private sector;
- Ski area development respects, and is sensitive to, views from the Bow Valley and trails to Skoki area; and
- Cultural resources are protected and presented by Parks Canada and others.

#### 6.7.3.3 Key Actions

- Continue implementation of the Lake Louise Area Strategy (see Annex 4);
- Reduce wildlife mortality on the TCH and CP Railway, grizzly bear habituation and risks to public safety;
- Improve the effectiveness of the Fairview wildlife corridor and monitor, maintain and improve, if necessary, the effectiveness of the Whitehorn wildlife corridor;
- Protect and present locally, regionally and nationally significant cultural resources, including archaeological resources and built-heritage;
- Put in place a transportation system that is a positive, central aspect of the visitor experience, that considers the needs of users and businesses and results in improved wildlife movement;
- Continue to manage for high-levels of summer use in the frontcountry of upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake with emphasis on improving visitor services and reducing ecological impacts;
- Manage the Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise trail system as one of the major day-hiking areas in Banff National Park;
- Undertake adjustments to trails in the Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise backcountry to reduce impacts and improve opportunities while providing access to popular locations;



- Manage the Skoki, Pipestone and Baker Land Management Units (LMUs) for low-to-moderate use in recognition of their importance as a reproductive area for female grizzly bears;
- Continue to manage the Skoki area as one of the premier overnight camping and backcountry lodge destinations in the park;
- Complete a long-distance cycle route from Canmore to Jasper that enables users to avoid travelling on the TCH, by developing a cycle route connecting the Bow Valley Parkway and the Icefields Parkway.
- Parks Canada's *Ski Area Management Guidelines* will guide all future ski area development at Lake Louise ski area, including summer use. Work with ski area operators to complete the development of site guidelines and negotiated growth limits; and
- Enhance and maintain a network of high-quality cross-country ski tracks and snowshoe trails and make Lake Louise the winter activity hub of Banff National Park.



## 6.8 Icefields Parkway

### 6.8.1 Intended Future Condition

Canadians and visitors from around the world who come to the Icefields Parkway in Banff and Jasper national parks find themselves immersed in a dramatic landscape of ice-draped ridges, jagged peaks, turbulent headwater streams, sweeping vistas of forest-carpeted valleys and alpine meadows bright with wildflowers.

Great rivers arise here at the very backbone of the North American continent, born of melting snow and ancient glaciers, and flowing to three oceans. Timeless pathways along the Bow, Mistaya and North Saskatchewan rivers guide travellers on a breathtaking journey from the valley bottom to two of the highest passes that can be reached by paved road in Canada.

From the road's edge and beyond, visitors witness dynamic natural forces at work – slow scouring ice, sudden-release avalanches, rushing waters, renewing fires and variable mountain weather. Wildlife follow their ancient patterns, and visitors take pride in knowing and adopting behaviours that ensure that they can share space with wild, undisturbed grizzly bears, moose, mountain goats, wolves and other Rocky Mountain wildlife.

### 6.8.2 Current Situation

- The Icefields Parkway (Highway 93 North) extends 230 km between the Park community of Lake Louise and the town of Jasper; it hosts about 400,000 vehicles each year;
- The entire parkway lies within the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site and is one of the best-known features of Banff and Jasper national parks;
- Along the parkway are 14 day-use areas, three entrance gates, 16 viewpoints, 19 trailheads, five hostels, 11 frontcountry campgrounds and seven OCAs;
- The parkway is a leisurely recreational drive; it is unfenced, winding and undulating and only two lanes wide; paved shoulders exist in some areas; and

- A strategic concept and action plan have been developed through an advisory group process, involving Parks Canada, a dedicated group of stakeholders and First Nation representation; this section of the management plan summarizes that more detailed work.

### 6.8.3 Objectives

- Parkway visitors are offered a variety of ways to connect with their surroundings, whether they experience the parkway from their vehicles, step into wilderness or leave the road far behind;
- Opportunities are designed to support a continuous visitor experience that engages interest from pre-trip planning to post-trip memories, and which gives all visitors “access to the spectacular”;
- Parks Canada and stakeholders work closely together to design and implement key actions and monitor success and to adopt and celebrate stewardship practices and designs that maintain and restore the natural environment;
- Wildlife safely use wilderness habitats right to the pavement’s edge, offering exceptional viewing opportunities to visitors who are aware of, and practice, responsible wildlife-viewing behaviours; and
- The quality of the Icefields Parkway as a scenic heritage drive and an important link between Jasper and Banff is retained.

### 6.8.4 Key Actions

- Implement the Strategic Concept for the Icefields Parkway (Annex 5);
- Create a distinctive identity for the parkway, which conveys the iconic status of the parkway and its promised opportunities and integrates messages promoting welcome, stewardship and personal safety;
- Create a distinct sense of welcome, anticipation, arrival and departure at the three entry gates;



- Based on enhanced understanding of visitor needs, interests and motivations, align existing and new visitor experience products to three types of experience: “*a view from the edge*”; “*a step into the wild*”; and, for more remote areas accessible from the parkway, “*Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*”;
- Implement consistent standards for viewpoints, day-use areas and trailheads that take into consideration seasonality, ecological integrity, education and operational efficiencies;
- Collaborate with tourism partners and non-profit groups to develop and share best management practices, to implement strategies, to strengthen interpretation and to promote and market the parkway;
- Develop and implement prevention and enforcement strategies to manage traffic speeds and ensure that human-wildlife interactions minimize the risk of habituation or displacement of wildlife;
- Link glacial landforms, historic treelines and other landscape features to interpretation of climate change and its effects on mountain landscapes, ecosystems and hydrology;
- Redesign sensitive viewing areas to address safety, quality of experience and wildlife issues;
- In keeping with the parkway’s status as a leisurely, scenic, heritage drive, emphasize visitor experience and safety, not speed, when designing and implementing a highway standard; and
- Ensure visitors have timely information to make informed travel decisions in this remote setting.

## 6.9 North Saskatchewan

### 6.9.1 Intended Future Condition

This is the park at its wildest. The terrain is rugged, with extensive glaciers and icefields along the Continental Divide. A small number of popular day trails penetrate the edges (Cirque/Chephren, Glacier Lake, Sunset and Nigel passes, Parker Ridge) but otherwise trails are few and long, with difficult creek and glacier crossings. Climbers and experienced backcountry travellers enjoy the challenge of accessing mountain wilderness on its own terms.

Visitors are inspired by glacier-clad peaks visible at each turn from the Icefields Parkway, enhanced by interpretive media at places such as the Howse Pass viewpoint. Parker Ridge gives many the opportunity to hike a short trail into the alpine and spectacular views of the Saskatchewan Glacier. Mistaya Canyon shows the power of river erosion.

The area's wildlife rarely see people except along the narrow strip of the Icefields Parkway; they live in a largely natural and timeless world. Caribou have re-established themselves in areas east of the parkway.

The area's special features—such as the historic Aboriginal and fur trade route over Howse Pass and the Castleguard Cave and Meadows – are shared widely off-site via a variety of media.

Apart from occasional climbing guides leading parties to distant peaks, this area is wild and free of commerce and crowds. It is a place for visitors to escape into adventure, where nature sets all the rules.



### 6.9.2 Current Situation

- This area is located on both sides of the Icefields Parkway, from Bow Pass to Sunwapta Pass;
- The Castleguard Cave and meadows area and the Siffleur Valley are Zone 1 Special Preservation because of outstanding natural features (alpine meadows, a long and deep cave and caribou habitat);
- There is a small and important area of montane habitat in the area of Saskatchewan Crossing; prescribed fire is being used to renew this habitat;
- Visitor use is concentrated on the day-hiking trails and distant parts see very few visitors; and
- Access to Castleguard Cave is restricted because of severe safety hazards.

### 6.9.3 Objectives

- The area provides exceptional “*Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*” opportunities and outstanding day-hiking near the Icefields Parkway;
- Interpretation of the glacial history, Aboriginal use and early mountain exploration in the North Saskatchewan area is provided along the Icefields Parkway and David Thompson Highway (Highway 11) and off-site via various media;
- Grizzly bears have secure access to all habitat and conflicts between bears and humans are minimized;
- Montane vegetation diversity is maintained through natural processes of fire, herbivory and flooding; and
- A self-sustaining population of caribou occupies traditional habitat.

#### 6.9.4 Key Actions

- Complete investigation of the feasibility of reintroducing caribou and act on the findings;
- Use prescribed fire to restore and maintain montane habitat diversity;
- Limit commercial activity to licensed mountain guides and renewals of existing business licences; and
- Maintain current minimal levels of infrastructure to sustain “*Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*” visitor opportunities and wildlife habitat values.



## 7 ZONING AND DECLARED WILDERNESS

### 7.1 National Park Zoning System

The zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park. Areas are classified according to the need to protect the ecosystem and the park's cultural resources. The areas' capability of and suitability for providing opportunities for visitors are also considered in making decisions about zoning. The zoning system has five categories, which are described in *Parks Canada: Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* (Parks Canada, 1994).

### 7.2 Zones in Banff National Park

The zones in Banff National Park remain the same as approved in the 1997 management plan, with the exception of the wilderness portion of Johnson Lake, formerly mapped in Zone 3, which is now included in Zone 2. Depending on the outcome of the current feasibility study for caribou reintroduction, the boundary of the Clearwater-Siffleur Zone 1 area may be expanded or reduced in a future amendment to this management plan.

#### 7.2.1 Zone 1 - Special Preservation

Zone 1 lands require special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation of the specified values is the key management consideration. Motorized access is not permitted and other forms of access are carefully regulated. This plan identifies four Zone 1 areas that cover approximately 4% of the park.



### Clearwater-Siffleur Zone I Area

The Clearwater-Siffleur area contains the southernmost woodland caribou habitat in Alberta and a number of important and sensitive physiographic and biotic resources. These include hoodoos, permafrost, rare plant and animal species, prehistoric cultural sites, elk and bighorn sheep range and wolf and grizzly bear habitat.

### Castleguard Cave System and Meadows Zone I Area

Castleguard Cave is part of a karst system that is internationally recognized for its physical development, diversity of features and rare and unique fauna. At more than 20 kilometres, it is the longest cave in Canada and the sixth-deepest cave in the country. Castleguard Cave contains a notable variety of special features including stalagmites and stalactites, precipitates of gypsum, hydromagnesite and rare cave minerals. The Castleguard area not only contains significant surficial karst features but is also an outstanding example of pristine alpine vegetation.

### Cave and Basin Marsh Zone I Area

The discovery of the Cave and Basin springs on Sulphur Mountain led to the establishment of the Canadian national park system. The Cave and Basin complex has been designated as a national historic site in recognition of its historic significance. The warm water of the Cave and Basin marsh supports a number of invertebrates and provides a unique habitat for reptiles and amphibians, as well as wintering habitat for rare species such as the Virginia rail. The Cave and Basin area is the most important habitat for snakes in the park. The Vermilion Wetlands and the Cave and Basin marsh constitute the most productive bird habitat in the lower Bow Valley.



### Christensen Archaeological Site Zone I Area

This deeply stratified site contains archaeological evidence of at least nine separate periods of occupation dating back some 8,000 years. Protection not only of the known artefact sites but also of the undisturbed soil horizons throughout the entire area is important.

## 7.2.2 Zone II - Wilderness

Zone II contains extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and that are conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. In Zone II, visitors have exceptional opportunities to experience adventure, remoteness and solitude associated with “*Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*” opportunities and “*a step into the wild*”. Motorized recreational access is not permitted. Most of the park is managed as Zone II. Zone II facilities are restricted to trails, backcountry campgrounds, alpine huts, trail shelters and Parks Canada patrol facilities.

## 7.2.3 Zone III - Natural Environment

In Zone III areas, visitors experience the park’s natural and cultural heritage through outdoor recreational activities that require minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. Zone III covers approximately 1% of the park; it applies to areas where visitor use requires facilities that exceed the acceptable standards for Zone II and is where many of the park’s “*view from the edge*” and “*a step into the wild*” opportunities are located. Motorized access is not permitted, except for snowmobiles used to set tracks and to service backcountry facilities and off-season servicing by helicopters. Access routes and land associated with backcountry commercial lodges are in Zone III.

### 7.2.4 Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation

Zone IV covers approximately 1% of the park and accommodates a broad-range of opportunities for “*drive through awareness*” and “*view from the edge*” experiences. Direct access by motorized vehicles is permitted. In Banff, Zone IV includes frontcountry facilities and the rights-of-way along park roads. Zone IV nodes occur at Lake Minnewanka and the three ski areas.

### 7.2.5 Zone V - Park Services

The town of Banff and the park community of Lake Louise are the Zone V areas; they cover less than 1% of the park.

### 7.2.6 Environmentally Sensitive Sites (ESS)

This designation applies to areas with significant and sensitive features that require special protection measures.

#### Vermilion Lakes Wetlands ESS

The Vermilion Lakes Wetlands support a diversity of vegetation and many rare and significant plant species. These montane communities are important habitat for a variety of birds and mammals. The area contains many special features: lakes, ponds, springs, rare birds, moose winter range, elk calving areas and ungulate mineral licks. The alluvial landforms on the north and east shores of the lakes and adjacent wetlands are rich in significant archaeological resources from at least 10,700 years ago.



### Middle Springs ESS

The upper and lower Middle Springs remain the only relatively undisturbed hot springs on Sulphur Mountain. The warm mineral waters create a unique habitat for rare plants and invertebrates. This area's importance is increased by its location in an important wildlife movement corridor along the lower slopes of Sulphur Mountain.

### Fairholme-Carrot Creek Benchlands ESS

The Fairholme Range area from the East Gate to Johnson Lake is the largest remaining intact block of secure montane wildlife habitat in the park. Human use of this area, particularly during the summer, can displace wildlife and diminish habitat security. Off-road bicycling is not permitted and trails are not maintained in this area. Human use is restricted by means of educational measures and a voluntary access closure.

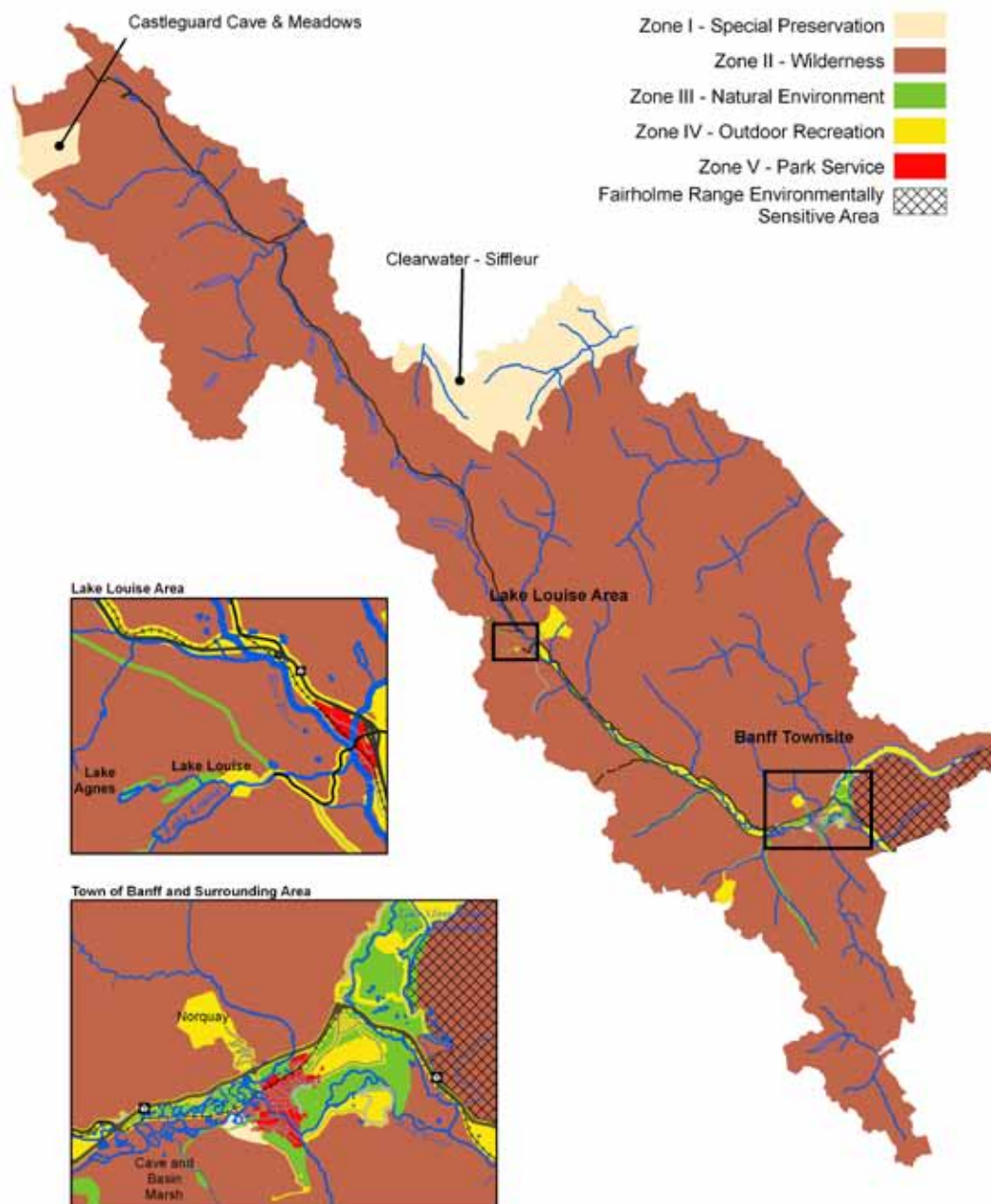
## 7.3 Wilderness Area Declaration

Large tracts of protected wilderness, where visitors can experience solitude, isolation and self-reliant travel in remote natural settings, have become a scarce and valuable resource. The intent of legally designating a portion of a national park as wilderness is to maintain its wilderness character in perpetuity. Only limited development required for park administration, public safety and the provision of basic user-facilities such as trails and rudimentary campsites is allowed in designated wilderness.

In Banff National Park, most of Zone 2 has been legally declared as Wilderness.

In the event that future revisions to Declared Wilderness Area boundaries may need to be considered (e.g. for alternative backcountry energy sources), specific proposals will receive full public review prior to Parks Canada recommending any regulatory change.

## Land-Use Zoning, Banff National Park



## 8 MONITORING AND REPORTING

Parks Canada monitors the effectiveness of this management plan by tracking key performance indicators related to the park ecosystems, cultural resources, visitor experience and education programming. A set of quantitative measurements underlies each indicator. Management performance is evaluated against either a prescribed trend or target for each measure.

The indicators of management performance that will be evaluated in the next SOPR, scheduled for completion in 2014, are shown in Annex 1.

## 9 SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### 9.1 Introduction

A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was conducted for the 2010 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan, in accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals*, 2004. The SEA was carried out during the development of the management plan as an integrated, iterative process, to allow for adjustments to be made to the plan in order to enhance positive effects and avoid or reduce potential negative effects.

### 9.2 Proposal Description

The management plan identifies a range of guiding concepts and related key strategies and directions that provide overall guidance in the management of the park. The plan also includes a number of area concepts that provide more specific objectives and actions to guide implementation of the broader strategic direction in specific areas of the park.

All concepts and strategies integrate heritage resource protection, visitor experience and educational considerations. While the SEA includes consideration of all elements of the plan, key sections of the plan that are particularly important to the SEA include:

- Section 5.3, A Model of National Park Stewardship, with a focus on addressing existing and future conservation and restoration challenges while increasing opportunities for visitor involvement in, and understanding of, ecosystem management;
- Section 5.4, Welcome...to Mountains of Possibilities, with a focus on improving visitors' experiences and connections to the park through improved facilities and an expanded range of opportunities while respecting conservation objectives; and



- Section 5.5, Managing Development and Commercial Activities, with a focus on maintaining existing limits to commercial growth and development while providing opportunities for improved visitor experiences that support ecological or cultural resource protection objectives.

All area concepts and related actions were also considered in the SEA process, in particular, to ensure consistency with relevant ecological and cultural resource protection objectives.

### 9.3 Effects and Mitigating Measures

Valued components of particular relevance to the SEA include wildlife, aquatic ecosystems, vegetation and cultural resources. The SEA considers the broad level impacts of the concepts, strategies, objectives and actions identified in the management plan on these valued components, with an emphasis on potential contributions to cumulative effects.

The plan introduces a number of strategies, objectives and actions aimed at improving visitors' experience and connections to the park that are likely to result in increased number of visitors undertaking a wider range of activities in various locations throughout the park. Growth in visitation and an increased range of activities will be carefully managed to avoid adverse environmental effects on various valued ecosystem or cultural resource components. General measures identified in the plan that are essential to managing related potential cumulative effects include:

- Fully integrated delivery of the management plan strategies, directions, objectives and actions;
- Ongoing consideration and incorporation of all ecological objectives during management deliberations, project-level environmental assessments and implementation of decisions;
- Adherence to existing limits to growth and development; and



- Implementation of ecological and social science research and monitoring programs to better understand park ecosystems and related human dimensions.

### Wildlife

The management plan recognizes existing wildlife-related cumulative effects concerns that have resulted from development of transportation corridors, communities, visitor service facilities and related activities throughout the park. These concerns include habitat loss, displacement, fragmentation, disruption of travel patterns and mortality.

The plan identifies a range of strategies and directions to address these concerns, with emphasis on improving or restoring conditions for particularly sensitive species. The plan includes commitments to investigate the feasibility of restoring a breeding population of caribou, a threatened species, as well as reintroducing a breeding population of the extirpated plains bison.

Grizzly bears are a species of special concern and an important indicator species for all the mountain parks. The plan reinforces Parks Canada's commitment to work with adjacent land managers to maintain a non-declining grizzly bear population in the Rocky Mountains. Banff National Park will continue to use grizzly bear habitat security targets as a key decision-making tool in managing development and visitor activities. The plan identifies improved public awareness, minimized bear-human conflict, maintenance of access to habitat and minimized mortality as key priorities for the management of grizzly bears.

Measures are also identified to maintain or improve wildlife connectivity and habitat conditions for a broader range of wildlife species. Zoning commitments that designate large areas of the park to be managed as wilderness will contribute to protection of many species. Plan commitments to consider new recreational activities or facility development include clear requirements for consistency with wildlife management objectives.



Implementation of the wildlife-related measures identified in the plan is expected to result in an overall positive contribution to cumulative effects on wildlife in the park.

### Aquatic Ecosystems

The management plan recognizes the need to address a range of aquatic-related cumulative effects concerns that have resulted from past and existing developments and activities in the park. Concerns include displacement and hybridization of native fish species by introduced non-native species, impacts to water quality, loss of habitat connectivity and hydrological changes related to dams and culverts and changes in natural alluvial processes.

The plan identifies a variety of measures to address these issues, including commitments to reduce populations of non-native fish and restore natural aquatic ecosystems. Water quality in the Bow River and other water bodies will be maintained or improved by continued adherence to the mountain national parks' leadership targets for wastewater effluent. The plan includes direction to restore aquatic connectivity where it has been impaired by dams, culverts, roads or railways. Ecologically critical alluvial fans are identified as priorities for restoration activities and mitigation of existing development-related impacts. Protection of the endangered Banff Springs snail will be enhanced as part of the renewal of the Cave and Basin National Historic Site. Consideration of new activities or facilities is subject to consistency with relevant aquatic ecological objectives.

Implementation of the aquatic-related measures identified in the plan is expected to result in an overall positive contribution to cumulative effects on aquatic resources in the park.

## Vegetation

The management plan acknowledges a variety of cumulative effects to vegetation and related terrestrial ecosystems, including the reduced role of fire as an ecosystem process, changes to forest composition and related reductions in biodiversity, increased extent of non-native plant species and direct vegetation disturbances related to development.

The plan commits to a continued focus on the restoration of the role of fire throughout the park. Restoration of affected terrestrial ecosystems through controlled burns and mechanical thinning is also identified as a priority, in particular within the disproportionately important montane ecosystems, grasslands and forest savannas. The plan includes direction to rehabilitate existing disturbed areas, including the Cascade Pit. The opportunity to enhance Parks Canada's existing non-native plant control program through the use of volunteers is identified in the plan.

Successful implementation of the vegetation-related measures identified in the plan is expected to result in an overall positive contribution to cumulative effects on vegetation and related terrestrial ecosystems in the park.

## Cultural Heritage

Facility and infrastructure development and related operations and activities, as well as natural degradation, may physically affect cultural resources. Loss of knowledge or awareness over time may also impact cultural heritage.

The management plan provides direction to address these potential issues, including a commitment to prepare and implement a cultural resources management plan to guide the management, protection and presentation of cultural resources, other than national historic sites, within Banff National Park. The plan also emphasizes a commitment to implement the approved Mountain Parks National Historic Sites of Canada Management Plans for the seven sites within the park that Parks Canada manages directly. This commitment will ensure



the continued commemorative integrity of those sites, including a significant renewal of the Cave and Basin National Historic Site. Additional direction in the plan will expand the relevance and reach of national historic site and cultural heritage programming.

## 9.4 Visitor Experience and Education

The management plan recognizes the mutually supportive relationships between environmental and cultural resource protection and improved visitor experience and understanding. The plan includes many key strategies, directions, objectives and actions aimed at improving visitor experience, understanding and connections to Banff National Park. Successful implementation of those aspects of the plan is expected to result in positive environmental and cultural heritage effects. Positive results are expected to include improved and more widespread knowledge of ecosystems and cultural resources and the need for ecosystem and cultural resource protection, restoration, monitoring and presentation. Enhanced connections between Canadians and their national parks are expected to increase the relevance of the parks to Canadians and encourage support for park management activities and conservation initiatives.

The plan acknowledges the need to maintain pristine aesthetic values, wilderness character and high levels of ecological and commemorative integrity throughout much of the park as important means to maintain or improve visitor experience and support for Banff National Park and Canada's national parks system as a whole. The plan identifies several opportunities to combine visitor experience, education and understanding with park management, science and monitoring programs.

## 9.5 Implementation and Monitoring

The management plan provides strategic direction for a wide-range of park management actions that will be implemented over the course of the next 15 years. Many of these actions will be subject to individual, project-level environmental screenings under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). All

future proposed projects and activities will be reviewed for consistency with the policy direction, including environmental objectives, provided in the plan prior to initiation of a project level assessment. In most cases, the plan provides adequate policy direction to allow subsequent projects and activities to proceed to an environmental screening. In some cases, additional policy discussion and clarification may be required prior to further environmental assessment under the CEAA.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the management plan in meeting ecological, cultural heritage, visitor experience and education objectives, a comprehensive monitoring and reporting program is required. An existing monitoring program is in place that identifies various indicators, measures, targets, and trends. Results of the monitoring program are evaluated and presented in a SOPR every 5 years, with the next report scheduled for 2014.

## 9.6 Public Engagement

The public consultation process undertaken during preparation of the park management plan provided many opportunities for input from the general public, stakeholders and regional Aboriginal groups. Numerous comments and suggestions were received during the consultation process. Feedback received during the process contributed meaningfully to the preparation of the final plan, resulting in stronger direction related to all aspects of Parks Canada's mandate.

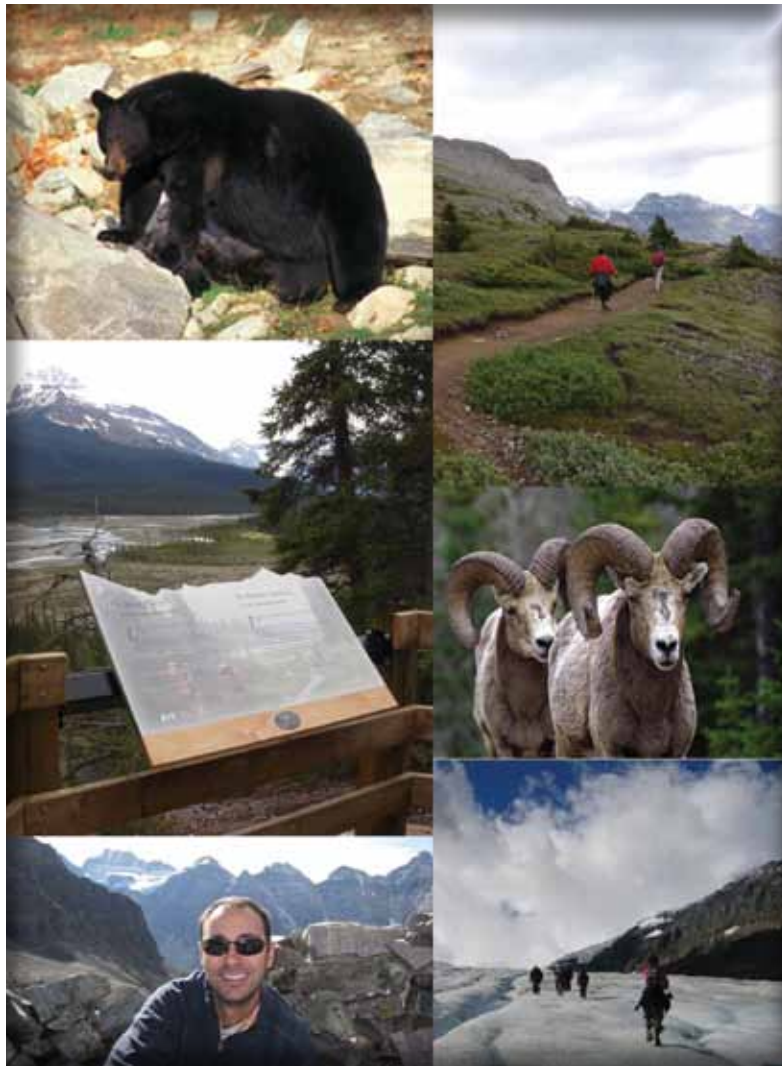
## 9.7 Conclusion

The cumulative effects associated with the 2010 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan were considered with respect to management objectives for ecological and commemorative integrity and visitor experience and education. Successful implementation of the plan is expected to result in many positive effects. Positive contributions to existing cumulative effects concerns identified in the SOPR are anticipated, including maintaining or improving conditions for grizzly bears, caribou, bison and other wildlife species. Improvements to aquatic



and vegetation resources, and related ecosystem processes, are also anticipated. The plan provides adequate direction to ensure that any potential adverse effects associated with enhanced or expanded visitor opportunities are mitigated. The management plan is not expected to result in any important adverse effects. Successful implementation of measures aimed at improving visitor experience, education, awareness and connections to the park is expected to make a positive contribution to ecological integrity and cultural heritage over the long term.

In conclusion, implementation of the plan is expected to support Parks Canada's objectives related to improved ecological and commemorative integrity and visitor experience and education for Banff National Park.



## 10 SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR 2010 - 2014

This management plan contains almost 200 action statements based on the key strategies for Banff National Park. When implemented, these will achieve long-term management objectives and the desired future condition for each area concept. Some are discrete projects. Others are ongoing commitments that will begin, or be continued, as a result of this plan.

Individual actions will be outlined in the field units' annual business plans and will be influenced by the urgency of the issue, public consultation, opportunity and financial capabilities.

This summary list for the first five years focuses on only discrete projects. Many other activities that this plan envisions will be advanced during the same period.

Progress will be reported each year via the Year in Review Report and the annual Planning Forum. Cumulative progress will be reviewed in the 2014 SOPR and the five-year reviews of this management plan.

	2010 - 2014 Actions
Parks Canada Program Activity	
Program Activity 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate planning for reintroduction of plains bison.</li> <li>• Complete investigation of the feasibility of restoring a breeding population of woodland caribou.</li> </ul>
Heritage Resource Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop evidence-based estimates of grizzly bear population numbers.</li> <li>• Complete the restoration of Devon Lakes' ecosystem.</li> <li>• Restore aquatic connectivity in at least three tributary streams to the Bow River.</li> <li>• Continue implementation of the prescribed fire program.</li> <li>• Continue adaptive management measures aimed at restoring and understanding interactions between prescribed fire, forest health, ungulates, predators and people.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate protection and education measures for the endangered Banff Springs snail into a renewed visitor experience at the Cave and Basin National Historic Site.</li> <li>• Design a citizen science program around core ecological monitoring programs and other ecosystem studies. Share the stories of citizen scientists widely through the Internet and new media.</li> <li>• Begin implementation of the management plan for National Historic Sites, notably renewal of the Cave and Basin.</li> </ul>
<p>Program Activity 3</p> <p>Public Appreciation and Understanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite strengthened involvement of Aboriginal people in the park and develop a working protocol on consultation with elders.</li> <li>• Create a user-friendly website that incorporates enhanced trip planning information.</li> <li>• Develop and implement an outreach program for new target audiences.</li> <li>• Link the work of all park advisory groups more closely to the round table and the park management plan.</li> </ul>
<p>Program Activity 4</p> <p>Visitor Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With tourism and community partners, create a communications and learning strategy around the concept of welcome and employ it throughout the park.</li> <li>• Refine and renew visitor facilities, information and promotions, based on visitor experience planning and opportunity development that provides for five types of engagement.</li> <li>• Develop and promote new programs and services that facilitate “<i>virtual experience</i>” and “<i>drive through awareness</i>” experiences.</li> <li>• Increase knowledge of the park’s visitors and target markets.</li> <li>• Complete components of a long distance cycle route from Canmore to Jasper.</li> <li>• Review and revitalize the park’s camping offer.</li> <li>• Develop a strategy for enhancing winter opportunities in addition to downhill skiing.</li> <li>• Establish site guidelines and growth limits for the three ski areas in support of their importance as cornerstones of winter tourism.</li> </ul>



Area Concepts	
6.1  Lower Bow Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a phased-approach to revitalize the arrival experience at the East Gate.</li> <li>• Design and install improved directional signage.</li> <li>• Complete the Banff Legacy Trail and register it as part of the Trans-Canada Trail.</li> </ul>
6.2  The Montane Heart of the Park	<p><u>Town of Banff</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew the Cave and Basin National Historic Site as the birthplace of Canada's national parks.</li> <li>• With the town, develop integrated trail connections and way-finding media to adjacent areas.</li> <li>• With the town, develop a sustainability strategy in advance of commercial build-out.</li> </ul> <p><u>Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff (LATB)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue implementation of the LATB Strategy.</li> <li>• Support development of a regional transit system.</li> <li>• Restore the Cascade Pit.</li> <li>• Re-list the airstrip.</li> </ul>
6.3  Spray River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove or relocate the Bryant shelter.</li> </ul>
6.4  East Slopes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin reducing the Cascade Trail to a single track north of Stoney Creek.</li> <li>• Implement at least four large-scale prescribed burns.</li> <li>• License outfitters for day-rides.</li> <li>• With the Province of Alberta, restrict vehicle access east of Lake Minnewanka.</li> </ul>



6.5 Middle Bow Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With an advisory group, complete an action plan for the Bow Valley Parkway.</li> <li>• Implement a “<i>drive-through awareness</i>” product. focused on interpretation of the TCH wildlife crossings.</li> </ul>
6.6 Main Ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate options to replace the Egypt Lake shelter.</li> <li>• Develop at least 5 km of new trail.</li> </ul>
6.7 The Subalpine Heart of the Park	<p><u>Park community of Lake Louise:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue implementation of the community plan.</li> </ul> <p><u>Lake Louise area</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue implementation of the Lake Louise Area Strategy.</li> <li>• Complete the twinning, fencing and provision of wildlife highway crossing structures for the TCH.</li> <li>• Support development of a regional transit system.</li> <li>• Provide 2-km of bike trail between Bow Valley Parkway and Icefields Parkway.</li> </ul>
6.8	<p><u>Icefields Parkway</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin implementation of the 2009 Action Plan.</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 1 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

Program Activity 2 - Heritage Resource Conservation	
Indicator: Regional Landscapes	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Wildlife corridor effectiveness	✓ Corridor effectiveness is maintained or improved.
Wildlife movement	✓ Movement is unimpeded throughout the landscape.
Wildlife crossing structures and fences	✓ Completed along the TCH.
Wildlife fences	✓ Fences effectively exclude wolves and larger wildlife.
Wildlife genetic interchange	✓ Evident within the region.
Long-term fire cycle	✓ 50% achieved in all parts of the park.
Indicator: Terrestrial Ecosystems	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Invasive non-native plants and insects	✓ Invasive species are effectively controlled and, where feasible, eliminated.
Terrestrial ecosystem restoration	✓ An increased area of restoration of grassland, aspen woodland, open Douglas fir forest and other ecosystem types.



Terrestrial ecosystem restoration continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Montane vegetation diversity and structure are restored.</li> <li>✓ Physical disturbance of montane and lower subalpine alluvial fans and riparian areas is reduced 3% by 2013–2014 through active restoration and/or relocation of facilities.</li> </ul>
Ungulate browsing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Browsing in the montane ecoregion replicates the natural range of variability.</li> </ul>
Vegetation patterns, structure and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Vegetation composition is within the historic range of variability across the national park landscape.</li> </ul>
Landscape disturbance footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The disturbance footprint at a park scale remains the same or shrinks between 2010 and 2014.</li> <li>✓ Disturbance footprint on alluvial fans and riparian areas is reduced.</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator: Aquatic Ecosystems</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Connectivity of aquatic ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least three Bow River tributary streams have restored connectivity by 2014.</li> </ul>
Water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Water quality in the Bow River meets reference conditions.</li> <li>✓ Parks Canada leadership targets for effluent are consistently achieved or exceeded at both park communities and all outlying facilities.</li> </ul>

Thermal springs	✓ The integrity of thermal springs ecosystems is maintained or improved.
Non-native fish populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eliminated from Devon Lakes.</li> <li>✓ Reduced to ecologically insignificant levels in at least two other subalpine watersheds by 2013–14.</li> <li>✓ Anglers are actively involved in reducing non-native fish populations.</li> </ul>
Alluvial fans and riparian areas	✓ Natural hydrology and vegetation patterns are improved.
<b>Indicator: Native Biodiversity</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Bear-human conflict	✓ The number is reduced.
Grizzly bears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Safely use available high-quality habitat.</li> <li>✓ Annual known, human-caused mortality of independent female grizzly bears does not exceed one per year or 1.2% of the</li> </ul>



Grizzly bears continued	<p>estimated minimum population, whichever is less, based on a four-year running average.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 15 kilometres of trails are relocated, or new trails developed, away from high-quality bear habitats by 2013–14.</li> <li>✓ Habitat security is maintained or improved in all landscape management units.</li> </ul>
Carnivores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Populations remain genetically linked on a regional basis.</li> <li>✓ Safely use available high-quality habitat.</li> </ul>
Species at Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recovery plans are completed and implemented.</li> <li>✓ No new species require listing.</li> </ul>
Ungulates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All native ungulate species occupy historic ranges.</li> </ul>
Waterfowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Survival and fledging success are maintained or improved along rivers and lakes.</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator: Aquatic Ecosystems</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Greenhouse gases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Emissions from park operations are reduced at least 5% from 2010 levels by 2014.</li> </ul>

<b>Indicator: Cultural Resources</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Asset condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Condition ratings of historic assets managed by Parks Canada improve.</li> <li>✓ All known archaeological sites are recorded and protected.</li> <li>✓ All nationally-significant cultural artifacts are recorded and protected.</li> </ul>
<b>Program Activity 3 - Public Appreciation and Understanding</b>	
<b>Indicator: Awareness</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 60% of visitors and residents are aware of Parks Canada's national system of protected areas.</li> <li>✓ At least 60% of visitors are aware that they are in Canada's first national park and the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.</li> <li>✓ At least 60% of stakeholders and visitors understand and support the park's conservation initiatives.</li> </ul>



Awareness continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 60% of drive-through visitors are aware that they are in a national park and understand the purpose and importance of highway fences and crossing structures.</li> <li>✓ An increasing percentage of visitors are aware of the national historic sites, the North Saskatchewan Canadian Heritage River and cultural resources.</li> <li>✓ An increasing percentage of visitors and residents understand and support limits to development and know how they can help.</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator: Appreciation</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 85% of visitors consider Banff National Park meaningful to them.</li> <li>✓ At least 75% of visitors consider the national historic sites, cultural resources and World Heritage Site meaningful to them.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Canadians appreciate the significance of Banff National Park as the birthplace of Parks Canada's system of protected heritage places.</li> <li>✓ Canadians understand that Parks Canada protects and manages Banff National Park on their behalf.</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator: Engagement</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Protocols are established with First Nations for their engagement with Parks Canada.</li> <li>✓ First Nations participate in, influence and contribute to life in, and management of, the park.</li> <li>✓ First Nations are actively involved in cultural heritage presentation and in the protection of cultural resources.</li> <li>✓ At least 60% of interested stakeholders feel that they can influence and contribute to the management of Banff National Park and its regional ecosystem.</li> <li>✓ At least 80% of stakeholders and visitors support conservation and stewardship measures and feel that they can influence and contribute to them.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The number of volunteers increases at least 10% by 2014.</li> <li>✓ An increasing number and variety of Canadians participate in advisory groups, focus groups, online panel surveys etc.</li> <li>✓ Participation in science-and stewardship-related activities increases at least 6% by 2014.</li> <li>✓ The availability of, and participation in, “voluntourism” increases 10% by 2014.</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator: Learning (Outreach Education)</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ An increasing percentage of Canadians learn about Banff National Park, its heritage and its visitor experience opportunities.</li> <li>✓ An increased percentage of Canadians understand that the park is protected and presented on their behalf.</li> <li>✓ An increasing percentage of Canadians are aware of the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.</li> <li>✓ An increasing percentage of Canadians are aware of ecosystem science findings from Banff National Park.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 60% of drive-through visitors are aware that they are in a national park and understand the purpose and importance of highway fences and crossing structures</li> </ul>
<b>Program Activity 4 - Visitor Experience</b>	
<b>Indicator: Attendance</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The annual number of Banff National Park visitors increases 2% annually over the first five years of this plan.</li> <li>✓ Visitation increases are primarily in targeted market segments.</li> <li>✓ There is an increase in visits to other national parks and national historic sites by Canadians who have visited Banff National Park.</li> <li>✓ Visits to the Cave and Basin National Historic Site increase to 300,000 by 2013-14.</li> <li>✓ Visits to the Banff Park Museum National Historic Site increase to 35,000 by 2013-14.</li> </ul>



Indicator: Enjoyment/Satisfaction	
Measure	Target
Enjoyment/ Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 90% of visitors, in all market segments, are satisfied with all elements of their experience (services, facilities, programs and value-for-money).</li> <li>✓ All visitors feel welcomed and well oriented to the opportunities they seek.</li> <li>✓ Park visitors and stakeholders consider that science and stewardship enhanced the quality of their experience.</li> <li>✓ Visitors and residents feel that conservation measures enhance their enjoyment of the park.</li> <li>✓ Visitors to the Cave and Basin National Historic Site consider that Species at Risk conservation measures enhanced their experience.</li> <li>✓ Availability of, and participation in, “voluntourism” increases 10% by 2014.</li> <li>✓ New “virtual experience” and “drive through awareness” products are introduced.</li> <li>✓ There is increased participation in, and satisfaction with, new and renewed winter visitor experience products.</li> </ul>

<b>Indicator: Learning (interpretation)</b>	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Learning (interpretation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 70% of visitors report that they learned about Parks Canada's system of protected heritage places.</li> <li>✓ At least 70% of visitors report that they learned about the park's ecosystems and conservation initiatives.</li> <li>✓ At least 70% of visitors report learning about stewardship initiatives and how they can help.</li> <li>✓ At least 60% of visitors report learning about cultural resources and the World Heritage Site.</li> <li>✓ At least 85% of visitors to national historic sites report learning about the sites' commemorative themes.</li> <li>✓ Staff of Parks Canada and private businesses are trained and certified to interpret park heritage to visitors</li> </ul>



Indicator: Asset Condition	
Measure	Target
Asset condition	✓ At least 65% of Parks Canada's public facilities are in good condition.
Indicator: Visitor Safety	
Measure	Target
Visitor Safety	✓ Reduced incidence of injury to visitors from the natural environment, including human-wildlife conflict.
Indicator: Through Highways	
Measure	Target
Condition of through highways	✓ National transportation routes operate safely. ✓ No delay caused by asset condition.

Environmental Stewardship	
Indicator: Environmental Stewardship	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Target</i>
Energy efficiency	✓ Energy efficiency in Parks Canada buildings is improved.
Waste diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improved recycling opportunities are provided at campgrounds and other Parks Canada facilities.</li> <li>✓ Solid waste disposal volumes are reduced at least 5% by 2013–2014.</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Commercial growth is managed within established limits for Lake Louise, Banff and OCAs.</li> <li>✓ Growth limits are established for ski areas.</li> </ul>



## ANNEX 2 GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT SECURITY BY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT UNIT





### Grizzly Bear Habitat Security by LMU in 2010

<i>Landscape Management Unit</i>	<i>% &lt;2500 m nonsecure due to human use</i>	<i>% &lt; 2500 m nonsecure due to small size</i>	<i>% &lt;2500 m secure</i>
Alexandra	6	1	93
Howse	0	2	98
Mistaya	22	2	76
Sask. Crossing	10	0	90
Upper N. Sask.	21	2	77
Siffleur	1	1	98
Baker Creek	14	0	86
Lake Louise	59	3	38
Massive	33	4	63
Panorama	30	4	66
Pipestone	22	2	76
Sawback	32	1	67
Skoki	40	8	52
Upper Bow	21	1	78
Clearwater	1	2	97
Lower Red Deer	0	0	100
Upper Red Deer	0	2	98

<i>Landscape Management Unit</i>	<i>% &lt;2500 m secure due to human use</i>	<i>% &lt; 2500 m secure due to small size</i>	<i>% &lt;2500 m secure</i>
Panther	6	0	94
Banff Town	67	3	30
Brewster Creek	24	1	75
Bryant	25	5	70
Upper Spray	23	1	76
Middle Spray	7	0	93
Sunshine/Egypt	47	3	51
Cuthead	20	0	80
Cascade	27	1	71
Minnewanka	15	0	85

## Notes:

- Areas above 2500 m<sup>2</sup> do not provide suitable habitat because of rock and ice.
- The management objective for grizzly bear habitat security is to maintain these values or increase them as opportunities arise.

## ANNEX 3 LANDS ADJACENT TO THE TOWN OF BANFF (2007)

1. Expand the formal trail system from approximately 130 kilometres to approximately 200 kilometres and decommission up to 250 kilometres of informal trails, as detailed in the following key actions. The general principles which apply to the revised trail system are to:
  - Direct trail use away from wildlife crossing structures and the Cascade wildlife corridor;
  - Monitor the revised trail system for use-levels and for impacts on wildlife; adaptively manage as appropriate;
  - Resolve specific trail condition and use-conflict issues; and
  - Work with trail stewardship groups to implement these actions.
2. Investigate opportunities for trail users starting from the town of Banff to safely cross the TCH and the CP Railway both to the east and west of town:
  - Investigate the feasibility of a trail-crossing structure across the TCH and CP Railway, east of Banff Avenue and separate from the highway interchange;
  - Until a structure can be provided, direct human use to the Cascade River underpass; any trail route from the town to the underpass will require cooperation with CP Railway;
  - Provide formal trail connections on each side of Banff Avenue from the town to the Cascade River underpass – a total of approximately six kilometres; on the west side of Banff Avenue provide a trail along the edge of the Indian Grounds, within the trees so as to minimize damage to the sensitive grasslands; on the east side of Banff Avenue, provide a trail from the Pinewoods site; these trails should eventually connect with the proposed crossing structure; and
  - Provide a designated trail between the Third Vermilion Lake and the Five Mile highway interchange and crossing under the TCH to connect with the Bow Valley Parkway, a distance of approximately 2.5



kilometres; locate the trail inside the highway fence in order to eliminate human disturbance at the wildlife underpasses.

3. In partnership with the Town of Banff, provide a multi-use family oriented “ring” trail around the town by linking existing trails and by providing new links where needed and ecologically feasible; include a connector to Tunnel Mountain campgrounds.
4. Explore the feasibility of a 20-km trail between Banff and adjacent communities to the east; locate the trail inside the TCH fence in order to avoid disturbance of wildlife habitat and crossing structures; modify the fence location to enable an improved trail user experience if no significant ecological impacts would result; the trail might eventually form part of a regional trail through the Bow Valley.
5. East of the Cascade River underpass:
  - Provide a continuous trail between Cascade River underpass and the Lake Minnewanka day-use area. The preferred route is to extend the existing Cascade Ponds -Lower Bankhead Trail to Lake Minnewanka via Upper Bankhead, the first part of the Cascade Trail and a short connection to Lake Minnewanka;
  - Provide a trail connection from Two Jack campground to the Lake Minnewanka Trail;
  - Provide a trail connection from the underpass to Johnson Lake via the “Watertower Trail”; and
  - Monitor trail use and wildlife movements between Cascade River underpass and Lake Minnewanka; make adjustments as necessary (e.g. relocate trail segments) if any wildlife disturbance concerns become apparent.
6. Investigate the feasibility of providing a designated trail between the Brewster Creek trailhead and the Five Mile/TCH interchange, inside the TCH fence; this would complete a loop trail around the Vermilion wetlands.

7. Provide a network of primary and secondary trails on the Tunnel Mountain bench:

- A primary trail encircling Tunnel Mountain campground, with connections to the town of Banff and Cascade underpass;
- Secondary trails north and east of the campground and south and east of the Hoodoos viewpoint;
- Primary trails are hard-surfaced (but not necessarily paved) and suitable for a wide variety of users; some will accommodate strollers and wheelchairs. Primary trails will be well signed (including distance and difficulty) and well maintained. Total length is approximately eight kilometres;
- Secondary trails are single-track, with varying grades and surface conditions and lower construction and maintenance standards. Total length is approximately 20 kilometres;
- All trails will be multi-use, except for some closures to specific uses if necessary for safety or environmental reasons;
- The network will utilize existing formal trails and some existing informal trails; there will be no new trail development in undisturbed areas;
- Remaining informal trails will be decommissioned;
- Loop trails will be provided where possible;
- Trails will avoid sensitive areas such as wildlife corridors and areas of sensitive vegetation;
- The most southerly section of trail, closest to the confluence of the Bow and Cascade rivers, will be monitored for trail use and for wildlife movements in the area as it is close to the important Duthil wildlife underpass; if disturbance of predators is detected, adaptive measures, up to and including trail closure, will be implemented; and
- Parks Canada will work with trail-user groups and others to implement these actions, including identifying appropriate trails,



decommissioning unwanted trails, providing ongoing maintenance of the trail network, monitoring trail use and wildlife movements, discouraging off-trail travel and determining adaptive measures as necessary.

8. Designate two trails on the east side of Tunnel Mountain (total length approximately two kilometres) for use as technical mountain bike trails, subject to the following conditions:
  - The establishment of a mountain-bike stewardship group to take responsibility for the trails, prevent trail proliferation and direct use to the two trails;
  - The rehabilitation of unauthorized technical mountain bike trails in the Tunnel Mountain area;
  - Upgrading and maintenance guided by the standards of the International Mountain Bike Association;
  - Design features to ensure safety where the mountain bike trails intersect the Rundle Riverside Trail; and
  - No other technical mountain bike trails will be provided or authorized in the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff area.
9. Designate the warm springs wetland between Mountain Avenue and Valleyview as an ESS—an area containing significant and sensitive features that requires special protection:
  - Retain the existing upper Bridle Trail for commercial horse-use and establish a new adjacent parallel trail for other users;
  - Retain the boardwalk trail;
  - Formalize the trail alongside Mountain Avenue between the town and the Upper Hot Springs; and
  - Decommission informal trails in the area.

10. Improve the Minnewanka Road as a scenic drive by:
  - Providing additional vehicle pull-offs and viewpoints to reduce environmental impact, enhance visitor experiences, provide more opportunities for increased public understanding and appreciation and improve safety; and
  - Improving the road surface and drainage.
11. Each winter, close the western section of the Minnewanka Road to vehicles, from the Johnson Lake intersection near Cascade Ponds to the Minnewanka parking lot; the eastern section via Two Jack Lake and the Minnewanka dam will remain open year-round for access to the Lake Minnewanka area.
12. Retain Vermilion Lakes road as a scenic drive and maintain motorized access to Third Lake:
  - Improve the road surface;
  - Provide more viewpoints at appropriate locations;
  - Recognize the area as a high priority for providing outstanding opportunities for visitor experiences, public understanding and appreciation close to the town;
  - Develop and implement an interpretive plan that focuses on aquatic ecosystems in the montane ecoregion; and
  - This section replaces Section 6.1.3.4 in the 1997 park management plan and the 2004 amended park management plan.
13. Upgrade facilities to improve visitor experiences, increase opportunities for appreciation and understanding and resolve ecological concerns as necessary at day-use areas: Johnson Lake, Lake Minnewanka, Mt. Norquay, Vermilion Lakes, Cave and Basin area (including Marsh Loop Trail), Hoodoos viewpoint; recognize these popular locations as focal points for providing enhanced heritage presentation.
14. Explore the feasibility and the environmental and social implications of an aerial tramway system from the vicinity of the town of Banff to the Mt. Norquay ski area.



15. In partnership with the Town of Banff and the Province of Alberta, investigate the feasibility of providing coordinated trail information, including common standards, formats, symbols and published material.
16. In partnership with stakeholders:
  - Develop and implement a comprehensive heritage presentation program for the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff area, including both ecological and cultural heritage messages;
  - Provide a full-range of information about opportunities and conditions in the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff area; and
  - Make the Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff area a showcase of cooperative communication partnerships that enhance the experiences of millions of national park visitors.
17. In association with partners, resolve identified trail issues at specific locations:
  - Johnson Lake: decommission informal trails;
  - Stoney Squaw: provide connections between the two mountain bike trails and provide a safe crossing of the TCH;
  - Banff Springs Hotel/Upper Hot Springs: provide separate trails for hikers/horse-riders and mountain-bike riders;
  - Cave and Basin/Marsh Loop: resolve user conflicts, trail damage and environmental impacts;
  - Bow Falls: provide centralized trailhead facilities in partnership with the Town of Banff;
  - Sulphur Mountain: provide improved trail identification;
  - Spray Loop/Tower 1: resolve user-conflicts and trail damage; and
  - Decommission up to 250 kilometres of informal trails not endorsed in this plan.



## ANNEX 4 LAKE LOUISE AREA STRATEGY (2004)

Parks Canada has undertaken an area-planning exercise for Lake Louise, including the community, upper Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, and the Skoki, Pipestone, and Baker LMUs. The following section provides guidance to respond to the unique challenges in the Lake Louise area.

In the heart of Banff National Park, the Lake Louise area is an important international symbol of Canada and the national park system. Because of its remarkable combination of natural features, mountain scenery, important railway and mountaineering history, as well as its outstanding trail system and skiing opportunities, Lake Louise is a primary destination for many visitors to Banff National Park. The area is also important to a range of wildlife species, particularly grizzly bears. Nowhere else do so many bears and people occupy the same space.

### Strategic Goals

- To sustain the population of grizzly bears and other sensitive species;
- To improve wildlife connectivity and wildlife access to important habitat areas;
- To offer a variety of appropriate four-season activities;
- To protect and present cultural resources;
- To enhance the quality of experience for visitors and residents and reduce impacts within the Lake Louise area;
- To make visitors feel welcome and valued;
- To provide facilities and services that enable visitors to enjoy the area;
- To ensure visitor information and marketing activities foster appropriate expectations;
- To recognize the interests of Canadians, visitors, businesses, residents and the community in providing appropriate high-quality national park opportunities;



- To use education and interpretive programs to promote a better understanding of a sustainable environment, local environmental issues and the vital role of visitors, residents and staff in protecting the area;
- To consider the needs of businesses, residents and the community in planning and implementation;
- To foster the social and economic well being of the community and the tourism industry in the context of the area's ecological health; and
- To implement the approved Lake Louise Community Plan.

### *Objective 1*

To reduce wildlife mortality on the TCH and CP Railway, grizzly bear habituation and risks to public safety.

#### Key Actions

1. Install a fence around the tenting area in the Lake Louise Campground to reduce bear habituation and bear/human conflicts and to maintain opportunities for tenting.
2. As part of planning for TCH upgrading, prepare a feasibility study for TCH fencing at Lake Louise as a priority; consider including the community and the campground in the fenced area and necessary wildlife crossing structures; take action as recommended.
3. Continue the seasonal reduced speed zone at Lake Louise until other measures to reduce wildlife mortality are in place.
4. Continue to work with the CP Railway to reduce wildlife mortality.

## Objective 2

To improve the effectiveness of the Fairview wildlife corridor.

### Key Actions

5. Reduce the volume of traffic through the Fairview corridor through use of a managed public transportation system.
6. Maintain the Tramline Trail; examine possible realignment in some locations to reduce the impact of the trail on the Fairview corridor.
7. Continue vehicle closure of the Bow Valley Parkway (1A west); allow emergency access; maintain current low-to-moderate use; ensure activities minimize impacts on wildlife.

## Objective 3

To protect and present locally, regionally, and nationally significant cultural resources, including archaeological resources and built heritage.

### Key Actions

8. Implement cultural resource initiatives in the Lake Louise Community Plan.
9. Encourage the protection and presentation of Skoki Ski Lodge and Abbott Pass Refuge Hut national historic sites.
10. Encourage the protection and presentation of the Lake Agnes and Plain of Six Glaciers teahouses.
11. Provide information at trailheads about national historic sites in the backcountry.
12. Work with operators to protect and present the cultural heritage values of their properties.



## Objective 4

To put in place a transportation system that is a positive, central aspect of the visitor experience, that considers the needs of users and businesses and that results in improved wildlife movement.

### Key Actions

13. Pursue transit systems for the Lake Louise area, including regional winter and ski area transportation in consultation with the community, affected stakeholders and the motor coach industry.
14. Consider a variety of transportation approaches including parking lot management, alternative parking for oversize vehicles, intercept parking and an aerial and/or ground-access system for most day users; focus primary efforts on improvements for July and August.

## Objective 5

To reduce the impacts of informal and designated trails.

### Key actions

15. Review informal and designated summer and winter trails; consolidate, realign or relocate to maintain access and reduce environmental impact.
16. Identify important habitats that support grizzly bears and other sensitive species, link to trail review.
17. Encourage use of designated trails in sensitive areas.
18. Work with mountain bikers to reduce their ecological impact and the proliferation of informal trails.

### *Objective 6*

To continue to manage for high-levels of summer-use in the frontcountry of upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake with emphasis on improving visitor services and reducing ecological impacts.

### *Objective 7*

To manage the Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise trail system as one of the major day-hiking areas in Banff National Park.

### *Objective 8*

Undertake adjustments to trails in the Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise backcountry to reduce impacts and improve opportunities while providing access to popular locations.

#### Key Actions

19. Reduce congestion at peak summer-use periods at Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise.
20. Redesign parking lots at Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise to improve the sense of arrival, aesthetic appeal and vehicle/pedestrian circulation.
21. Prohibit overflow parking and increases in parking lot capacity at upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake; provide overflow parking in lower Lake Louise.
22. Reduce size of parking lots if full public transportation system is put in place; rehabilitate the riparian environment along Louise Creek adjacent to the upper Lake Louise parking lot.
23. Provide new, short strolling opportunities to better meet visitor interests and reduce impact on the backcountry.
24. Upgrade the Moraine Lake Road to standards appropriate for future transportation system; formalize viewpoints along the Moraine Lake Road.



25. Work with Moraine Lake Lodge to integrate day-use washrooms at the lodge.
26. Manage the Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise backcountry as a semi-primitive area with well-maintained facilities and moderate-to-high levels of day use on designated trails.
27. Relocate trail to Eiffel Lake and the upper section of Larch Trail to improve habitat security and reduce public safety risks.
28. Close the lower Paradise Valley Trail between the Lake Annette junction and the Giant Steps in the summer; maintain access to Sentinel Pass and the Giant Steps via the Lake Annette Trail.
29. Continue to close the upper section of the Moraine Lake Highline trail in berry season.
30. Prepare landscape plans for the Lake Agnes and Plain of Six Glaciers teahouses' areas to reduce impact on vegetation.
31. Move the Paradise Valley campground to another location in the valley that is less significant as bear habitat.
32. Allow mountain bikes on the Ross Lake connector; consider new trails that encourage bikers to remain on designated trails.
33. Continue the program requiring hikers to travel in groups in the Moraine Lake area to reduce public safety risks and bear/human interaction when grizzly bear activity indicates the need; improve communications to ensure that backcountry users understand the reasons for the program.
34. Separate horses and hikers on some trails (e.g. the Plain of Six Glaciers).

### *Objective 9*

To manage the Skoki, Pipestone and Baker LMUs for low-to-moderate use in recognition of their importance as a reproductive area for female grizzly bears.

### *Objective 10*

To improve grizzly bear habitat security, reduce habituation and risks to public safety.

### *Objective 11*

To continue to manage the Skoki area as one of the premier overnight camping and backcountry lodge destinations in the park.

### *Objective 12*

To monitor, maintain and improve, if necessary, the effectiveness of the Whitehorn wildlife corridor.

#### Key Actions

35. Manage use in the Baker and Pipestone LMUs at existing low levels and at existing moderate levels in the Skoki LMU.
36. Manage most of the Skoki LMU as semi-primitive with well-maintained facilities and moderate levels of day and overnight-use on designated trails.
37. Manage the Baker and Pipestone LMUs as primitive.
38. Improve important grizzly bear habitats in the Fish Creek/Temple area and the Whitehorn wildlife corridor. Pilot a summer period shuttle to Temple Lodge for the vast majority of Skoki area backcountry users (i.e. allow horse-users to continue to access area on Temple Road); as part of the pilot, set the number of trips and scheduled departures from a centrally located staging area in the valley bottom; relocate the public portion of the Fish Creek parking lot in consultation with the ski area and other users; assess the impact of the introduction of a shuttle on the Hidden Lake campground, patterns of visitor use and ecological benefits prior to a long-term decision.



39. Encourage visitors to travel in groups and to stay on designated trails in sensitive areas in the summer to reduce disturbance events throughout the Skoki area.
40. Address the future of summer use at the ski area as part of the long-range ski area plan and the associated comprehensive study, including management strategies for the Whitehorn wildlife corridor.
41. Pending the completion of the ski area long range plan, manage summer-use of the ski area on a year-to-year basis with specific conditions. During this period, there will be no major change to the nature and scope of summer use.
42. Close Temple Road to mountain bikes; identify a substitute trail in an acceptable location.
43. Consolidate redundant trails in the Red Deer Lakes and Merlin Meadows areas and at Deception Pass to improve habitat effectiveness.
44. Maintain the current capacity of Skoki Lodge.
45. Encourage the use of trails that have the least amount of impact on important bear habitat during certain times of the year.
46. End maintenance of the Baker Creek Trail from the Bow Valley Parkway to Wildflower junction.
47. Use prescribed fire to improve habitat along the Pipestone Trail and in Baker Creek.
48. Apply a variety of techniques (e.g. timing, location, number/size of trips) to limit trail damage by horses in sensitive areas.
49. Continue to work with commercial horse outfitters to reduce impacts on grizzly bear habitat effectiveness in the Skoki, Pipestone and Baker LMUs.
50. Establish designated campsites within horse-grazing areas.
51. Work with the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies to relocate their camp from the Pipestone Valley to an area less sensitive to large groups.



52. Explore options to increase habitat effectiveness and to improve wildlife movement in the Baker Lake campground area (e.g. closure of the Baker Lake campground during berry season, relocation of the campground in the area).
53. Prepare a comprehensive vegetation management strategy for the Lake Louise area that addresses protection of facilities and the enhancement of grizzly bear habitat away from areas of high human use.

### *Objective 13*

To make communications and education a central aspect of all initiatives.

#### Key Actions

54. Update and expand interpretation at Moraine Lake, upper Lake Louise and the park community of Lake Louise and popular viewpoints.
55. Support the tourism industry in developing visitor education programs.
56. Work with businesses and the community to develop educational and training programs that encourage staff to become responsible stewards and ambassadors who actively help safeguard the ecological values of the area.
57. Celebrate the mountaineering history of the area by incorporating this important theme in interpretation programs and other services.
58. Install new orientation facilities at Moraine Lake and upper Lake Louise trailheads to help visitors find trails that match their interests.
59. Improve the Skoki trailhead facilities to identify the importance of the area to bears and how people can help protect the area.
60. Educate hikers about the importance of using designated trails in sensitive areas to reduce their impacts on wildlife.
61. Improve directional signs so that visitors can find their way more easily.



## ANNEX 5 ICEFIELDS PARKWAY STRATEGIC CONCEPT (2009)

*The Icefields Parkway is a spectacular 230-km drive along the backbone of the continent between the park community of Lake Louise in Banff National Park and the town of Jasper in Jasper National Park. It is an icon, recognized by its status as part of the Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. As a place for Canadians and people from around the world to experience and sustain mountain life and wilderness with friends and family, it provides a focus for renewing our integrated mandate of education, protection and visitor experience. A public participation process that involved Parks Canada, a dedicated group of stakeholders and First Nations' representation helped prepare this strategic approach. A commitment by stakeholders, commercial operators and partners to work closely with each other and Parks Canada with respect to visitors and stewardship will help carry the parkway to its future best.*

*The Icefields Parkway at its future best...*

Canadians and visitors from around the world who come to the Icefields Parkway in Banff and Jasper national parks find themselves immersed in a dramatic landscape of ice-draped ridges, jagged peaks, turbulent headwater streams, sweeping vistas of forest-carpeted valleys and alpine meadows bright with wildflowers. Great rivers arise here at the very backbone of the North American continent, born of melting snow and ancient glaciers, flowing to three oceans. Timeless pathways along the Bow, Mistaya, Sunwapta, Athabasca and Saskatchewan Rivers guide travellers on a breathtaking journey from valley bottom to two of the highest passes that can be reached by paved road in Canada. In this place, people find some of the wildest and most beautiful landscapes in the world, protected for all time. The Icefields Parkway, part of the Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, is an icon of Canada's national park system.

Long before there was a Canada, this place was known to Aboriginal people on both sides of the Continental Divide. Aboriginal guides shared their routes and knowledge with early European explorers, traders, railroaders and the first tourist-

mountaineers. Their stories and our shared experiences of wonder and awe connect past, present and future; all of us are travellers, yearning to linger and discover.

From the road's edge and beyond, visitors personally witness dynamic natural forces at work—slow-scouring ice, sudden-release avalanches, rushing waters, renewing fires and variable mountain weather. Wildlife follow their ancient patterns and our stewardship as we share space with caribou, mountain goats, grizzly bears, and wolves will help us ensure that this is, and will remain, a wild place for all time.

Few return from their journey through the Icefields Parkway unchanged. Adventure-seekers, family groups, and armchair explorers alike are rewarded. Visitors take home a better understanding gained through personal discovery and assimilation of well-presented stories. Visitor facilities, integrated with their wild surroundings, are designed, used, and maintained in ways respectful of the land and water. Exemplary and sustainable environmental and tourism practices and ecological restoration actions assure visitors that this place is very well cared for. Parks Canada, Aboriginal people and tourism partners play coordinated roles in managing visitor opportunities, storytelling and fostering the comfort, safety and convenience of travelers.

The ongoing protection of the landscapes, habitats and cultural heritage along the Icefields Parkway sets the foundation for meaningful experiences and making personal connections with wild places and with fellow travellers; these experiences provide a window that inspires people to care about the natural world and their connection to it.

## ***Introduction***

The opportunities the Icefields Parkway provides in Jasper and Banff national parks resonate with Canadians and international travellers. Visitors connect with dramatic mountain landscapes and glaciers, rivers, spectacular scenery, history and mountain culture, and the prospect of encountering wildlife, including several Species at Risk in Canada. The charms of this high-elevation mountain road include a wide-range of opportunities that change with the seasons.



The challenge for all who value this unique and special place is to continue to enjoy and manage the parkway in a way that perpetuates the richness of the experience, the ecosystem and the cultural resources. Parks Canada, together with a host of other organizations, will focus on excellence in visitor opportunities, protection and education. We will reach-out to Canadians to increase awareness and appreciation whether or not they visit. The quality and unique character of the parkway, in all its aspects, will be the primary consideration.

### ***Key Directions***

1. The Icefields Parkway<sup>1</sup> will have a single, distinctive identity as a scenic heritage destination that gives all visitors, no matter how they travel, “access to the spectacular”.
2. The parkway will reflect the three fundamental aspects of Parks Canada’s mandate—education, experience and protection. Maintaining the ecological integrity<sup>2</sup>, cultural resources and visual integrity of the setting are fundamental for memorable visitor experiences and opportunities to learn and to appreciate the natural surroundings.
3. As part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site and two national parks, the parkway will inspire visitors through its high standards for ecological integrity and cultural resource protection. Key elements of ecological health include maintaining or restoring ecological processes (e.g. fire), aquatic ecosystem health, viable wildlife populations, key habitats and habitat connectivity, and ensuring that human-caused wildlife mortality and disturbance does not increase.

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<sup>1</sup> The Icefields Parkway includes the road along with the adjacent services, facilities and opportunities. This area has traditionally been known as “front country.”

<sup>2</sup> When considering ecological integrity in the Icefields Parkway Initiative, scale is important. Many core ecological maintenance and restoration initiatives appropriately lie outside the scope of the strategy at the broader scale of the management plans for Banff and Jasper national parks.

4. Concentrating efforts on the most popular day-use areas, viewpoints and campgrounds will ensure a safe, enjoyable experience for visitors and make the most efficient use of investments. Services and facilities at less well-known sites will provide additional opportunities. At both primary and secondary locations, experiences and opportunities to learn will engage visitors with different needs and interests.
5. Planning will focus on the quality of visitor opportunities.
6. Providing incentives or removing barriers will encourage visitors to stop more often along the parkway. Better use of existing accommodation, especially campgrounds, means people will be more inclined to stay overnight.
7. Maintenance of this scenic heritage highway will focus on experiences and safety rather than through traffic.
8. Parks Canada will play a leadership and coordinating role in enhancing visitor experiences and a stronger role in promoting broad national awareness of the parkway, Banff and Jasper national parks and the World Heritage Site, by working cooperatively with relevant destination-marketing organizations and with individual operators who provide opportunities along the parkway.
9. Parks Canada will collaborate with stakeholders, commercial operators and partners to develop common key messages about the parkway and its national park and World Heritage Site status for staff training and for visitors. These groups will build seamless, high-quality visitor experiences by working together to develop products, sharing best practices for presentation and stewardship and cooperating on promotion.
10. Visitors from the region are a primary market for the parkway. By providing satisfying experiences, the parkway will continue to resonate with Canadians and visitors from other countries and maintain its international status.
11. Consistent and clear information will allow visitors to plan their trip, visit the parkway and share their memories.



12. Discovery and learning will be fundamental. Key themes reflecting the area's environment and culture will shape opportunities and infrastructure. The parkway is a natural "interactive space" where visitors can gain personal insights into the area's ecological and cultural heritage.
13. Parks Canada, Aboriginal people and tourism partners will cooperate in managing visitor opportunities, storytelling and fostering the comfort, safety and convenience of travellers.
14. Monitoring programs for both the parks and the parkway will help determine the need for mitigation or management adjustments. Of particular interest are the numbers of visitors, patterns of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, wildlife mortality, wildlife conflicts (etc.).

## Strategies

Five strategies and a corresponding set of key actions are proposed to move the Icefields Parkway towards its future best:

1. *Offer visitors a variety of ways to connect with their surrounding;*
2. *Provide opportunities for continuous experiences;*
3. *Work closely with stakeholders to design and implement key actions and to monitor success;*
4. *Adopt and celebrate stewardship practices and designs that maintain and restore the natural environment; and*
5. *Retain the quality of the Icefields Parkway as a scenic drive and an important link between Banff and Jasper.*

### **Strategy #1: Offer visitors a variety of ways to connect with their surroundings.**

Parkway visitors have a wide-range of backgrounds, expectations and desires. The magic and uniqueness of the parkway rests in its ability to provide each of these visitors an opportunity to experience the area's history and its natural and

cultural features. As stewards of the parkway, Parks Canada, the tourism sector, Aboriginal people, non-profit groups and others will value and provide for three broad relationships:

1. ***A view from the edge*** - most visitors experience the parkway from their vehicles, stopping occasionally to admire the view. The parkway introduces these visitors to the mountain wilderness that Banff and Jasper national parks represent.

### Key Actions

- a. Review facilities and infrastructure (day-use areas, pull-offs, viewpoints, picnic spots and campgrounds) to identify ways to enhance opportunities;
- b. Address the needs and safety of visitors, improve operational efficiencies and reduce environmental impacts by consolidating, redesigning or revitalizing facilities;
- c. Cluster<sup>1</sup> opportunities or facilities where feasible;
- d. Identify and possibly close viewpoints and facilities that have minimal recreational potential, receive low use or are a hazard;
- e. Use highway signs and exhibits at Howse Pass and Hardisty viewpoints to highlight the significance of Howse and Athabasca passes as national historic sites;
- f. Create activity checklists and guides tailored to the various interests and time constraints of visitors;
- g. Increase the presence of Parks Canada staff at popular sites;
- h. Remove brush and selected trees at key locations to restore the view and promote the safety of wildlife and visitors;

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<sup>1</sup> For example at picnic areas include formal strolling opportunities, play areas for children, learning opportunities etc.



- i. Prepare and implement a sign plan consistent with national guidelines, that communicates necessary messages while avoiding visual clutter;
- j. Orient visitors to the parkway at major locations;
- k. Increase basic awareness and appreciation for Canada's mountain parks and historic sites through interpretive programming/exhibits that reflect the "*view from the edge*". Pique visitors' interest in learning and/or exploring; and
- l. Maintain the parkway in winter so people can enjoy the "*view from the edge*" and occasional stops at basic facilities such as pull-offs and privies.

**2. A step into the wild** – Visitors who prefer to linger can get closer to the wilderness without leaving the parkway too far behind. The focus here is on short, safe, high-quality opportunities for recreation and learning.

### Key Actions

- a. Provide introductory-level opportunities for self-guided learning that arouse curiosity and allow exploration.
- b. Offer more intensive learning opportunities for day-use and overnight visitors.
- c. Create and implement a camping strategy that supports the unique heritage and wilderness character of the parkway:
  - Upgrade campgrounds to offer services for large recreational vehicles, smaller campers and tents in the same campground;
  - Offer opportunities for camping that meet the needs of a wider range of visitors and that reflect the cultural context of the parkway (e.g. wall tents; equipment rental);
  - Provide information about opportunities, services and facilities for different campers;



- Maintain the rustic ambiance and design elements that characterize a classic Icefields Parkway camping experience;
  - Provide opportunities for families, seniors, youth and groups;
  - Implement camping reservations in some or all campgrounds;
  - Consider converting Silverhorn overflow to a full time recreational-vehicle campground;
  - Assess winter camping in light of the needs of current campers and projected future demand; and
  - Build short walking trails at day-use areas and campgrounds that reflect parkway themes with a strategy to manage maintenance costs; post information about the trails (e.g. distance, difficulty) at the trailhead.
- d. Work with Aboriginal groups to determine the potential for a site or sites for ceremonial use along the parkway.

**3. *Rocky Mountain wilderness adventure*** – These visitors leave the road behind—physically or mentally—in search of a better understanding of the area and its natural and cultural features. For this group, the Icefields Parkway is a starting point for trips of a-day-or-more<sup>2</sup>.

The focus is on providing resources and opportunities for sustained, year-round exploration. These can include convenient and well-designed basic services such as pre-trip information and clearly marked trailheads.

### **Key Actions:**

- a. Work with OCAs and hostels on opportunities for learning that are consistent with the area's key themes;

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<sup>2</sup> This could include visitors who spend several days on the parkway taking advantage of most front country recreational opportunities and who explore in-depth learning opportunities, or those who simply use the parkway as a staging area for single or multi-day backcountry activities.



- b. Install highway signs to identify trailheads and associated facilities (e.g. privy, horse ramp, etc.) for summer and winter backcountry access/activities;
- c. Ensure adequate parking at trailheads; respect both site specific and broader ecological considerations;
- d. Ensure the design of trailhead kiosks, information/orientation panels and park publications is consistent in Banff and Jasper national parks;
- e. Maintain winter access to select trailheads with basic facilities (parking, garbage cans, privies); and
- f. Ensure visitors have access to avalanche bulletins and the avalanche terrain rating program.

**Strategy #2: Provide opportunities for a continuous visitor experience that engage interest from pre-trip planning to post-trip memories.**

The visitor experience cycle will serve as the framework for a variety of experiences that reflect the three broad visitor relationships. The cycle will recognize a range of trip lengths for independent travellers and commercial tour operators and will offer opportunities to learn and to practice stewardship.

**Key Actions:**

- a. Create an identity with a distinctive look-and-feel that visitors immediately identify with the parkway and its promised opportunities; ensure this identity reinforces Banff and Jasper national parks, Parks Canada and the mountain national parks' story;
- b. To encourage an interest in learning, link opportunities to key themes that reflect the area's natural and cultural features and history. Develop themes based on the following topics:
  - *Backbone of the Canadian Rockies* - mountain-building, spectacular landscapes, life "on the edge";

- *The Wild Side: Habitats and Wildlife of the Canadian Rockies*– mountain animals, habitats, elevation, wide-ranging species, Species at Risk;
  - *Glaciers and Flowing Water*– significance of this area for Canada’s watersheds, water dynamics, climate change;
  - *People and the Land*–First Peoples, European explorers, mountaineers, building the parkway; and
  - *Protected Landscapes*–stewardship, national parks, Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site; this is a core topic, to be woven through each theme.
- c. Create a distinctive design, inspired by the area’s themes, for interpretive panels/bases, signs identifying geographical features, bridges and highways (steel rails/guide rails);
  - d. Set consistent standards for viewpoints, day-use areas and trailheads that take into consideration seasonal visitors, ecological integrity, education and efficiency of operation;
  - e. Increase the availability of pre-trip information, both electronic and print, that reflects the parkway’s identity and messages;
  - f. Present the Icefields Parkway as a complete experience and not as isolated stops or destinations;
  - g. Promote opportunities for multi-day visits;
  - h. Create a distinct sense of welcome, anticipation, arrival and departure at the three parkway gates;
  - i. Carry the common look-and-feel guided by key themes throughout the parkway to strengthen its sense of place as a unique Canadian heritage route through two national parks and a World Heritage Site;
  - j. Provide in-depth interpretation at OCAs, hostels and campgrounds; provide interpretation at key campgrounds for visitors who are there for a few hours or a few days;
  - k. Identify winter opportunities and required levels-of-service;



- l. Present information about ways to enjoy the parkway in different seasons;
- m. Consider integrating day-use facilities and campgrounds to make the best use of facilities and improve the cost-effectiveness of upgrading campgrounds;
- n. Provide follow-up and reflection opportunities for visitors after their trip (on-line, books and CDs, podcasts, etc); and
- o. Offer opportunities for visitors to share stories and experiences.

**Strategy #3: Work closely with stakeholders to design and implement key actions and monitor success**

Parks Canada, Aboriginal people and stakeholders will cooperate to enhance the quality of opportunities along the parkway. This includes a range of activities from storytelling, to protection, to fostering the comfort, safety and convenience of travellers.

**Key Actions:**

- a. Develop and share best management practices related to orientation/training programs, education, stewardship, information, marketing, etc.;
- b. Identify opportunities to implement the strategies using public-private partnerships and smaller joint ventures with individual operators;
- c. Continue to work with the Interpretive Guides Association and other interested parties to strengthen interpretation (key messages, story ideas, etc.) and to develop and present the themes; and
- d. Collaborate with partners to promote and market the parkway and to increase national awareness of the two national parks and World Heritage Site status.

**Strategy #4: Adopt and celebrate stewardship practices and designs that maintain or restore the natural environment.**

This strategy recognizes the important interactions between the built and natural environment and the role of effective environmental stewardship in maintaining or restoring ecological health. It enables the Icefields Parkway to be an experiential classroom where visitors learn about the relationship between humans and the environment.

Education promotes local and global environmental stewardship while on the parkway and back at home.

**Key Actions:**

- a. Expand the use of meaningful and effective environmental stewardship practices (e.g. alternative energy, rigorous wastewater treatment standards, etc.);
- b. Base communications on key ecological concepts that reflect Parks Canada's resource management objectives (e.g. connectivity, aquatic ecosystem health, forest health, etc.); where feasible, include cultural stories;
- c. Identify educational initiatives to increase stewardship of the parkway by Canadians;
- d. Engage pertinent audiences through broader mountain park outreach initiatives (e.g. Species at Risk, climate change, healthy forests, etc.);
- e. Integrate messages promoting stewardship and personal safety;
- f. Ensure the design of facilities does not detract from the setting (e.g. roads, trails, buildings, campgrounds, etc.);
- g. Reduce environmental impact when building or modifying infrastructure;



- h. Profile the importance of the Howse Pass regional wildlife corridor at Saskatchewan Crossing and the Howse Pass 'node' to increase awareness of the value of wildlife corridor protection to ecological health; and
- i. Redesign sensitive wildlife viewing areas (e.g. Mountain Goat viewpoint, Tangle Hill) to address safety, quality of experience and wildlife issues.

**Strategy #5: Retain the quality of the Icefields Parkway as a scenic drive and an important link between Banff and Jasper.**

The road will remain a scenic heritage highway with an emphasis on the visitor experience and safety, not speed. The impact of the road and its associated infrastructure on the environment will be kept to a minimum.

Visitors and residents will recognize that travel on the parkway can be challenging in the face of mountain terrain and weather, and plan accordingly, particularly in winter when safety may require closures for avalanche control or extreme weather.

Road standards and design will contribute to the visitor experience and ecological goals. Adequate investment in maintenance will allow visitors to experience the parkway and to reach their destinations in Jasper and Banff national parks safely.

**Key Actions:**

- a. Provide a highway standard that recognizes the heritage drive experience within the limitations of the existing right-of-way (inconsistent shoulders, etc.);
- b. Review the needs of cyclists and develop options. Explore options to enhance opportunities;
- c. Give priority to the elements of the highway standard that encourage a more leisurely drive with frequent stops and that discourage speeding;
- d. Continue to restrict commercial truck traffic (weight restrictions);

- e. Provide information so motorists can plan their stops well in advance, while driving on the parkway;
- f. Ensure travellers know what-to-do and what-to-expect in an emergency (e.g. warden stations, emergency phone locations, etc.);
- g. Create realistic expectations about road conditions in both winter and summer;
- h. Ensure information about changing road conditions is up-to-date;
- i. Promote safe practices by visitors while driving or participating in recreational activities and encourage them to assume some personal responsibility for their safety and the safety of others; and
- j. Involve partners in distributing consistent, accurate messages about safety that create realistic visitor expectations.

