



Yoho

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

2010



JUNE 2010

Yoho
National Park of Canada

MANAGEMENT PLAN

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For more information about Yoho National Park:

Yoho National Park
P.O. Box 99
Field, BC
VOA 1Go
www.pc.gc.ca/yoho

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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 Yoho 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 Yoho National Park of Canada Management Plan.

Jim Prentice
Minister of the Environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended by:



Alan Latourelle
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada



Pamela L. Veinotte
Field Unit Superintendent
Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This updated management plan for Yoho National Park provides strategic direction for the integrated delivery of Parks Canada's mandate for protection, visitor experience and education. It sets out a vision for the future that seeks to protect the unique natural and cultural heritage of the park, and provide opportunities for memorable experiences that allow Canadians to make meaningful connections with their heritage.

The management plan includes key strategies that describe the overarching management approach to the park, as well as area concepts which provide more detailed direction for specific geographic areas. The plan also includes key performance indicators and measures that will allow Parks Canada to measure and report on progress over time. The development of the plan included a 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 fifteen-year life of this plan are summarised below. Each strategy for the park as a whole, or the more detailed direction in the area concepts, is dependent on the others to achieve full delivery of Parks Canada's mandate. No one strategy, objective or action should be viewed in isolation when considering the intent of this management plan.

A Showcase of National Park Stewardship

Unique approaches to the protection of park resources can serve as a compelling way to engage visitors and residents. Stewardship efforts provide concrete examples with which to both reach out to Canadians and demonstrate the protection they expect. Parks Canada will work with local residents, stakeholders, visitors and volunteers to resolve conservation challenges and implement actions to reduce the impact of park operations in ways that enhance visitor experience and learning. Knowledge to support park decision making will be enhanced by working collaboratively with others while maintaining a high degree of scientific rigour.

Key actions include:

- Support ongoing research on the Burgess Shale and incorporate emerging knowledge in guided hiking programs, park exhibits, and electronic media.
- Expand use of environmental technologies in campgrounds, day use areas and built facilities.
- Lead or support research that increases understanding of park ecosystems and processes, environmental change, and cultural resources.

Experiencing the Authentic...and the Spectacular

Connecting Canadians to real and inspiring experiences within well-functioning and healthy ecosystems is integral to the management and sustainability of the park. A

primary focus will be to welcome and orient visitors, and provide an expanded range of opportunities that respond to visitors' needs and expectations.

Key actions include:

- Invest in improved reception and orientation at both the west and east entrances, to provide a strong sense of arrival and welcome to the park.
- Profile Yoho's array of superlatives, including Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site as a way of differentiating Yoho from other mountain parks.
- Enhance visitor experience at all stages of the trip cycle from wishing and planning through post-visit memories.
- Expand the range of recreational, leisure and learning opportunities, in collaboration with communities, environmental and tourism stakeholders and private operators, and subject to an assessment process at national and local levels.
- Invest in infrastructure in Kicking Horse and Monarch Campgrounds for first-time campers and those seeking a hassle-free experience or alternative camping options such as wall tents.
- Manage and promote winter recreation opportunities to better position Yoho as a winter destination.

Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site

Yoho National Park protects a unique cultural legacy reflecting early Aboriginal use, European exploration and settlement, development of a transcontinental railway, nation-building, alpine recreation and tourism, and the nature conservation movement. As part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, Yoho is also part of a broader celebration of heritage that is significant to the global community. This rich cultural heritage allows visitors to experience a vivid sense of the past and to personally connect with, and contribute to, this continuing human legacy. This strategy aims to increase the profile of this heritage and integrate it into the contemporary experience of park visitors.

Key actions include:

- Complete a cultural resource management plan that contributes to the contemporary visitor experience.
- Conduct research and monitoring of archaeological sites.
- Work with partners to develop and promote the discovery of the Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape.
- Strengthen involvement of Aboriginal people in documenting and presenting their culture, traditions, and relationships with the land.
- Develop new interpretive and outreach materials to communicate the significance of cultural resources and the World Heritage Site.

Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live

Connecting with Canadians who may not have an opportunity to visit Yoho in person allows Parks Canada to communicate the value of protected heritage and helps Yoho remain relevant to Canada's diverse population. Through this connection to Canadians, Parks Canada will be more successful in garnering support to protect the natural and cultural heritage represented by Yoho National Park. This strategy focuses on extending the reach of Yoho National Park, by using a range of media to bring engaging content to Canadians and create the excitement of being virtually here.

Key actions include:

- Work with partners to develop a Burgess Shale virtual museum.
- Target youth, urban Canadians, and new Canadians with content on unique aspects of the park such as Kicking Horse Pass, the Spiral Tunnels, and the Burgess Shale.

Managing Development

Most of the development in Yoho National Park, such as the Trans Canada Highway, Canadian Pacific railway, the community of Field, and park infrastructure is located in valley bottom montane habitat. Careful management of development and commercial activities will ensure that well designed staging areas continue to allow visitors a strong sense of place and connection to the authentic nature of the park. This approach will also minimize effects on ecological or cultural resources.

Key actions include:

- Confine development of new frontcountry commercial accommodation in the community of Field, consistent with direction in the *Field Community Plan (1999)*.
- Use the *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks (2007)* to guide any changes to commercial accommodations outside of the community of Field.
- Direct development away from the most significant natural areas, such as montane habitat and wetlands.
- Develop, or support special events and new recreational activities that promote public understanding and appreciation of the park, in ways that also support ecological and cultural heritage objectives

Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Parks Canada will maintain or restore ecological integrity by ensuring that native species exist in viable populations, and that natural ecological processes continue to function normally. Protecting healthy ecosystems is also critical to ensuring that visitors continue to have outstanding opportunities to experience, enjoy, and learn about the unique natural heritage of Yoho National Park.

Key actions include:

- Use prescribed fire and carefully controlled natural fires to maintain healthy forest ecosystems and diverse wildlife habitat.
- Maintain or restore wildlife movement patterns by improving terrestrial and aquatic habitat connectivity and maintaining important movement corridors.
- Incorporate meaningful opportunities for visitor experience and education into ecosystem research, monitoring and restoration programs.
- Reduce wildlife mortality on the Trans Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific railway.
- Maintain habitat security for grizzly bears.

In addition to the five (5) key strategies outlined above, more detailed area concepts have been developed for Lake O'Hara, Takakkaw Falls-Yoho Valley, Emerald Lake, Burgess Shale, Kicking Horse Corridor, Yoho Backcountry Valleys, and the Community of Field. These area concepts describe a future best, current strengths and challenges, and key actions to help achieve the future best.

The performance management framework includes broad ecological integrity and cultural heritage indicators shared with the other national parks in the montane bioregion. The management framework also includes strategic national indicators for public appreciation and understanding, and visitor experience. Data from these indicators will be used to prepare a State of the Park report prior to the next five-year review of this plan.

A strategic environmental assessment of this management plan was conducted to evaluate potential environmental effects. This assessment concluded that the plan is likely to result in many positive environmental effects. Potential negative effects can be reduced and mitigated by implementing an integrated management approach and paying close attention to desired outcomes for ecological integrity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
Recommendations	v
Executive Summary	vii
Table of Contents	xi
A Vision for Yoho National Park	1
1. Introduction	3
1.1 Management Plan Review Process	4
1.2 Regulatory and Policy Context	6
1.3 Measuring Success	7
1.4 Collaborative Planning and Management	7
2. Importance of Yoho National Park	9
3. Planning Context	12
3.1 Sources of Information	12
3.2 State of the Park Summary	12
3.3 Ecological Context	13
3.4 Visitation Trends	14
3.5 Management Priorities and Challenges	16
4. Key Strategies	17
4.1 A Showcase of National Park Stewardship	17
4.2 Experiencing the Authentic...and the Spectacular	20
4.3 Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site	25
4.4 Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live	28
4.5 Managing Development	29
4.6 Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems	32

5. Area Concepts	36
5.1 The Kicking Horse Corridor	36
5.2 The Community of Field	40
5.3 Lake O’Hara	43
5.4 Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley	46
5.5 Emerald Lake	49
5.6 The Burgess Shale	51
5.7 Yoho Backcountry Valleys	54
6. Zoning and Wilderness Area Declaration	56
6.1 The National Park Zoning System	56
6.2 Declared Wilderness Areas	59
7. Monitoring and Reporting	61
7.1 Condition Monitoring	61
7.2 Management Effectiveness Monitoring	61
8. Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment	62
9. Summary of Priority Actions	68
Appendix 1: Performance Management Framework	70
Appendix 2: Grizzly Bear Habitat Security Estimates by Landscape Management Units	74
List of Maps	
Map 1: Planning Areas in Yoho National Park	38
Map 2: Park Zoning	60
Map 3: Landscape Management Units in Yoho National Park	75
List of Figures	
Figure 1: Main Elements of the Park Management Plan	5

A VISION FOR YOHO NATIONAL PARK

In a vast and protected mountain landscape where ‘spectacular’ is amazingly the norm, Yoho National Park stands out as a place of superlatives. It embodies the essence of the Canadian Rockies in a compact and easily accessible destination.

The Burgess Shale is one of the world’s most important palaeontological resources. The fossil sites, discovered in Yoho in 1909, are showcases of environmental stewardship, research, visitor experience and educational outreach. Rigorous protection, on-site access, engaging exhibits and a virtual museum are hallmarks of managing these exquisite international treasures.

Yoho’s human history is intertwined with some of Canada’s most enduring stories - the exploration of the continent and the building of the railway. Here in Yoho, visitors truly sense the spirit of Aboriginal travellers, and feel the thunder of the locomotives, as they follow in the footsteps of centuries of visitors before them. Seeing first hand places like the Spiral Tunnels and Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site, visitors are vividly reminded of the ties that bound a young nation and which still define Canada today.

Yoho, along with Glacier and Mount Revelstoke national parks, Kicking Horse Pass, Rogers Pass and Eagle Pass national historic sites, and the communities of Field, Golden and Revelstoke are focal points of a cultural landscape that stretches from Kicking Horse Pass to the site of the Last Spike at Craigellachie. Working in concert, partners bring this corridor to life as a cohesive cultural landscape, a series of linked protected places and educational opportunities and a visitor destination in its own right.

Glaciated mountains along the spine of the continent provide the backdrop for some of the best alpine hiking and climbing opportunities in North America. Nestled amid the high peaks of the continental divide is Lake O’Hara, a stunningly beautiful area whose peaceful character is actively protected through controlled access.

As a key link in the regional ecosystem, Yoho continues to provide critical movement corridors for wildlife, connecting habitat in British Columbia and Alberta. Fire continues to shape the landscape, and visitors have numerous opportunities to witness the process of forest regeneration and learn about the role played by fire in ecosystem health.

The community of Field, situated at the base of majestic Mount Stephen, is an eclectic and unique mountain town that respects the ecological and cultural importance of its national park setting. The community supports the well being of residents, and serves as the main staging area for memorable experiences throughout the park. Takakkaw Falls, Canada’s second highest waterfall, and the much photographed Emerald Lake, are two more of Yoho’s many iconic features.

In summer, new and returning visitors to Yoho participate in a wide range of activities -- from guided hikes to well known locations to backpacking in a remote wilderness valley. During the winter Yoho is a destination of choice for cross-country skiers, ice climbers and snowshoers seeking to pursue their passion in the solitude of wilderness. In addition to enhanced traditional activities, a range of opportunities aimed at people that don’t normally visit national parks builds a larger and stronger constituency of national park users.

Canadians and international visitors come to Yoho to share a less crowded alternative where many find and re-visit their own favourite, secret spots. No matter the season, a host of superlative features and opportunities engage the senses and encourage real and inspiring discovery in a protected mountain landscape.

1. INTRODUCTION

National parks are some of Canada’s most recognized treasures, each a celebrated part of our nation-wide family of special places. Among our most rewarding and memorable destinations, each national park is integral to Canada’s vision of protecting natural environments that represent the diversity of our land and our people. These are places of renewal and deep connection, where we experience, first hand, the wonder and richness of our heritage. When Canadians work together to protect these spaces and build upon our park system, we are doing much more than preserving the integrity of our nature – we are preserving the very essence of what defines us as Canadians.

The *Canada National Parks Act* requires each national park to have a management plan. These plans reflect the legislation and policies of the Government of Canada, and are prepared in consultation with Canadians. Management plans are reviewed every five years. This management plan will guide the overall direction of Yoho 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’S 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.

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 future generations.

Corporate priorities that influence the management plan for Yoho 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.*

- *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.*

Connecting Canadians with their protected heritage requires that national parks remain relevant and meaningful. Parks Canada will work to ensure relevance by facilitating experiences that respond to the needs and interests of Canadians, in a manner that respects and reinforces protection and education objectives.

Refreshing, enhancing, expanding and promoting the existing family of visitor experience opportunities will be a priority for Yoho National Park. Parks Canada will also seek to introduce new recreational, leisure and learning activities that support Parks Canada's mandate. New offerings will be developed in collaboration with external proponents and stakeholders from all sectors, and will be subject to an assessment process at the national and local levels.

1.1 Management Plan Review Process

This management plan builds on the foundation of the *Yoho National Park of Canada Management Plan (2000)*. The 2000 plan provided important guidance which improved the ecological health of the park and helped steer investments and decision-making in support of Yoho's role as one of Canada's premier national parks. The plan was reviewed in 2005, at which time it was found to still provide sufficient direction, so no amendments were required.

Parks Canada's approach to management planning has evolved over the years. In 2008, the Parks Canada Agency finalized new national management planning guidelines. These guidelines aim to ensure that management plans provide strategic



Parks Canada / C. Siddal

direction, as opposed to specific prescriptive measures, and that they more effectively integrate the three key elements of Parks Canada’s mandate: protection, visitor experience, and education.

This second five-year review of the *Yoho National Park of Canada Management Plan (2000)* coincided with an opportunity to substantially update and reorganize the plan so it is aligned with the new planning guidelines and corporate priorities. This revised plan carries forward existing policy direction from 2000 for the ecological integrity of Yoho National Park and integrates it with new content that identifies direction and opportunities for visitor experience and education.

The seven (7) mountain national parks – Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Jasper, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Lakes – share many features and issues in common. Visitors travel among the parks, and stakeholders often have interest in several parks. Consequently, the management plans for the mountain parks have been reviewed and amended concurrently through a common process. Each contains a common mountain park vision and key strategies that often share common threads.

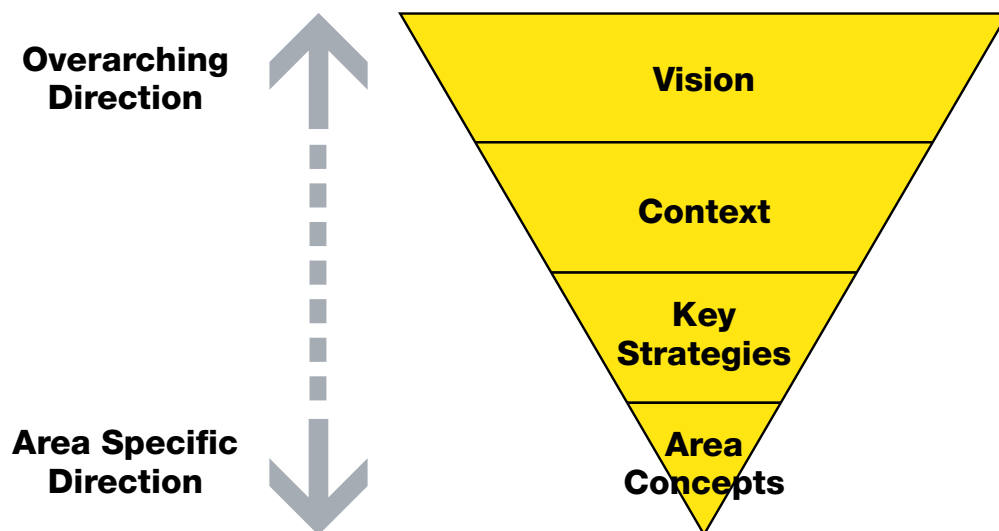


Figure 1: Main Elements of the Park Management Plan

The structure of the management plan is shown in Figure 1. Each plan begins with a vision for the individual park that highlights what is distinctive about the park, and Canadians’ collective aspirations for the park’s future. The vision will guide future planning and decision-making. Key strategies provide overarching direction that applies to the whole park. Elements of each key strategy are shared with the other mountain parks, however each strategy responds to the unique context of Yoho National Park.

Each plan also contains area concepts, in which detailed direction is provided for specific geographic areas of the park (see Map 1). The management actions outlined in each concept integrate objectives around protection, education, and visitor experience, and reflect the heritage values and ecological sensitivity of each area.

Policy and regulatory decisions, 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.

Key strategies for Yoho National Park:

- A Showcase of National Park Stewardship
- Experiencing the Authentic ... and the Spectacular
- Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site
- Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live
- Managing Development
- Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Area concepts for Yoho National Park:

- The Kicking Horse Corridor
- The Community of Field
- Lake O'Hara
- Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley
- Emerald Lake
- The Burgess Shale
- Yoho Backcountry Valleys

1.2 Regulatory and Policy Context

Management authorities and accountabilities for national parks are established under the *Parks Canada Agency Act* and the *Canada National Parks Act (CNPA)*. The park management plan provides strategic direction for a national park and is mandated by Section 11 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. By law, the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity must be the first priority in the management of the park. Providing opportunities for Canadians to connect to their heritage through meaningful experiences in national parks is a fundamental part of achieving this goal.

Other important statutes and regulations form part of the legal framework that defines Parks Canada's accountabilities. Some examples include:

- The *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and Parks Canada's *Policy on Strategic Environmental Assessment* ensure thorough, science-based consideration of potential environmental effects, and appropriate public review, in advance of any development, licensing, or policy decision.
- Parks Canada has specific obligations under the *Species at Risk Act*, and works with other responsible agencies to support recovery planning for species at risk.
- Specific limits to community development, commercial zones and commercial development are registered in Schedule 4 of the CNPA.
- Large areas of the park are legislatively protected as wilderness under the *National Parks Declared Wilderness Area Regulations*.

The strategic direction contained in this management plan outlines Parks Canada's approach to meeting these legislated accountabilities in Yoho National Park. Additionally, all operational and business planning decisions are subject, on an ongoing basis, to policies and guidelines that frame Parks Canada's approach to all national parks and national historic sites. Specific management direction in this plan should be viewed in the context of these policies, including:

- *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies;*
- *Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management Policy;*
- *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountains National Parks;*
- *Management Bulletin 2.6.10. Recreational Activity and Special Event Assessments; and*
- *The Field Community Plan.*

In addition to preparing annual reports, Parks Canada will continue to publicly account for its performance by preparing a State of the Park Report every five (5) years, which provides a synopsis of the current condition of the park based on key indicators, and assesses performance in advancing the Agency's mandate.

1.3 Measuring Success

Parks Canada's protected areas measure their performance by using common, consistent national indicators for all three elements of the mandate, as shown in Appendix 1. The indicators are supported by both national and local measures. To reflect current Parks Canada guidelines, indicators and measures for public appreciation and understanding and for visitor experience are updated from those used in the 2008 State of the Park Report.

Indicators are categorized under the main program areas for which Parks Canada is accountable, as outlined in the corporate performance management framework. The strategic direction contained in this management plan describes an integrated approach to the delivery of the mandate, so that the successful implementation of any of the key strategies should be reflected in improvements to a broad range of the indicators.

1.4 Collaborative Planning and Management

Yoho National Park shares boundaries with Banff and Kootenay national parks. These parks, together with Jasper National Park, and three provincial parks in British Columbia (Mount Assiniboine, Hamber, and Mount Robson) have been designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. Other boundaries of Yoho National Park adjoin public land administered by the Province of British Columbia.

These parks collectively comprise the core protected area in the Central Rockies Ecosystem. Joint preparation of the mountain national park management plans in

2010 helps fulfill this important role by ensuring the management strategies of these parks are coordinated and complementary.

The mountain national parks share a common vision that aligns with, and frames, each national park's specific vision:

A Vision for the Mountain National Parks

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 mountain culture. 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.

Together, these national parks represent the Columbia Mountains and Rocky Mountains natural regions. They are the result of the conscious choice of Canadians to preserve a large part of their mountain heritage in a natural condition, so that future generations can continue to be inspired by the kinds of experiences that Canada's mountain environments offer. Visitors, through-travellers, residents, and all Canadians benefit from and can contribute to this heritage.

Dating back over 10,000 years, traditional use on these lands by Aboriginal people is evidenced by archaeological sites and cultural artefacts, as well as the oral traditions of Aboriginal communities. The mountain national parks also contain 15 national historic sites representing major themes in Canadian history.

While much of the direct management of Yoho National Park is the responsibility of Parks Canada, the advice and support of others is critical to success. In collaboration with partners such as the Field Community Council, the Advisory Development Board, Canadian Pacific, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Friends of Yoho National Park, the Burgess Shale Geoscience Foundation, and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, together with the involvement of many Canadians in the development of the management plan, Parks Canada shares with others the leadership and challenge of managing this treasured place. Special events such as the 2009 centennial celebrations of Walcott's discovery of the Burgess Shale and the completion of the Spiral Tunnels are examples of how Yoho National Park can build on past successes and work collaboratively with partners to strengthen the delivery of Parks Canada's mandate today and into the future.

1.4.1 The Community of Field

The community of Field was established in the 1880s as a staging area for railway construction in Kicking Horse Pass. In 1886, the Canadian Pacific Railway constructed Mount Stephen House at Field, the first railway hotel in the Canadian Rockies, thus initiating the era of commercial tourism in Yoho. Canadian Pacific Railway also built a large stone roundhouse for the repair of locomotives and rail cars, as the community became a base for railway maintenance, as well as a focus of early mountain exploration. The discovery and exploration of lead and zinc at the nearby Monarch and Kicking Horse mines fuelled further development of the community in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Today Field is a small, vibrant community nestled in the heart of Yoho National Park, home to approximately 250 residents. The community includes an elementary school, a post office, a hotel, restaurants, a pottery studio, gift shops, a general store, Parks Canada's administrative offices, and numerous small guest houses and tourist cabins. A number of historical buildings, and the unique mix of residential, administrative and small commercial enterprises, give the community a distinctive, appealing character. Field continues its long tradition of welcoming visitors as the main staging area for experiencing the wonders of Yoho National Park.

The community is part of Yoho National Park, and is subject to the *Canada National Parks Act* and Regulations. It is administered by Parks Canada, with the collaboration of the Field Community Council. The federal government retains ownership of all land in the community (with the exception of land within the Canadian Pacific right of way), and is the final authority on questions of planning, land use, development and environmental matters.

Parks Canada, in partnership with the Field Community Council, completed a community plan for Field in 1999. This plan was reviewed in 2008-09, and several minor amendments are pending final approval.

1.4.2 National Historic Sites

There are three (3) national historic sites within Yoho National Park: Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site of Canada, Twin Falls Tea House National Historic Site of Canada, and Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin National Historic Site. All have current management plans that were approved in 2007. 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.

2. IMPORTANCE OF YOHO NATIONAL PARK

Yoho National Park was established in 1886, one year after Canada's first national park was established at Banff. Today the park protects 1,313 km² representing the western slopes of the Main Ranges of the Rocky Mountains Natural Region. The park shares boundaries with Banff National Park to the east and Kootenay National Park to the south, and is an important component of the 23,069 km² Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.



Parks Canada / C. Siddal

Situated along the continental divide, the park is noted for its steep peaks, glaciers, cliffs, turquoise glacial lakes, waterfalls and turbulent rivers. The park protects important habitat within the alpine, subalpine and montane ecoregions, and is home to a broad range of wildlife, including mountain goat, lynx, wolverine, westslope cutthroat trout, and grizzly bear. There are more than 400 km of trails that provide outstanding hiking, cycling and skiing opportunities. The Trans Canada Highway and other park roads provide exceptional scenic mountain drives. Unique features such as the 254 m high Takakkaw Falls, the Lake O'Hara area, and the exquisite fossils of the Burgess Shale are justifiably world renown.

For thousands of years, the area that is now Yoho National Park was part of the traditional lands identified by the Ktunaxa (Kootenay) and Secwepemc (Shuswap) First Nations people. Archaeological evidence suggests the mountains were primarily seasonal hunting grounds and travel routes that were used periodically to cross the mountains to hunt bison on the plains east of the Rockies.

The park includes part of a large cultural landscape extending for 300 km from Kicking Horse Pass to Craigellachie, the site of the Last Spike, representing one of the ties that bind Canada together. The pass was first recorded in 1858 by Sir James Hector of the Palliser Expedition. In 1881 the Canadian Pacific Railway adopted this pass as the first rail route through the Canadian Rockies, providing a vital link that connected British Columbia to the rest of Canada. Canada's second and third national parks – Yoho and Glacier – embraced some of the west's finest alpine scenery when they were established one year after the completion of the railway. In 1909, the tracks were re-aligned and the Spiral Tunnels were completed to lessen the rail grade through the steep Kicking Horse Pass. Subsequently, the Trans Canada Highway was built through the Kicking Horse River Valley following closely the original rail alignment.

The *Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape* evokes a unique sense of place shaped by the evolving relationship between people and the land. Stories abound here – of Aboriginal people, explorers, railway surveyors and builders, palaeontologists, base metal miners, mountain climbers, hoteliers, conservationists, loggers, highway builders, artists, and others. Today, this rugged valley continues to be an important movement corridor allowing people and wildlife to travel across the Canadian Rockies from the Bow Valley to the Columbia Valley.

Yoho National Park is home to one of the most significant fossil sites in the world. The Burgess Shale, discovered in 1909 by Charles Doolittle Walcott, contains exquisitely preserved fossils from more than 150 species of marine organisms from the middle Cambrian period, 505 million years ago. Ongoing research continues to reveal organisms new to science, and profound insights into the nature of evolution itself. The Burgess Shale was designated a World Heritage Site in 1980.

The park contributes significantly to the representation of the Rocky Mountains Natural Region. The upper half of the Kicking Horse River, a major tributary of the Columbia River, is protected within the park. This portion of the river was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1989. Protected habitat within Yoho National Park provides a critical link between the Columbia Valley in British Columbia and Banff National Park. River valleys within the park, including the Ice River, Kicking Horse River, Amiskwi River, Otterhead and Ottertail River provide important wildlife movement corridors.



Parks Canada / J. Jazvac

The dramatic landscape of Yoho National Park draws visitors from near and far who wish to experience the grandeur of the Canadian Rockies and the unique heritage attractions within the park. Supported by the community of Field and many partners, the park welcomes visitors to a variety of outstanding year-round experiences.

3. PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 Sources of Information

Parks Canada evaluates programs and activities to ensure that they are meeting the objectives outlined in the management plan for protection, visitor experience and education. A major tool for assessing and reporting on the condition of the park and the effectiveness of Parks Canada's management actions is the State of the Park Report (SOPR). Prepared every five (5) years, these reports are based on the results of ongoing monitoring of natural and cultural resources, and social science data gathered from visitors and other Canadians. The State of the Park Report plays an important role in identifying deficiencies in current park management approaches, emerging issues and information gaps, and determining the scope of management plan reviews.

The *Yoho National Park of Canada State of the Park Report (2008)* rated the state of ecological integrity as fair and stable based on available research and monitoring data. Cultural resource condition was also rated as fair. No trend was assessed due to data limitations.

Fewer data were available to quantify the state of visitor experience and public education. Based on available data, including high visitor satisfaction ratings, visitor experience in the park was assessed to be good and improving. Public education was assessed to be fair and improving. Since the 2008 SOPR, several surveys on specific topics such as camping trends, hiking trails, special events, and winter use have helped to fill in some knowledge gaps. These data were supplemented by a qualitative visitor experience assessment, focus groups, and a consultant's review of social science data and trends in order to develop key strategies for visitor experience in this plan. Ongoing dialogue with the public, stakeholders, and park staff also helped to shape plan content.

3.2 State of the Park Summary

The *Yoho National Park of Canada State of the Park Report (2008)* included the following key findings:

- Native biodiversity is considered fair and stable. There is concern regarding the population stability of some wide-ranging species such as grizzly bear. Human-caused wildlife mortality on the Trans Canada Highway and railway is a threat to many species.
- The connectivity of aquatic ecosystems is a concern, due to aging or poorly designed infrastructure that hinders movement and passage of some aquatic species. The impact of wastewater is a concern at specific localities, although upgraded infrastructure has led to recent improvements.

- Past fire suppression has caused the loss of some habitat types and an increase in forest insect and disease issues. There is a need to adjust forest management strategies to respond to these concerns, especially with respect to the effects of the mountain pine beetle.
- Regional population growth and development adjacent to the park create pressures that can affect ecosystems within the park.
- Evidence of a warming climate is measured in reduced snowpack, increasing temperatures, and receding glaciers.
- Cultural resources are in fair condition. The focus on resources related to national historic sites has meant that other cultural resources in the park have received limited attention. Inventories require updating, and a cultural resource management plan is needed.
- Basic knowledge of visitation and visitor characteristics exist, and satisfaction is generally high. However, there is a need to reinvest in aging frontcountry infrastructure that has reached the end of its life cycle (e.g. campgrounds and day use areas).
- Visitor satisfaction with educational programs is high, although participation rates are low. Better tools are required to evaluate the effectiveness and reach of communication programs.
- Additional research is required in order to better understand and monitor how park experiences and outreach can help to influence attitudes and connect Canadians to the park.

3.3 Ecological Context

The mountain landscape of Yoho National Park is characterised by three distinct ecoregions: the montane, subalpine and alpine. The montane ecoregion occupies the lowest elevations in the western end of the park and along the valley bottoms of the main rivers. This area has the mildest climate and receives less precipitation than the rest of the park. Montane forests are characterised by Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, white spruce, trembling aspen and cottonwood. The montane makes up 19% of the park, and is critical to the park's ecological integrity as it supports the greatest biodiversity and provides important movement corridors for wildlife. The Kicking Horse River montane area contains the Ottertail flats and Leancoil marsh, two relatively large and uncommon wetlands. This montane valley also contains most of the large infrastructure in the park, including the Trans Canada Highway and Canadian Pacific railway, the community of Field, and four frontcountry campgrounds. Due to the relative rarity of montane habitat in the park, many animals migrate into adjacent lands during the winter. Parks Canada must work cooperatively with the British Columbia government to manage these shared wildlife populations.

The majority of the park is within the alpine (34%) and subalpine ecoregions (47%), with forests dominated by Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir, and meadows dotted with wildflowers above treeline. The subalpine throughout the park supports whitebark pine, a species of special concern in British Columbia (Blue List). Alpine larch occurs near treeline along the continental divide. Much of the alpine consists

of bare rock, glacial ice and rugged terrain which limit its value for most wildlife. The park's location on the west side of the divide results in relatively high precipitation, which creates unique pockets of wet belt forest where coastal species such as devil's club, western red cedar and western hemlock occur.

Forest ecosystems have been affected by decades of fire suppression, and a recent population explosion of mountain pine beetle, a native insect in western pine forests. Prescribed burning is being used to restore fire to the forest ecosystem and to create a more natural vegetation mosaic of different ages and diversity throughout the park. Prescribed fires and Fire Smart facility protection projects are also being used to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires.

Aquatic ecosystems have been affected by the development of transportation corridors, which sometimes act as barriers to fish passage, and the introduction of non-native fish species. Efforts are underway to restore natural aquatic connectivity, and to address the impacts of non-native fish. Recovery measures are being planned for the westslope cutthroat trout. The British Columbia population of this species has recently been designated under the federal *Species at Risk Act* as a population of special concern.

3.4 Visitation Trends

Over the last decade visitation to Yoho has fluctuated annually, with a high of 609,000 in 2007/08 to a low of 405,000 recorded in 2003/04 when significant wildfires affected travel to the Canadian Rockies. From 2000/01 to 2007/08



Parks Canada / A. Brooks

visitation rose by almost 4%. However visitation in 2008/09 was down more than 11% from the previous year, due in large part to the global economic recession. Visitation for 2009/10 is up 3.5% indicating a slight recovery.

Recent visitor surveys indicate that roughly one-third of park visitors are Canadian, one-third are from the United States, and one-third have other international origins. Only 2% of visitors to Yoho come from British Columbia. Visitor use during July and August accounts for half of total visitation, and 87% of all visits occur between early May and late September. Only 4% of visits are recorded during the winter months of December to February, while March and April account for 8% of visits.

Of the people who visit Yoho National Park each year, approximately 70% are independent travellers, while the remainder are on commercial group tours. Visitors stop to explore the park and the community of Field, and to enjoy picnic areas, viewpoints, interpretive trails, and campgrounds. Visitors to the park participate most commonly in the activities of sightseeing (83%), walking (79%) and hiking a trail (70%)¹. Backcountry camping is highly popular relative to the small size of the park. Nordic skiing, ski touring, and ice climbing are popular winter activities. Many other travellers pass through the park without stopping, and instead enjoy the spectacular scenery along the Trans Canada Highway as it passes through the Kicking Horse River Valley.

Visitors come to the park to experience the dramatic landscapes of the Canadian Rockies and to explore iconic destinations such as Lake O'Hara, Emerald Lake, the Natural Bridge and Takakkaw Falls. Visitor satisfaction remains high, although congestion can be a problem at these popular locations. Four (4) campgrounds are located along the highway corridor, and semi-wilderness campgrounds are located at Lake O'Hara and Takakkaw Falls. While the park provides easily accessible, spectacular destinations at roadside, there are also more than 400 km of hiking trails, mostly concentrated in the popular Yoho Valley, Emerald Lake and Lake O'Hara areas. More primitive trails and routes extend further into remote backcountry areas where there is little human activity. Approximately 95 % of the park is declared wilderness, which provides outstanding recreation opportunities in areas with minimal facilities.

Recent social science analysis has focused in part on understanding the social values and travel motivations of park visitors. This work will allow Parks Canada to better match existing and potential new opportunities to the needs and expectations of distinct visitor segments.

The general growth in visitation to Yoho National Park has not kept pace with regional population growth. This suggests a relative shift of public interest away from visiting Yoho, and in that sense reflects a broader phenomenon that has seen visitation stagnate or fall off in national parks and national historic sites across Canada in recent years. A primary consideration in the management of Yoho National Park must be to ensure its continued relevance in a changing, more urban Canada.

¹ IPSOS REID – Online Panel Composition Overview, *Parks Listens*, March 2008.

3.5 Management Priorities and Challenges

Since the previous management plan was approved, the park has made progress addressing some of the most pressing park management challenges. Prescribed burns have been used to restore fire to the landscape. New washroom facilities have been installed at Emerald Lake and Takakkaw Falls, improving visitor amenities and addressing water quality concerns. Some infrastructure has been removed from the edge of the community of Field, and a new wastewater treatment plant has been installed. Together these achievements have helped to improve wildlife movement through a narrow pinch point, improve water quality in the Kicking Horse River, and improve the overall look and feel of the community. This management plan will ensure that Parks Canada continues to build on these successes.



Parks Canada

For Yoho 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.

Management priorities for Yoho National Park include:

- Reducing wildlife mortality on the Trans Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific railway.
- Increasing engagement of Aboriginal people.

- Working with partners to celebrate the heritage of the Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape.
- Improving aquatic connectivity and fish passage.
- Increasing the park's relevance to Canadians and reaching new markets by improving existing opportunities, and considering new activities that respond to their needs and expectations.
- Collaborating with the Community of Field, and other stakeholders to develop and promote winter opportunities in the park.
- Renewing visitor facilities at Takakkaw Falls, the Natural Bridge, and in select locations along the Trans Canada Highway.
- Improving the sense of arrival and welcome at the park's east and west gates.
- Ensuring that wildlife can safely use important habitat and movement corridors.
- Increasing understanding of the impact of climate change and developing adaptation strategies.
- Increasing engagement with Canadians who do not visit the park through various media.
- Working with partners to develop a Burgess Shale Virtual Museum.

4. KEY STRATEGIES

Key strategies are the guiding concepts that define the approach Parks Canada takes to setting priorities, selecting and implementing actions, and evaluating the success of park management. Each key strategy has a primary focus and is intended to complement other strategies in the plan. For Parks Canada to fulfill its mandate in an integrated way, implementation of these strategies will be done in concert with one another. Similarly, policy direction for Yoho National Park must be viewed as the collection of these strategies and subsequent area concepts.

The following six (6) key strategies summarise the overall approach to achieving Parks Canada's mandate within the context of Yoho National Park.

4.1 A Showcase of National Park Stewardship

Conservation challenges associated with managing protected areas in a changing world are many and complex. Canada's mountain national parks have long been at the forefront of efforts to re-think and re-design the way in which people interact with protected landscapes. Given Parks Canada's mandated responsibilities, and the high value that Canadians also attach to the health of their mountain national parks, Yoho will focus research attention, innovation and investment on key conservation challenges, and on opportunities to continually reduce the environmental impact of park management and operations.

As part of a community of protected areas, Yoho National Park has benefited from experience gained in other places in Canada and the world, and from fresh thinking by knowledgeable people who share an interest in this special place. The development and implementation of creative conservation solutions that add value to visitor experiences and ensure resource protection begins with a solid knowledge base and strong collaborative relationships with others. This can be observed in the park's approach to restoring fire on the landscape, and will be used in planning for future upgrading of the Trans Canada Highway through Yoho.

Many Canadians are passionate about sustaining the integrity of park resources and the quality of recreational opportunities that support memorable park experiences. The culture of cooperative stewardship that has developed over time in Yoho National Park is reflected in the work of groups such as the Field Cross-Country Ski Club, the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, the Friends of Yoho, and the Burgess Shale Geoscience Foundation. Strengthening this culture of cooperation, learning and stewardship is a priority for Parks Canada.

Continued research on ecosystems, geology and cultural resources will provide insight, understanding and objective data to support science-based decision making. Park research will also provide opportunities to enhance visitor experience and collective learning through the engagement of stakeholders, park visitors and local community members. As the understanding of park resources continues to evolve, research findings will be integrated into the stories shared with park visitors, stakeholders, and Canadians across the country.

Objective #1:

Knowledge for decision-making is improved and visitor learning opportunities are enhanced by ongoing research that increases our understanding of park landscapes, ecosystems, and cultural resources.



Parks Canada / R. Hostin

Actions:

- Lead, or support, research activities that contribute to an increased understanding of park ecosystems, ecological processes, environmental change, and cultural resources.
- Showcase emerging knowledge and understanding of the Burgess Shale by encouraging further research, and working with scientists, the Royal Ontario Museum, and others to create new, exciting exhibits and virtual experiences.
- Participate in regional and national planning initiatives to help enhance knowledge sharing and improve decision making within the regional ecosystem.

Objective #2:

The environmental impact of park operations is reduced by expanding the use of evolving technologies and encouraging commercial operators in the park to do the same.

Actions:

- Continually expand and improve the use of environmental technologies such as renewable energy, waste composting, recycling and water and energy conservation in campgrounds, day use areas and, through development review, in built facilities.
- Encourage the development and/or use of alternative energy sources to improve efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with fossil fuel energy generation, in ways that do not negatively affect natural and cultural features or visitor experience.
- Build on successes to date, and continue to minimize negative effects on water quality of wastewater systems in the community of Field and in outlying commercial accommodations.

Objective #3:

Community residents in Field, regional stakeholders in British Columbia and Alberta, park visitors, volunteers and broader communities of interest are fully engaged in opportunities to create new conservation and environmental stewardship solutions, ecosystem monitoring, and research that stresses collaboration with others and maintains a high degree of scientific rigour and statistical validity.

Actions:

- Engage a diverse community of interested Canadians to share information, imagine creative solutions, and collaborate to implement those solutions, creating new stories of conservation success.
- Design and implement conservation measures such as prescribed fires, historic building restoration, salvage archaeology, and trail relocations in ways that provide opportunities for visitors to witness the action and learn about the reasons for undertaking these measures.

- Provide opportunities for people to share in the active stewardship of the park by participating in collaborative research and monitoring programs, and volunteer activities such as invasive plant management, ecological and cultural resource restoration activities, and trail planning and maintenance.

Objective #4:

Stewardship successes become important elements of the stories the park tells the world, help to increase the environmental literacy of Canadians, influence people's thinking and behaviour, and inspire hope.

Actions:

- Communicate current Burgess Shale research to on-site visitors as part of the guided hiking program, and to off-site audiences through exhibits and virtual media.
- Develop communication products that showcase the environmental and cultural stewardship initiatives that Parks Canada and others are carrying out in the park.
- Recognize industry members and non-profit organizations that incorporate heritage tourism principles and environmental stewardship initiatives into their operations.

4.2 Experiencing the Authentic...and the Spectacular

Yoho National Park embodies the essence of the Canadian Rockies in an accessible and authentic heritage destination. Massive mountains, crowned with ice fields and glaciers along the spine of the continent provide a stunning backdrop for experiencing the park. Iconic attractions allow visitors to experience the raw power of the landscape, and marvel at the great stories of exploration and nation-building that define Canada. Yoho is a place of superlatives that “wows” visitors – no matter where they look, or how and when they travel – and inspires them to protect this special place for all time.

Parks Canada and its tourism partners recognize that visitors to national parks are not all the same. Extensive demographic and psychographic information, product development and promotional activities acknowledge that visitors have different needs and desires, and connect with the park in many different ways. Infrastructure and programming will welcome and attract attention, and satisfy the needs of visitors at all stages of their visit, from pre-trip planning to post-trip memories. Visitors find in Yoho the ability to create the experiences that are most meaningful and rewarding to them, within the context of a unique national park setting.

Connecting Canadians to real and inspiring experiences within well-functioning and healthy ecosystems is integral to the management and sustainability of the park. A renewed focus on authentic and meaningful visitor experiences, tailored to key visitor segments, will set the stage for the best national park experience possible. This effort will be evident in every program and activity, and in every aspect of service delivery.

Heritage tourism, which results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area, plays an important role in making these connections and providing these experiences. In national parks, heritage tourism

actively fosters an appreciation of nature, history and culture and is an important part of facilitating stewardship of these important places. Heritage tourism strategies are required of operators undertaking redevelopment in Yoho National Park.

4.2.1 Welcoming Visitors to Mountain Heritage

As Canada’s third oldest national park, Yoho has a long history of welcoming visitors –from as far back as the historic Hector and Palliser Expedition and the building of the transcontinental railway, to modern day travellers seeking an intense physical challenge amid the lofty peaks.

“Welcome” will be a recurring theme, reflected in visitor infrastructure, local ambassadors, Parks Canada staff and other service providers. Visitors to Yoho – whether from the east or west – are acutely aware of having arrived in a special landscape, greatly affected by human interaction, but which continues as a key link in the regional ecosystem.

Objective #1:

Visitors are welcomed to mountain ecosystems, the park’s natural and cultural heritage, and to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site in a manner that reflects the significance of this special place.

Actions:

- Invest in improved reception and orientation at both the west and east entrances, that will provide a strong sense of arrival to the park.
- Investigate alternative fee collection methods such as mobile gates, remote pay stations, and the creation of an entry kiosk at the start of the Yoho Valley Road.
- Position “View from the Edge” experiences on the Yoho Valley Road, at Emerald Lake and in the community of Field as an introduction to the park for no hassle



Parks Canada / T. Keith

Five Types of Engagement for Visitor Experiences

The “**Virtual Experience**” is targeted to visitors with an interest in nature and mountains, anywhere in the world within reach of technology. These visitors will benefit from brief, intense visual and/or auditory experiences of mountain heritage, delivered through technology 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 an actual visit. Whether they visit or not, this experience will contribute to awareness of and support for Yoho National Park, a key component in maintaining or improving the ecological integrity of the park.

Travellers who currently journey through the park without stopping are targeted in the next type of experience, “**Drive Through Awareness.**” To date, these visitors have been largely ignored, even though they represent a significant volume on the Trans Canada Highway. There is a tremendous opportunity for Parks Canada to strengthen the connection of through-travellers, by highlighting Yoho’s railway history, Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site, and its growing importance as a cultural landscape. Although still primarily a visual experience, subtle interpretation will promote understanding of and support for the protection of the scenic mountain panorama, and may inspire a return visit to experience the park in more depth.

A “**View from the Edge**” experience appeals to the second largest visitor group, those who prefer to stay close to civilization, or stop briefly on their way to other places. They may stop to snap a picture at renowned Emerald Lake, dine in the community of Field, or spend a night in a luxurious mountain lodge. For this segment, better maintained infrastructure and an enhanced level of interpretation will set the stage for a deeper connection to place, in which all of the senses are engaged. Meaning and value will be added to this “**View from the Edge**” experience, through heritage programming and dynamic media that bring the wilderness to the campsite, lakeshore or community. This will be particularly appealing for those seeking hassle-free travel, rejuvenation and relaxation, or freedom and excitement in outdoor settings described as ‘no hassle travellers’, ‘gentle explorers’, ‘rejuvenators’ and ‘free spirits’. Additionally, many of the facilities and services used by these visitors form the basis for the next two visitor segments. For this reason, investment here reaches a large proportion of multiple target markets.

A “**Step into the Wild**” experience is targeted to visitors who stop and stay in the parks for more than a few hours, but who do not venture far physically or perceptually for too long. They may be on a day-hiking trip, or staying in Field, one of the nearby commercial lodges, or in neighbouring Banff National Park. In winter, this group may take advantage of the exceptional Nordic skiing and snowshoeing opportunities in Field and the Kicking Horse Pass area. Lesser in volume than the previous group, this segment has more time for personal reflection, in-depth learning, and possibilities of memorable moments with wildlife. The park experience of these ‘cultural explorers’ and ‘free spirits’ will give them renewal, freedom and authentic connection to nature and mountain culture, as well as volunteer opportunities to help maintain or improve ecological conditions.

Visitors who seek “**Immersion in Mountain Wilderness**” have an inherent affinity for nature or have gained experience and comfort through repeated outdoor adventure over time. These ‘authentic experiencers’ become immersed physically and perceptually in the natural environment, leaving behind at the trailhead the built human environment that characterizes daily life. Their carefully planned, intensely personal experiences may include long, challenging day hikes such as the Iceline, guided glacier travel on the Wapta Icefields, or lengthy, unguided backpacking trips into remote areas. These visitors already have a strong connection to the park, and this connection will be maintained through the provision of off-site trip planning information and unobtrusive assistance, and when desired, contact with certified guides. They themselves will be encouraged to deepen their connection to place, as ambassadors or stewards, passing on their passion for Yoho to friends, family and colleagues.

travellers, gentle explorers, rejuvenators and free spirits and an invitation to explore further.

- Create a communication and learning strategy around the concept of ‘welcome,’ which is employed throughout the park and echoed by all who live and work in the park.

4.2.2 Connecting Visitors to Exceptional Experiences

Like the other mountain national parks, Yoho’s visitor experience strategy is based on five (5) types of engagement that will be used to plan for and provide opportunities for visitors: Virtual Experience; Drive Through Awareness; View from the Edge; Step into the Wild; and Immersion in Mountain Wilderness. The identification of these engagement types is a step in making stronger connections between Canadians and their park, and will result in more meaningful and varied visitor experiences. The five types share a common foundation: they occur in, are based on and must contribute to a whole and well-functioning ecosystem.

Objective #1:

Visitors are increasingly aware and appreciative of the unique nature of Yoho National Park as a distinct destination in the Canadian Rockies, worthy of protection and support.

Actions:

- Profile Yoho’s grandeur, railway history and winter opportunities as a way of differentiating Yoho from other mountain parks.
- Increase visitor knowledge of the park through outreach, external communications and on-site interpretation, targeted to residents of British Columbia, particularly those who fall into the ‘authentic experiencer’, ‘cultural explorer’, and ‘cultural heritage buff’ categories.
- Work with Glacier National Park and partners such as the community of Field, the Friends of Yoho, and the Lake O’Hara Trails Club to present Yoho’s product offer.

Objective #2:

Visitor experiences are enriched using a systematic approach to planning opportunities based on the natural ecosystem and cultural heritage that Yoho National Park protects and presents.

Actions:

- Enhance visitor experience in all stages of the visit from wishing for and planning through to post-trip memories.
- Improve services and products by considering the specific needs and interests of different market segments (such as ‘no hassle travellers’, ‘gentle explorers’, ‘rejuvenators’, ‘free spirits’, ‘cultural explorers’ and ‘authentic experiencers’).
- Develop targeted promotions, setting expectations that are compatible with the landscape and ecological objectives.

- Communicate with visitors post-trip to build loyalty, add value and encourage repeat visitation.
- Invite visitors to move from one type of experience to another for those who wish to do so.
- Measure success in facilitating a memorable visitor experience.

Objective #3:

Connection to place among park visitors is deepened through expanded opportunities and increased visitation, while respecting protection goals and character of place.

Actions:

- Expand the range of recreational, leisure and learning opportunities, in collaboration with communities, environmental and tourism stakeholders and private operators, and subject to an assessment process at national and local levels.
- Produce and install informative signage to enhance “Drive-Through Awareness”, targeted to no hassle travellers.
- Develop and promote additional opportunities for “View from the Edge” experiences for gentle explorers at popular locations such as Emerald Lake and Takakkaw Falls.
- Increase the number of visitors to the park by 2% annually during the next five (5) years by focusing on residents of British Columbia, visitors on multi-day trips to Banff National Park, and those looking for a less crowded or winter experience.
- Influence patterns of use and direct additional visitation to opportunities and activity nodes, designed for intensive use, where ecological and visitor impacts can be managed.
- Support the efforts of the community and tourism industry in attracting international visitors by promoting the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site to international markets.
- Investigate options to introduce inexperienced visitors to backcountry camping, taking people from “Step into the Wild” to “Immersion in Mountain Wilderness” experiences.

Objective #4:

Infrastructure at the western end of the park, in Kicking Horse Pass, and along the Yoho Valley Road is clustered and revitalized, while maintaining or improving ecological integrity and gaining operational efficiencies.

Actions:

- Invest in infrastructure in Kicking Horse and Monarch Campgrounds for first-time campers and those seeking hassle-free or alternative camping options such as wall tents.

- Improve appearance and functionality of trailhead kiosks and signage as a means to provide key information and encourage visitors to “Step into the Wild.”

Objective #5:

Yoho National Park is developed as a quality winter destination.

Actions:

- Maintain ski trails between Field and Emerald Lake and on the old 1-A Highway to the 2-way Nordic skiing standard, in collaboration with the Field Cross Country Ski Club.
- Explore the potential of additional track-set ski trails and opportunities for snowshoeing separate from track-set trails, as well as the feasibility of winter warm-up shelters.
- Explore the potential for using campground facilities in the off-season for school or special interest groups seeking a day or overnight national park experience.
- Provide promotional support to increase awareness of winter opportunities and to increase visitation in winter.
- Investigate, with partners, the feasibility of establishing one additional alpine hut on the Wapta Icefield in order to support ski touring between Yoho’s Stanley Mitchell Hut and Bow Hut in Banff National Park.

4.3 Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site

Yoho National Park is rich in human history and cultural traditions. The stories that help to define Yoho are inspired by early Aboriginal use, European exploration, industrial development, and the unique communities of people who have come to call this area home. Key themes in Yoho’s cultural heritage include the chronicling of river valleys and mountain passes by the Palliser expedition, the completion of the transcontinental railway, nation-building, the development of recreation and tourism in the Rockies, and the movement to conserve natural and cultural heritage. Three (3) national historic sites, numerous archaeological sites, artefacts, heritage buildings, and the Kicking Horse Canadian Heritage River are found in the park. This rich cultural heritage allows visitors to experience a vivid sense of the past and to personally connect with, and contribute to, this continuing human legacy.

As part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, Yoho is also part of a much broader celebration of heritage. World Heritage Sites are places of outstanding universal value that are recognized as part of the common heritage of all people. The Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks were designated for their exceptional natural beauty, and for their significant ongoing geological processes, including the exquisite fossil record of the Burgess Shale in Yoho National Park.

Aboriginal history and traditions are also an important part of the heritage of Yoho and the World Heritage Site. Archaeological evidence suggests that Aboriginal people periodically travelled through and camped along the river valleys within the park. Historical accounts also record the Aboriginal use of the Kootenay Trail which passes through the Amiskwi, Beaverfoot, and Ice river valleys in the park. Parks Canada



Parks Canada / J. Jazvac

is committed to building strong and mutually beneficial working relationships with Aboriginal people, in order to better understand and incorporate Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in park management, and to showcase Aboriginal heritage and cultural traditions.

This strategy aims to increase awareness of the rich, still-evolving cultural heritage of Yoho National Park and the World Heritage Site. The national historic sites and cultural resources and traditions within the park will be profiled so that history, culture and landscape become integrated into the ways in which people experience and understand the unique heritage in Yoho National Park.

Objective #1:

Significant cultural resources are conserved and restored.

Actions:

- Complete a cultural resource management plan and invest strategically to ensure that these touchstones to our past and future remain intact, and contribute to the contemporary visitor experience.
- Complete an inventory of significant heritage buildings in the park, such as the Mount Hunter and Paget Peak fire lookouts.
- Conduct research and monitor the condition of archaeological sites.

Objective #2:

Aboriginal people are actively involved in documenting and presenting to visitors their cultures and relationships to park landscapes.

Actions:

- Facilitate the gathering and recording of traditional knowledge about park ecosystems, traditional land use, cultural resources, and relationships with landscapes, in ways that respect Aboriginal traditions and ownership of the knowledge.
- Identify and facilitate opportunities for Aboriginal people to present their culture, history and perspectives to park visitors.
- Develop and implement measures to support Aboriginal access to the park for spiritual and ceremonial purposes.
- Foster cultural awareness among Parks Canada and its partners.

Objective #3:

The profile of national historic sites, other cultural resources, and the World Heritage Site is elevated, by linking the stories associated with historic resources and events to the broader park landscape, to contemporary visitor experience, and to the stories that define Canada.

Actions:

- Work with local museums and heritage associations to strengthen their role in providing learning opportunities for visitors and to increase visitation to Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site.
- Continue to implement the management plans for the three national historic sites in the park.
- With Glacier National Park and community partners, explore and develop a coherent framework to encourage visitors to discover the Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape – a landscape rich in heritage that links Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site with Rogers Pass National Historic Site and the communities of Field, Golden, and Revelstoke (see sidebar).
- Collaborate with partners to make information on the World Heritage Site more visible and more widely available.
- Increase interpretive material about other cultural heritage sites such as the Kicking Horse Canadian Heritage River, historic buildings in Field, fire lookouts and patrol cabins in the backcountry, First World War internment camp, former base metal mines and lumber camps, and archaeological sites.
- In conjunction with partners, develop thematic information that encourages visitors to explore sites in the park that are associated with artists like Lawren Harris and J.E.H. MacDonald of the Group of Seven.

The Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape

Cultural landscapes capture the unique character of place and evolving relationship between people and the land. They illustrate how people have occupied, used, valued and connected with these special areas through time. Cultural landscapes flourish when those who value the landscape share their knowledge with others and act as stewards of the place.

Yoho, Mount Revelstoke, and Glacier national parks, Kicking Horse Pass, Rogers Pass, and Eagle Pass national historic sites, and the neighbouring communities of Field, Golden, and Revelstoke are focal points of a cultural landscape which stretches from Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike site at Craigellachie. In addition to the parks and historic sites, there are many other cultural attractions and institutions in the region that present the stories of people and place. Collective cultural presentation approaches have been successful in the communities, but implementation of this concept will mark the first time that all of the different stakeholders within this broad landscape have worked together.

Working in concert, partners can bring the Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape to life as a cohesive cultural heritage feature, a series of linked protected places and educational opportunities, and a visitor destination in its own right.

4.4 Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live

To promote, beyond our boundaries, an ongoing dialogue and lifelong 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.

An increasing proportion of Canadians live in urban centres, and more than 20% were born outside of 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 Yoho National Park and be able to connect with wild places, culture and history.

Making this connection with Canadians, whether they visit the park or not, is an important way of remaining relevant to Canada's diverse population, and demonstrating the value of national parks. Through this connection to Canadians, Parks Canada will be more successful in protecting the natural and cultural heritage represented by Yoho National Park. The stories of the nature and history of Yoho, and the knowledge that the park is part of a healthy, well-functioning ecosystem, will form the basis of this connection.

Objective #1:

Stories of mountain culture, science, recreation and park management are widely available to people who may not otherwise have an opportunity to learn about, visit, or become involved with Yoho National Park and its national historic sites.

Actions:

- Develop partnering arrangements with the Town of Golden and other communities in the Columbia Valley that enhance mountain park outreach and

education around restoration and conservation projects, including fire ecology, aquatic health, species at risk, and highway wildlife mitigation.

- In collaboration with the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, develop the premier website on the Burgess Shale, and investigate the potential to establish a Parks Canada presence in Toronto through the strong relationship with the ROM.
- Enhance the park website by ensuring content is timely, relevant, and up-to-date.

Objective #2:

Young Canadians, urban Canadians and recent immigrants to Canada make virtual connections to Yoho National Park, the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, and the defining stories of Canada.

Actions:

- Provide targeted programming that links these audiences to unique aspects of the park, such as the Burgess Shale, the Spiral Tunnels and the *Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape*.
- Raise awareness of the World Heritage Site among new Canadians by associating it with other iconic World Heritage Sites from their former home countries.

Objective #3:

Regional residents in British Columbia become more aware, and are more appreciative, of the protected heritage in Yoho National Park.

Actions:

- Collaborate with cultural and natural heritage organizations and institutions in the Columbia Valley, to deliver programs on the unique features, places, events, and people in Yoho National Park.
- Collaborate with the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network and school boards in the East and West Kootenays to support the Wild Voices for Kids speaker series in area schools, and increase the mountain park content in this program.
- Collaborate with provincial education authorities to tie national park themes such as ecological restoration, palaeontology and cultural heritage into school curricula at targeted levels.

4.5 Managing Development

As the third oldest national park, Yoho has a long history of development. Infrastructure within the park includes the Trans Canada Highway, park roads, the Canadian Pacific railway, campgrounds, day use areas, trails, Alpine Club of Canada huts, commercial lodges, backcountry patrol cabins, utilities and the community of Field. These facilities provide critical staging areas that allow visitors to experience the unique areas of the park. Well designed visitor infrastructure can also reflect and reinforce the history of the park and contribute to a unique sense of place.

Most of the development in Yoho, however, is in the valley bottoms, which include much of the most productive montane habitat and critical wildlife movement corridors. Existing and potential new developments, including park facilities, transportation and utility infrastructure, and development in Field must be managed carefully to minimize potential impacts on natural and cultural resources. Impacts such as terrestrial and aquatic habitat fragmentation, wildlife mortality, environmental contamination, disturbance of cultural resources, and negative aesthetic effects can compromise the natural and cultural attributes of the park that are valued by Canadians. Addressing these impacts is important as Parks Canada seeks stronger and more meaningful visitor connections with the park, based on whole and well-functioning natural ecosystems and authentic cultural resources.

Limits to development in Canada's national parks were established in the late 20th century and early 21st century as a result of extensive analysis and public review. Specific limits to community boundaries are registered within the *Canada National Parks Act*. A large area of Yoho National Park is legislatively protected as a declared wilderness area in order to preserve its natural character, and the unique opportunities associated with that character.

This strategy reaffirms the legislated limits to development in Yoho National Park and the community of Field, while providing flexibility to encourage creative approaches that enable more visitors to connect with the park and celebrate its heritage values. The community of Field, outlying commercial accommodations and campgrounds will continue to be the key staging areas for visitors. With the possible exception of a license to permit one additional hut on the Wapta Icefield, no additional park land outside the community will be released for the development of commercial accommodation. Careful management of development and commercial activities will enhance visitor experience, contribute to a strong sense of place, and minimize effects on ecological or cultural resources.

Objective #1:

Development and growth in Yoho National Park are carefully managed to support quality mountain heritage experiences, while safeguarding the natural and cultural attributes that make those experiences possible.

Actions:

- Manage the community of Field in a manner consistent with legislated growth limits and the strategic direction contained in the Field Community Plan.
- Use the *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks (2007)* to guide any changes to commercial accommodations outside of the community of Field.
- Direct development away from montane and sub-alpine alluvial fans, wetlands, riparian areas, grasslands and narrow pinch points in wildlife corridors. These areas will be priorities for ecosystem restoration activities and the application of measures to mitigate existing development.
- Modify, renew, add, or consolidate visitor facilities in the park, such as campgrounds, day use areas and trails, where there are opportunities to better respond to the different needs and interests of target market segments, enhance visitor experience and achieve ecological objectives.

- Restore disturbed areas no longer required for facilities or infrastructure.
- Confine development of new commercial accommodations, with possible exception of one additional hut on the Wapta Icefield, in the community of Field, as provided for in the community plan.
- Contribute to creating a strong sense of place by using design guidelines that demonstrate environmental leadership and are sympathetic with the unique natural and cultural attributes of the park when creating or renewing facilities and infrastructure.
- Develop and support special events and new recreational activities that promote public appreciation and understanding of the park, in ways that also support relevant ecological and cultural heritage objectives.

Objective # 2:

Travel and utility corridors are managed with partners in order to provide safe and efficient services to park residents and visitors in ways that minimize potential impacts on visitor experience, ecological and cultural resources.

Actions:

- Integrate fencing and wildlife crossing structures into all future highway upgrades, and consider its application when upgrading other roads in significant wildlife habitat. Use these measures as a basis for educational opportunities for visitors.
- Continue to work with Canadian Pacific to reduce grain spills on the railway that serve as attractants to wildlife, and explore other solutions to address wildlife mortality.
- With partners develop best practices for managing potential contaminants, including procedures for minimizing road salt application near sensitive aquatic ecosystems, and spill response protocols for hazardous materials.
- Improve signage along the Trans Canada Highway, directing visitors to attractions, increasing awareness of opportunities throughout the corridor, and making it easier for travellers to stop along the way.
- Prepare a long-term gravel extraction plan for the mountain national parks to support future highway and road requirements.
- Include future ecological restoration costs in highway construction and recapitalization budgets. Apply these funds to ecological restoration of depleted gravel sources and old disturbed sites, in accordance with a long-term restoration plan.
- Provide opportunities for park visitors and other volunteers to participate in restoration activities.
- Permit changes to the existing system of utilities where there is a clear and demonstrable need, where no significant environmental impacts will result, and where aesthetic effects will not diminish the visitor experience.

- Consider proposals to establish towers for wireless communications. Changes to the boundaries of designated wilderness areas may be required.

4.6 Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Parks Canada will maintain or restore the ecological integrity of Yoho National Park by striving to ensure that native plants and animals continue to exist in viable populations, and that ecological processes continue to function within their natural range of variability.

By protecting healthy ecosystems, Parks Canada also ensures that visitors to Yoho National Park continue to have outstanding opportunities to meaningfully connect with the natural characteristics that are representative of the Rocky Mountains Natural Region, in ways that build support and sustain this heritage for future visitors. Visitors find intact ecosystems that are still governed by natural ecosystem processes. These healthy and evolving ecosystems support a range of nature-based recreational experiences that constantly attract new and returning visitors to the park.

While maintaining the ecological integrity of the entire park, Parks Canada will emphasize the restoration and intensive management of those ecosystem processes and components that have the potential to yield significant conservation gains, or are rare or most vulnerable. Wherever possible, new visitor experience and learning opportunities will be incorporated into the management or restoration of these ecosystem features.

Objective #1:

Park ecosystems are protected and, where necessary and possible, restored to a healthy functioning state.

Objective #2:

Canadians and others are engaged in enjoying and learning about healthy, intact ecosystems and wild places in the park.

Ecosystem management priorities for Yoho National Park, with more detailed objectives and actions are described in the subsections below.

4.6.1 Maintaining or Restoring Ecological Processes

Parks Canada will place an emphasis on maintaining or restoring natural processes that contribute to the evolution of park ecosystems, and create the unique character of place that is the foundation of memorable visitor experiences and enjoyment.

Many processes influence the pattern and structure of park ecosystems including fire, insects, wind disturbance, erosion and deposition, animal migration and movement, predation and herbivory. These processes maintain a diverse array of habitat for wildlife, and create a distinctive, variable landscape that enhances the experience of park visitors. Interpretation and outreach programs, and citizen science and stewardship initiatives will engage people in learning about and understanding the important role that ecological processes play in maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Mountain landscapes are fragmented by their very nature. The construction of the Canadian Pacific railway, followed years later by the Trans Canada Highway, had the effect of increasing fragmentation by creating physical barriers to wildlife movement and introducing serious causes of wildlife mortality. Parks Canada and its partners will strive to restore terrestrial and aquatic connectivity and maintain conditions that allow animals to travel through the park landscape with minimal obstacles. Part of this initiative will include efforts to raise awareness among visitors and stakeholders of the challenges faced by wildlife, actions Parks Canada is taking to improve habitat connectivity, and opportunities for engaged citizens to get involved.

Objective #1:

Ecological processes are understood and active management initiatives are employed, where necessary, to ensure that these processes continue to play their traditional role in shaping park ecosystems.

Actions:

- Restore fire to the landscape by using prescribed fires and carefully managed natural fires to achieve 50% of the long-term fire cycle and restore natural vegetation characteristics in all ecosystems, as detailed in the field unit fire management plan.
- Maintain predator-prey dynamics, in part by protecting the integrity of key wildlife movement corridors in the park, and by working with the Province of British Columbia to encourage maintenance of regional wildlife movement corridors linking the park with the Beaverfoot and Blaeberry valleys.
- Develop and implement an ecological restoration program for disturbed sites, such as old road alignments and house sites near the west gate, and the depleted portions of Ottetail gravel pit.
- Incorporate meaningful opportunities for visitor experience and education into ecosystem research, monitoring and restoration programs.
- Improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on park ecosystems, and develop adaptation strategies to minimize these impacts.
- Develop education messages at key sites to communicate messages about a changing climate and the associated effects on wildlife and vegetation.

Objective #2:

Connectivity of terrestrial and aquatic habitat is maintained, and where impaired, is restored through active management and in cooperation with external agencies and interested members of the public.

Actions:

- Contribute to the maintenance and restoration of secure wildlife corridors at continental (Yellowstone to Yukon) and regional scales (Beaverfoot – Kicking Horse – Amiskwi – Blaeberry valleys), and develop content and themes for inclusion in interpretive programs and visitor information in the park.
- Repair barriers to fish movement, such as poorly designed or faulty culverts, in order to restore natural connectivity of aquatic ecosystems in streams, rivers and wetlands.

- Develop visitor nodes and interpretation products for both visitors and external audiences that raise awareness of wildlife movement patterns, barriers to dispersal, and efforts to improve aquatic and terrestrial connectivity.
- Engage volunteers to assist in restoration activities.
- Reduce wildlife mortality on roads and railways within the park.

4.6.2 Grizzly Bears

Grizzly bears are wide-ranging species requiring a variety of habitat types throughout the year. Rarely does a single jurisdiction provide all the habitat needs for this species. In Yoho National Park, grizzly bears are part of a larger regional population shared with neighbouring parks and adjacent lands in British Columbia and Alberta. Grizzly bear habitat within this ecosystem is naturally fragmented by large areas of rock and ice. Roads, railways, communities and other developments also fragment some of the best valley bottom habitat.

Grizzly Bear Conservation

Grizzly bears are an enduring symbol of the wilderness of the Canadian Rockies. 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.

The survival of reproductive females is the key factor affecting population persistence especially in light of research findings showing that the mountain park grizzly bear population has the lowest reproductive rate documented for this species in North America.

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 Canadian Rockies.

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. Parks Canada will apply these concepts, in conjunction with the most recent knowledge of bear habitat use and behaviour in the mountain parks, in order to ensure a sustainable, viable population of grizzly bears, and provide visitors with the opportunity for wilderness travel in a landscape also occupied by bears.

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. Areas with high habitat security are also likely to be high quality environments for wilderness recreation. Managing for habitat security will help to maintain grizzly bears, while also maintaining 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.

Parks Canada 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 six (6) landscape management units (LMUs) that are roughly equivalent in size to the area of a single female grizzly's home range (see Map 3, Landscape Management Units in Yoho National Park). Parks Canada will strive to maintain habitat security in each of these landscape management units (Appendix 2, Grizzly Bear Habitat Security Estimates by Landscape Management Units).

Objective #1:
Conflict between bears and humans is minimized.

Actions:

- Use the Mountain Parks' Trail and Back Country Facility Design Guidelines to support backcountry use while minimising the risk of human-wildlife conflicts.
- Restrict off-trail travel by commercial groups in high quality grizzly habitat, in order to minimize conflict and maintain habitat security.
- Use educational messages at trailheads, and in electronic and print media, to discourage independent visitors from travelling off-trail in high quality habitat.
- Provide educational programming and develop electronic and print media to increase visitor understanding of bear ecology, and to influence visitor behaviour on how to co-exist with bears.

Objective #2:
Grizzly bear mortality due to unnatural causes, such as collisions with motor vehicles and trains, is minimized.

Actions:

- Work with Canadian Pacific to reduce the occurrence of food attractants along the railway, in order to reduce the risk of bear-train collisions, and to examine other potential solutions to wildlife mortality on the tracks.
- Plan highway mitigations to minimize wildlife mortality in anticipation of potential upgrading along the Trans Canada Highway.

Objective #3:
Grizzly bears are able to safely access and use high quality habitat.

Actions:

- Consider using seasonal closures or temporarily controlling recreational use in areas important for grizzly feeding and travel, minimize food attractants, and educate visitors on risk management in bear country.
- Maintain wilderness recreation opportunities geared toward self-reliant travel with minimal infrastructure in areas with high habitat security.
- Work with adjacent land managers to maintain, and where possible improve, habitat connectivity through secure high quality corridors, allowing exchange between adjacent grizzly bear populations.
- Maintain large, natural landscapes that support healthy grizzly bear populations and provide opportunities for wilderness recreation.

4.6.3 Protecting the Full Complement of Native Species

Yoho National Park is home to a diverse community of plants and animals. Outstanding opportunities to see mountain wildlife and forest communities, including mountain goats and alpine larch forest, draw many visitors to the park. The only two species in the park to be listed under Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* are the western toad (*Bufo boreas*) and the westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*), BC population, which are both ranked as Special Concern. Parks Canada continues to gather data on the distribution of these species in the park.

Objective #1:

All native species that are expected to occur in Yoho National Park continue to persist at viable population levels.

Actions:

- Collaborate with stakeholders to implement proactive measures that will keep species from being added to Canada's list of threatened and endangered mountain species.
- Investigate opportunities to improve wildlife viewing opportunities, while decreasing the potential for habituation, disturbance, and human-wildlife conflict.

Objective # 2:

The occurrence and distribution of non-native species that are invasive, or threaten the stability of native species populations, is reduced.

Actions:

- 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.
- Prevent the introduction of new non-native species and engage park visitors and volunteers in efforts to control existing non-native species that are invasive, or harmful to native species.

5. AREA CONCEPTS

5.1 The Kicking Horse Corridor

5.1.1 Future Best

The Kicking Horse corridor is a key link in an east-west journey through the mountain parks. From Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site at the British Columbia-Alberta border, visitors travel along the Trans Canada Highway through the valley of the Kicking Horse Canadian Heritage River, part of the *Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape*.

The corridor offers many opportunities for visitors to explore and connect in a personal way to one of the most important nation-building episodes in the history of Canada. As the eastern anchor of the *Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape* the corridor includes numerous tangible historic resources such as sections of the original rail grade, a wooden trestle, the Spiral Tunnels, a stone bake oven and archaeological sites that provide visitors with an evocative sense of the past. Remnants of historic mining operations on the slopes and cliffs of Mount Field and Mount Stephen add to the depth of this heritage corridor. Deer Lodge cabin – the park’s first warden patrol cabin – is another important historic structure in this landscape. New collaborative promotional efforts and various anniversary celebrations throughout the corridor help to raise awareness and knit together the elements that give this cultural landscape meaning.

Field (see section 5.2), with its locally owned shops, restaurants, inns and guest houses, provides visitors with unique opportunities to mingle with residents and learn about the rich history of the area. The Visitor Reception Centre, operated in partnership with Travel Alberta, provides engaging exhibits on the Burgess Shale and other park features, and trip planning information for park visitors. Field’s active rail yard and the interpretation viewpoint overlooking the famous Spiral Tunnels fascinate railway buffs.

Outdoor recreation enthusiasts (hikers, campers, mountain bikers, ice and mountain climbers, cross-country skiers, and paddlers) all appreciate the staging services provided in the community of Field, or at the numerous day use areas, trailheads and campsites along the corridor.

5.1.2 Current Situation

Strengths

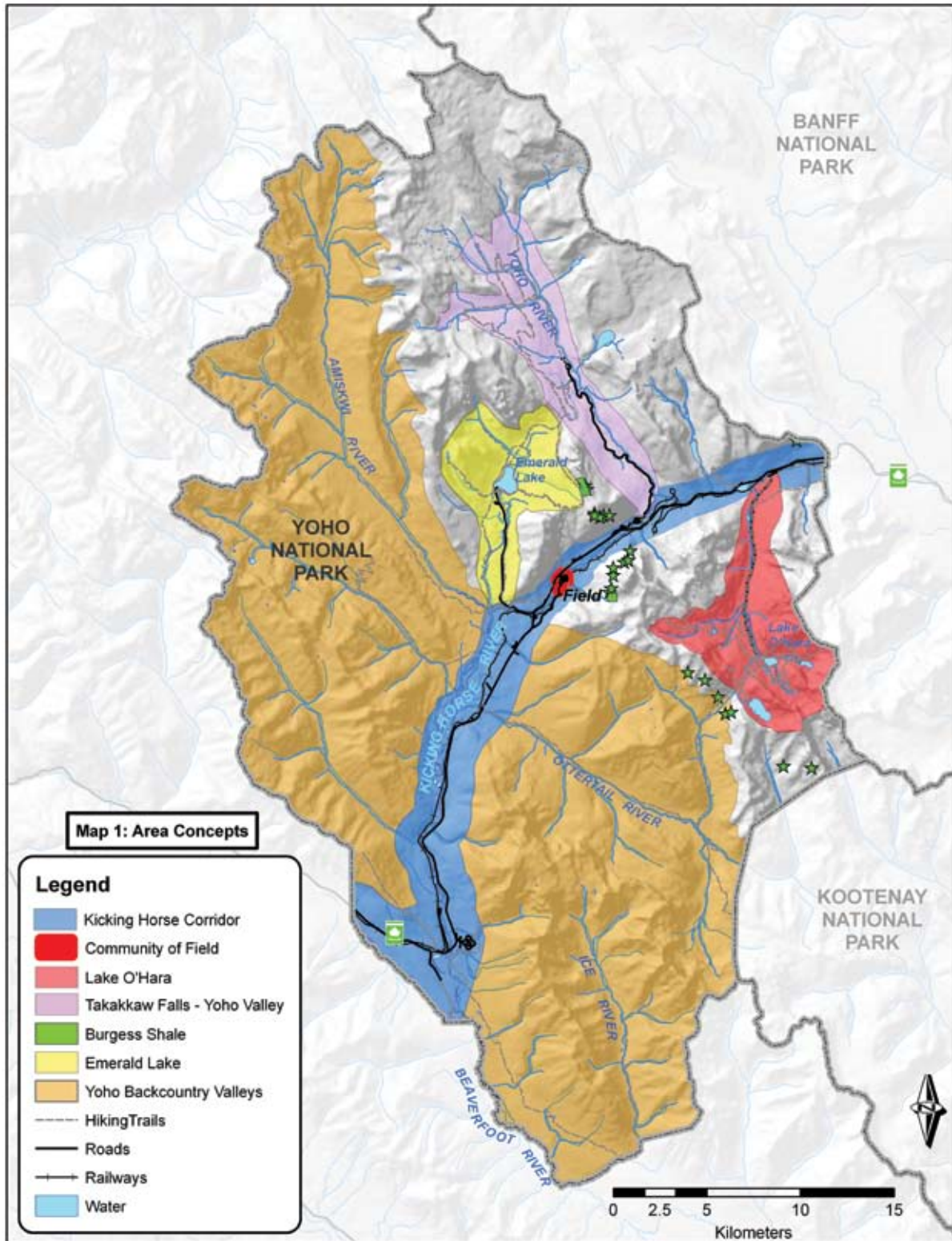
All of the park’s four (4) frontcountry campgrounds are located along this corridor: Kicking Horse (88 sites), Monarch (44 sites), Chancellor Peak (62 sites), and Hoodoo Creek (30 sites).

Field is a unique focal point for park information, roofed accommodation and services, and also includes several heritage buildings. Outside Field, two outlying commercial accommodations – Cathedral Mountain Lodge and West Louise Lodge – provide alternatives to camping.

A number of popular day use areas are located along the Kicking Horse Corridor, including the Spiral Tunnels viewpoint, the Great Divide (accessible by foot, bike or ski on the old 1A Highway), the Natural Bridge, Finn Creek and Faeder Lake picnic areas, and the Wapta Falls access road.

Upgrades to the Trans Canada Highway in Banff to the border with Yoho will improve the driving experience and may provide opportunities to renew the sense of arrival to Yoho at its east entrance.

Along this route are trailheads for several other popular destinations, including two historic fire lookouts (Mount Hunter and Paget Peak), Sherbrooke Lake, Wapta Falls, and the Hoodoos. Trailheads for several potential multi-day trips into backcountry valleys are also located along this corridor. Other special features along the corridor



Map 1: Planning Areas in Yoho National Park

include the Leancoil Marsh, Ottortail wetlands, Deerlodge cabin, and Deerlodge Pond.

The Kicking Horse River can be paddled by experienced canoeists or kayakers from Kicking Horse Campground to Field, and from the Amiskwi confluence below the Natural Bridge to Chancellor Peak campground.

Challenges

The Kicking Horse Corridor contains the majority of the montane habitat in the park and provides important winter range for ungulates. It is also an important wildlife movement corridor linking the Beaverfoot Valley with the Amiskwi and Blaeberry valleys to the north, and the Bow Valley to the east. This movement corridor is constricted by topography and built facilities around Field and at the base of the Field Hill near Monarch and Kicking Horse Campgrounds.

Many travellers on the Trans Canada Highway pass through the park without stopping. Many of these travellers may not be aware that they are passing through Yoho National Park and Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site.

With the exception of a small parking area at the Natural Bridge, none of the day use areas along the corridor are maintained or cleared of snow in the winter.

The West Louise Lodge dominates the landscape at Wapta Lake in Kicking Horse Pass and does not meet current guidelines for architectural design and site planning. The facility is adjacent to the highway on land that may be required to support future upgrades on the Trans Canada Highway.

Increasing truck traffic, along with railway traffic, increases the risk of accidents that could release hazardous materials into park ecosystems. Wildlife mortality on the highway and railway is a concern, and grain spillage along the railway continues to be an attractant to various kinds of wildlife.

There are no formal put-in locations for canoes and kayaks that are easily accessible to the public along the Kicking Horse River. A gravel road providing access to a former access location below the Natural Bridge is now closed to motor vehicles due to public safety concerns with the bridge there.

5.1.3 Objectives:

- An increased percentage of travellers on the Trans Canada Highway choose to stop in the park for a “View from the Edge” or a “Step into the Wild”, especially during the winter and shoulder seasons.
- The cultural resources of the corridor are celebrated as part of the *Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape* throughout the park, and in the communities of Field and Golden, Revelstoke and Craigellachie.
- Infrastructure and development is managed to protect key ecological values, such as water, wetland habitat, winter range for ungulates, and wildlife movement corridors through the Kicking Horse Valley.

5.1.4 Key Actions

- Improve the sense of arrival and welcome upon entering the park. Provide a link with Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site and the *Kicking Horse to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape* at the east entrance. At the west entrance, improve the sense of arrival to Yoho National Park, the Kicking Horse Canadian Heritage River, and the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.
- Develop and implement a communication strategy to raise the profile of cultural heritage along the corridor, especially among those seeking “Drive Through Awareness” experiences including more prominent signage for Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site.
- Extend the open season for selected day use areas to improve the experience of those seeking a “View from the Edge”.
- Identify opportunities to enhance and cluster roadside camping and day use areas in anticipation of future upgrades on the Trans Canada Highway. Integrate new or enhanced opportunities with planning for highway upgrades where possible.
- Allow the lease and associated licenses of occupation for West Louise Lodge to expire at the end of the current term on December 31, 2025.
- Maintain the closure of the former 1-A Highway between the Lake O’Hara Road and the border of Banff National Park in order to support wildlife movement through the Kicking Horse Pass corridor.
- Engage the paddling community to consider ways to improve access to the Kicking Horse River for canoes and kayaks.
- Renew the Natural Bridge day use area, including new washroom facilities and updated interpretive exhibits.
- Enhance wildlife viewing opportunities by creating a wetland observation area, either at Leancoil Marsh or Deerlodge Pond.
- Maintain natural habitat in critical pinch points within the Kicking Horse wildlife corridor, specifically around the town of Field, and around the Monarch, Kicking Horse and Chancellor Peak campgrounds.
- Create visitor experience opportunities to observe and learn about prescribed fires in conjunction with burns planned in the valley (e.g. Mount King and Ottertail junction), as well as completed burns (e.g. Hoodoos in 2003).

5.2 The Community of Field

5.2.1 Future Best

The community of Field is a model of a safe, self-sustaining mountain village that respects the ecological and cultural importance of its natural park setting. Both visitors and residents appreciate the tranquil beauty of Field, where the natural landscape dominates the visual experience.

Field is a model of excellence in environmental stewardship – a place where the quality of life of its residents and the satisfaction of visitors is valued. Residents welcome their role in protecting the park for future generations and in helping visitors learn about the park.

Residents and visitors utilize a mix of small commercial operations that meet their basic needs and support the national park experience. Business owners are committed to providing high quality, personalized service. An eclectic mix of simple homes and commercial buildings define the village's unique architecture. Select heritage buildings are protected, while the style of new buildings reflects the natural surroundings and community heritage. Links to the railway and past logging and mining activity are well interpreted, as are the ecological values of the area. Field is a place that reflects park values and supports the well being of residents and of visitors to Yoho National Park.

Summer visitors use Field as a base for hiking to mountain vistas and alpine lakes, and for guided trips to the Burgess Shale sites, while climbers test themselves on challenging mountain terrain, both in winter and in summer. In winter, visitors and locals alike take advantage of spectacular cross-country skiing adjacent to the community.



Parks Canada / C. Siddal

5.2.2 Current Situation

Strengths

Field is located in a spectacular setting, on an alluvial fan at the base of Mount Stephen in Yoho National Park. The village sits at the confluence of Stephen Creek and the Kicking Horse River, and is surrounded by high, steep-sided peaks which give it a dramatic and alluring backdrop.

Field is the main staging area for visitors to Yoho National Park. The community offers a mix of accommodations and services that caters to those seeking “View from the Edge” and “Step into the Wild” experiences.

Visitors seeking “Immersion in Mountain Wilderness” can find provisions in Field at the outset of their trip, or seek the comforts of civilization at the end of an excursion. Even visitors on a “Drive Through Awareness” experience may stop in Field for lunch or to spend the night.

Limits to commercial growth, zoning, and boundaries have been established for Field, which help to maintain the unique character of the community.

The Field Community Plan (1999) allows for an increase in commercial development from the existing 2025 m² of commercial space, to a maximum of 5055 m². The additional 3030 m² of available commercial space includes provisions for a hostel, a new lodge, as well as expansion of the current lodge, all of which can provide new opportunities for visitors to the park.

Challenges

Most of the heritage buildings in Field are privately owned, limiting the role of Parks Canada in ensuring their preservation. An inventory of all heritage buildings has been completed, and lessees are encouraged to protect this heritage.

The community is situated at a pinch point in the Kicking Horse wildlife corridor. The ability of wildlife to move through the region, including through the community of Field, is one of the most important ecological issues in the Kicking Horse River Valley.

The population of Field has shifted over the years, in response to changes in the mining, forestry, railway and tourism industries, from a high of over 400 to a current low of approximately 250 people. The declining population has had an impact on affordability in certain areas, such as utility fees.

Commercial development opportunities exist, but in recent years there has been limited interest expressed by businesses willing to invest.

5.2.3 Objectives:

- Field is a vibrant, thriving community where residents welcome visitors to experience the wonders of the park.
- Field provides visitors with opportunities for memorable experiences within the community itself and as a staging point for exploration of the park.
- The small scale of the community and limits to growth contribute to ecological objectives and the community’s unique sense of place.
- Responsible growth management ensures the community retains its small scale and strong aesthetic connection to its setting. Its heritage resources are protected.

- New residential and commercial development, consistent with guidelines and the community plan, supports the needs and interests of residents and visitors, and enhances the economic viability of the community.

5.2.4 Key Actions

- Retain Parks Canada management of the community.
- Continue to implement the Field Community Plan and implement approved character, sign, site and landscape guidelines to ensure the style and scale of Field is maintained.
- Expand the range of interpretive opportunities, including stories about the area's ecological and cultural heritage.
- Retain the limit for commercial accommodation at 255 visitors and the limit for residential growth at 425 residents. Rezone certain areas of the community to shift commercial opportunities from areas where commercial potential no longer exists.
- Maintain opportunities for effective wildlife movement adjacent to the community.
- Maintain a Parks Canada administrative centre in the community, and renew and expand the office capacity for Parks Canada staff.
- Address Parks Canada's housing and office space needs in ways that complement the community and its sustainability.
- Release available residential and commercial lots in Field, in accordance with the community plan.

5.3 Lake O'Hara

5.3.1 Future Best

Spectacular scenery, accessible solitude and incredible hiking combine to make Lake O'Hara one of the best-loved backcountry destinations in the Canadian Rockies. A well maintained network of trails leads visitors seeking day and multi-day adventure to turquoise lakes dwarfed by famed peaks.

New and returning visitors find unparalleled opportunities to hike, climb, ski, snowshoe, paint, draw or simply relax. Stands of fragrant subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce, and high alpine meadows dotted with wildflowers, provide inspiration to all who visit during the short summer season. In fall the golden glow of the larches is a feature attraction, while in winter the area offers some of the best, earliest and latest alpine ski touring anywhere.

The Lake O'Hara area continues to be strictly controlled. Visitors access the area on foot, ski or snowshoe, or travel via shuttle bus, outfitted with new interpretive media and staffed by informed drivers. Bicycles and private motor vehicle access are not

permitted. These important conservation measures help preserve Lake O'Hara's renowned landscape, peace and tranquility.

Visitors to this little bit of paradise find a landscape little changed from the time when the Canadian Pacific Railway built the Wiwaxy Cabin and the Elizabeth Parker Hut to accommodate its first alpine tourists. Abbott Pass Refuge Cabin National Historic Site, significant for its connection to Canada's alpine history, sits high above the lake. Now operated by the Alpine Club of Canada, these historic structures provide rustic accommodations and welcome a new generation of hikers, climbers and skiers. For campers there is a small Parks Canada-run campground, and for those seeking more luxurious accommodation, the elegant, timeless Lake O'Hara Lodge. No matter the accommodation, all offer authentic immersion in true mountain wilderness.

For those who want to give something in return for these memorable experiences, opportunities to help protect this fragile alpine environment are available through the efforts of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club and Parks Canada.

5.3.2 Current Situation

Strengths

Nestled amid the high peaks of the continental divide, Lake O'Hara is renowned for its stunning mountain scenery, its classic alpine hikes and its winter skiing opportunities.

The area features more than two dozen lakes set in the shadow of massive, quartzite and limestone cliffs in the Main Ranges of the Canadian Rockies.

High above the lake, on the boundary of adjoining Banff National Park, sits the impressive stone Abbott Pass Refuge Cabin National Historic Site.

Abundant moisture ensures superb skiing conditions in winter, and the elevation provides for the earliest and latest ski touring in the park.

The historic Wiwaxy Cabin and Elizabeth Parker hut, now operated by the Alpine Club of Canada, offer rustic accommodation to 24 overnight guests in a beautiful meadow located a short walk from the lake.

The Lake O'Hara Lodge and 30-site campground operated by Parks Canada complete the suite of available and diverse accommodation.

Le Relais day shelter, operated by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, provides information and refreshments for visitors. There is also a Parks Canada patrol cabin at the lake.

The 11-kilometre gravel road to the lake is closed to private vehicles and bicycles. During the summer months a shuttle bus operates with a quota and reservation system transporting up to 42 day users plus overnight guests staying at the campground and huts. A separate bus provides access for guests of the lodge.

Seasonal closures on the McArthur Valley route, the Odaray Prospect and Odaray Plateau, and a voluntary trail restriction on the Odaray Highline, were put into place in the 1990s to address serious bear-human conflicts that were occurring in this area. These closures are intended to protect people and bears and to improve habitat

connectivity. Since instituted, grizzly bears continue to move through these key travel corridors, and there have been no significant bear-human conflicts in the area.

Challenges

The reservation system operates by telephone only. Many potential visitors are frustrated by the difficulty of making reservations.

The quota system means that not everyone who wants to visit Lake O'Hara can do so. Physical limitations or time restrictions may not allow these visitors to hike to the lake.

Compliance with trail closures and voluntary restrictions has not been consistently monitored and evaluated. The effectiveness of closures for improving wildlife use and movement through the McArthur Pass – Oday Plateau area is not fully understood.

5.3.3 Objectives:

- Visitors experience exceptional hiking, skiing and snowshoeing on well-maintained trails designed to protect the fragile alpine environment.
- Effective wildlife corridors are maintained throughout the Lake O'Hara area, connecting important habitat in the Ottertail Valley with Kicking Horse Pass.
- Visitors appreciate, understand and support management actions taken to control access and protect Lake O'Hara's unique character.
- Visitors are offered new and enhanced opportunities to learn about Lake O'Hara's natural and cultural resources and are motivated to contribute to their conservation.

5.3.4 Key Actions

- Continue to offer unparalleled opportunities for authentic experiencers and rejuvenators seeking "Step into the Wild" and "Immersion in Mountain Wilderness" experiences.
- Monitor and analyze wildlife movement and compliance with trail closures and restrictions (especially on the Oday Highline); adjust and act on findings.
- Make improvements to the shuttle bus reservation system.
- Review access and quotas to the Lake O'Hara area for possibilities to improve visitor experience while maintaining ecological objectives for the area.
- Maintain unlimited walk-in access in summer and ski and snowshoe access in winter.
- Introduce a new generation of backcountry hikers, climbers and skiers to Lake O'Hara through outreach activities.

- Explore the potential to improve the shuttle bus system by enhancing the on-board interpretation program, and encouraging the use of more fuel-efficient and quieter buses.
- Maintain the current trail system, consistent with Parks Canada's standards, historic techniques and the aesthetic character of the area.
- Update trip planning information, interpretive exhibits, brochures and trail maps to respond to new technology and evolving visitor needs, and to clearly explain the special nature of Lake O'Hara.
- Maintain the current range and capacity of overnight accommodation at Lake O'Hara
- Explore new and value-added enhancements in collaboration with partners and leaseholders.

5.4 Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley

5.4.1 Future Best

Easily reached by road from the Kicking Horse corridor, Takakkaw Falls and the Yoho Valley provide an exciting experience for all visitors. Pre-trip information about the Yoho Valley Road and the landscape it traverses creates a sense of anticipation and curiosity for visitors as they enter the valley. On the dramatic drive alongside the Kicking Horse and Yoho rivers, travellers pass between the limestone cliffs of Mount Ogden and the lush sub-alpine forests and avalanche slopes of Mount Wapta, negotiating a unique set of switchbacks en route.



Parks Canada / C. Siddal

At the end of the Yoho Valley Road, visitors are greeted by an impressive view of Takakkaw Falls, one of the highest waterfalls in Canada. A short trail provides easy access to a viewpoint closer to the base of the falls.

The Takakkaw Falls walk-in campground provides 35 peaceful, scenic campsites for those wishing to linger near the falls. Most of the campsites provide a view of the falls, and their sound is ever present. Due to its vicinity to the road, this campground provides an excellent introduction to wilderness camping, providing an opportunity for new audiences to take a “Step into the Wild”.

For visitors seeking “Immersion in Mountain Wilderness”, the falls provide a jumping-off point for a number of premier hiking trips on well maintained trails. Day hikers gravitate to the Iceline Trail for its panoramic valley views and the chance to get up close to the Emerald Glacier and its milky tarns. Longer trips into the backcountry are supported by rustic campgrounds and the historic accommodations at Twin Falls Tea House National Historic Site and the Stanley Mitchell Hut. Attractions for hikers embarking on an overnight trip include numerous waterfalls, glaciated peaks, and breathtaking highpoints like the Whaleback.

In the winter, an increasing number of backcountry skiers travel the road en route to or from the Stanley Mitchell Hut and the Wapta Icefield.

5.4.2 Current Situation

Strengths

Takakkaw Falls is an iconic feature attraction that is within easy reach for day use visitors.

The Yoho Valley Road, joining the Trans Canada Highway with Takakkaw Falls, was resurfaced in 2009 and is currently in excellent condition.

Picnic and washroom facilities are conveniently located, adjacent to the parking lot.

A short, paved walking trail, suitable for wheel-chair access, leads to a viewpoint near the base of the falls, providing a classic “View from the Edge” experience for many park visitors.

For visitors seeking “Immersion in Mountain Wilderness” or a “Step into the Wild” experience, the day use area is also the departure point for a number of spectacular day hikes and multi-day excursions into the backcountry of the Yoho and Little Yoho valleys, or over Yoho Pass into the Emerald Lake basin.

The campground is walk-in only, which helps to maintain an intimate camping atmosphere influenced mainly by the power of the nearby falls. Small carts are provided so campers can easily load their gear the 400 metres to the campground.

The Laughing Falls, Twin Falls, and Little Yoho backcountry campgrounds provide several overnight options for backcountry travellers.

There is a small hostel located a short walk from the falls, which caters to those seeking basic roofed accommodation.

Roofed accommodation is also available in the backcountry, at the Stanley Mitchell Hut, which accommodates 26 people in summer and 22 in winter, and the Twin Falls Tea House, which accommodates 15 overnight guests.

Two day use areas on the Yoho Valley Road – Meeting of the Waters, at the confluence of the Yoho and Kicking Horse Rivers, and the Upper Spiral Tunnel Viewpoint – provide unique “View from the Edge” experiences.

Challenges

The road and parking areas at Takakkaw Falls can become congested during peak times in the summer.

Periodic maintenance of vegetation is required in order to ensure that trees near the Spiral Tunnels portal, or at the viewpoint itself, do not obscure the view of the tunnels. The view of the river confluence at the Meeting of the Waters day use area is partially obscured by trees.

The Yoho Valley road is not ploughed in the winter, adding an extra 13 km to the ski trip into the valley. At 23 km one way, a trip to the Stanley Mitchell Hut is a challenge for all but the most fit.

Maintenance of strolling trails, vegetation and other basic facilities is lacking.

A narrow wildlife corridor runs through the Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley area that provides an important link between Kiwetinok Pass and Sherbrooke Creek. The day use area, campground, road, and several trails lie within this pinch point.

5.4.3 Objectives:

- Day use facilities are upgraded to meet the needs of current and future users.
- Visitors are encouraged to take a “Step into the Wild” on the trails in the Yoho Valley.
- Wildlife can move effectively through natural habitat corridors in the Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley area, linking Kiwetinok Pass and Sherbrooke Creek.
- The Yoho Valley Road experience is enhanced through provision of pre-trip information, attention to quality facilities, and the availability of alternative transportation options.

5.4.4 Key Actions

- Develop trip planning information that will help to increase visitor awareness of the unique character of the valley before they embark on the Yoho Valley Road.
- Upgrade the day use area, trails, and bridges to contemporary standards, and improve trailhead information to communicate the full range of opportunities that can be pursued from Takakkaw Falls.

- Confine development around Takakkaw Falls to the existing developed footprint in an effort to retain sufficient habitat to allow wildlife movement through this narrow pinch point.
- Maintain trails in the Yoho Valley to a high standard in order to accommodate the popularity of this area for hiking.
- Consider the addition of a yurt or other temporary winter warm-up shelter to support ski touring parties on their way to or from the Stanley Mitchell Hut and Wapta Icefield, to be located within the developed portion of the day use area.
- Encourage the development of a public transportation system between Field and Takakkaw Falls, to provide a new experience and reduce vehicle congestion.
- Manage vegetation to improve and maintain views at the Meeting of the Waters and Spiral Tunnel Viewpoint day use areas.
- Work with Canadian Pacific to maintain open views around the portals of the Spiral Tunnels so they remain visible from the day use area.

5.5 Emerald Lake

5.5.1 Future Best

Visitors depart the Trans Canada Highway and follow a leisurely, scenic drive leading to Emerald Lake, one of the iconic destinations of the Canadian Rockies. Surrounded by forest-covered slopes and distinctive mountain peaks, the lake and shoreline area provide peaceful opportunities for walking and paddling, and in winter, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. The more adventurous set off into the park's backcountry, while those seeking leisure relax or dine in the Emerald Lake Lodge. An enjoyable trail encircles the lake, allowing visitors to experience an ever-changing panorama of lake and mountain scenery.

Emerald Lake also serves as a breathtaking introduction to more challenging day hikes and backcountry trips to rewarding destinations such as the Wapta Highline and Burgess Pass, Hamilton Lake, Emerald Basin, and over Yoho Pass to the Iceline Trail and Takakkaw Falls in the Yoho Valley. All-season trails for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing provide improved linkages between Emerald Lake and the community of Field.

A public transportation system, with onboard interpretation, provides an alternative means of visiting Emerald Lake. This, together with improved parking facilities at the lake, has reduced vehicle congestion. Transportation at the lake and lodge is managed so as to minimize its impact on lakeside experiences.

Emerald Lake draws regional visitors from Alberta and British Columbia for its excellent Nordic skiing. Celebrations and special events increase the profile of this Nordic skiing jewel.

Local and regional visitors enjoy a special relationship with Emerald Lake, returning frequently to reconnect with this accessible yet beautiful destination.

5.5.2 Current Situation

Strengths

Emerald Lake Lodge is situated on a wooded moraine at the south end of the lake. The lodge provides luxury accommodation and fine dining. It includes two restaurants that are open to the public.

Staff accommodation and overnight parking for lodge guests is located off-site, approximately 1 km south of the lake. Guests are shuttled from this parking area to their rooms.

The area contains superb winter opportunities. Ski trails are track set on the old horse trail on the west side of the lake, and around the alluvial fan at the back of the lake. The “Connector Trail” that links Emerald Lake to the Tally-Ho trail between Field and the Natural Bridge is also track set. The lakeshore trail and Emerald River trail are used for snowshoeing in the winter.

Emerald Lake Sports is a quaint gift shop and concession that rents canoes and rowboats in summer and cross-country skis and snowshoes in winter, allowing many people without their own gear to take a “Step Into the Wild”.

The lakeshore trail includes an interpretive exhibit on the Burgess Shale and a spotting scope that can be used to view the quarries on Fossil Ridge. The World Heritage Site plaque for the Burgess Shale is also located here.

Emerald Lake is the most popular day use area in the park. Visitors include independent travellers, and a large component of commercial travellers arriving on tour buses. Most visitors are seeking a “View from the Edge” or “Step into the Wild” experience.

Many local residents of Field frequent the lake, which is a popular place to ski, hike, paddle and fish. The Tally-Ho bike trail links Field with the lower part of the Emerald Lake road.

Challenges

The day use parking area is located at the edge of the lake with no visual buffer separating traffic from people enjoying the lake. Vehicle noise from tour buses, private vehicles, and shuttle vans and golf carts used to ferry lodge guests and their luggage, drifts across the lake causing frequent disturbance for those seeking peace and quiet.

Vehicle congestion and visitor crowding around the lakeshore occur frequently during the busy summer season. The parking area is too small to accommodate all of the vehicles at peak times.

The “Connector Trail” has not been constructed for summer use. Cyclists travelling from Field on the Tally-Ho trail must exit onto the Emerald Lake Road for the last 5.5 km to Emerald Lake. The Emerald River hiking trail is seldom used during summer.

5.5.3 Objectives:

- The experience of users at or on the lake is improved through a reduction of impacts related to motor vehicle traffic and congestion.
- All-season trail connections between Emerald Lake and Field are improved.
- The awareness of Emerald Lake as a winter recreational destination is increased.
- More visitors choose to “Step into the Wild” by venturing beyond the immediate lakeshore experience.

5.5.4 Key Actions:

- Redevelop the parking area to create a setback from the lakeshore, and create a visual and sound buffer between vehicles and visitors on the lake, lakeside trail and viewing areas. Engage a landscape architect to design an appropriate solution.
- Encourage Emerald Lake Lodge to use electric vehicles for passenger and luggage shuttles in order to restore quiet conditions to the lodge and lake.
- Upgrade trailhead information at the lake to encourage gentle explorers and rejuvenators to explore beyond the scenic lakeshore, and to provide sufficient details about the longer hikes to enable authentic experiencers to be properly prepared.
- Improve trail connections between Field and Emerald Lake by exploring the potential to upgrade existing trails for skiing, hiking and mountain biking.
- Work with partners to increase the profile of cross country skiing and snowshoeing opportunities through promotion and special events.
- Maintain trails in the Emerald Lake area to a high standard in order to accommodate the popularity of this area for hiking, and maintain wheelchair access along the west side to the bridge on the north side of the lake.
- Encourage and support the development of public transportation options linking Field with Emerald Lake.
- Improve the profile of Emerald Lake as a centre for high-quality, consistent Nordic skiing.

5.6 The Burgess Shale

5.6.1 Future Best

High above the Kicking Horse corridor, the Burgess Shale area provides strong protection for globally significant fossils, while ensuring visitors the opportunity to partake in outstanding science hikes guided by expert partners and compelling interpretive hikes led by experienced Parks Canada interpreters. Standing amid one

of the world's most important fossil localities surrounded by mountain peaks, visitors experience a sense of awe.

For those not able to undertake the challenging hike to the fossil sites, state-of-the-art virtual tours, digital media and off-site exhibits provide an opportunity to experience the fascinating story of early animal life preserved in these Cambrian rocks.

Researchers continue to investigate Burgess Shale sites, thus contributing new knowledge and understanding to the story of the evolution of life on earth.

5.6.2 Current Situation

Strengths

The Burgess Shale planning area includes all known locations of Burgess Shale type fossils within Yoho and Kootenay national parks. There are more than 15 recorded fossil sites, meaning that the potential for additional scientific discovery is significant.

The fossil bearing strata outcrop at fairly high elevations throughout the high peaks of the Canadian Rockies along the continental divide. This provides a certain level of protection from fossil collectors.

The main sites are the Walcott and Raymond Quarries on Fossil Ridge between Mount Field and Mount Wapta above Emerald Lake, and the Trilobite Beds on the southwest face of Mount Stephen. Both of these sites are in relatively close proximity to other popular visitor localities in Field and Emerald Lake.

The Burgess Shale fossils are of international significance, consisting of more than 150 species of remarkably preserved marine animals from the middle Cambrian period, 505 million years ago. It is recognized as one of the most significant fossil sites in the world, and was designated a World Heritage Site in 1980. Protection and presentation of the sites and fossil collections is an international obligation.

The most extensive palaeontological research and collection efforts on the Burgess Shale were undertaken by Charles D. Walcott of the Smithsonian Institution (1909 – 1925) and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) (1975 – 2000). The ROM and others continue to investigate and there remains considerable scope for new discoveries and increased understanding of the Burgess Shale fauna and its geological setting.

Visitors who are unable to take the challenging hikes to the Trilobite Beds or Walcott Quarry can learn about the Burgess Shale through interpretive exhibits located at the Field Visitor Reception Centre, and at Emerald Lake.

Monitoring by hiking guides, uniformed Parks Canada staff, and by remote surveillance has reduced the risk of theft from the two main sites.

A very large collection of fossils has been removed from the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen. Most of these fossils are curated at a small number of institutions, and they remain available for continuing study.

Challenges

The Burgess Shale rocks and fossils are vulnerable to theft and vandalism (graffiti), and to abrasion caused by rocks shifting under people's feet. For these reasons, Burgess Shale sites in Yoho and Kootenay are protected as Zone I areas and visitor access to the two main sites is closely controlled. Visitor access to the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds is permitted only through guided hikes.

Fossil protection and group management limitations mean only small groups are permitted on site at one time. This limits the number of visitors who can visit the sites in person.

Visitors attending the guided hikes tend to be highly educated and keen to learn about this important part of earth history. The challenging nature of the guided hikes means that participants must be fit and capable of hiking in steep terrain.

Many of the Burgess Shale sites have not been investigated in detail by scientists. These lesser known Burgess Shale sites are not actively monitored, and fossils remain vulnerable to theft.

5.6.3 Objectives:

- The fossils of the Burgess Shale sites within the park are protected from vandalism and theft.
- Visitors have unparalleled opportunities to “Step into the Wild” and experience the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds with qualified guides.



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- Reluctant travellers or visitors unable to visit the sites have opportunities to learn about the Burgess Shale through off-site interpretation and digital media.
- Peer-reviewed scientific research continues to increase understanding of Burgess Shale faunas, their geological context, and the nature of exquisite fossil preservation, and is incorporated in Parks Canada educational efforts.

5.6.4 Key Actions:

- Maintain restricted and closed areas around the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds, and evaluate other sites to determine if additional closures are required to protect fossil resources.
- Maintain guided access to the two main Burgess Shale sites, providing visitors with outstanding opportunities to visit and learn about an iconic palaeontological site.
- Monitor visitor satisfaction with guided hikes to the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds.
- Maintain association with the Royal Ontario Museum, and develop links with other global research institutions and individuals, as appropriate.
- With partners, develop digital media products that help to convey the importance of the Burgess Shale to off-site audiences.
- Encourage peer reviewed scientific research on Burgess Shale sites, particularly those that have been less studied.
- Permit fossil excavation on Fossil Ridge and Mount Stephen as part of legitimate scientific research only if it can be demonstrated that the research questions cannot be answered using existing fossil collections, and if research is supported by peer reviewers.

5.7 Yoho Backcountry Valleys

5.7.1 Future Best

The long, forested valleys of western and southern Yoho National Park provide many opportunities for remote wilderness adventures. Hikers, mountain bikers, snowshoers, horse-back riders and skiers experience a sense of solitude where crowds are nonexistent. Old fire roads provide a solid base for bikes, horses, and ski touring, offering trail users quality opportunities to explore deep into the heart of the mountains. Those on foot can use these roads to access hiking trails that lead out of the valley to overlooking viewpoints.

Wildlife continues to use and move through these forested valleys, finding access to important habitat with minimal disturbance from humans. Prescribed burns and natural fires have increased the complexity of the forest landscape, and diversified the range of habitat types that support native biodiversity.

Low levels of human use mean that backcountry travellers have a greater possibility of seeing wildlife such as moose or bears. The sounds of wind in the trees, of clear mountain streams, or simply silence, provide a refreshing contrast to the busy highway through the Kicking Horse corridor.

5.7.2 Current Situation

Strengths

The forested river valleys of the Ice, Amiskwi, Ottetail, and Otterhead rivers contain minimal infrastructure and old fire roads that are now used as biking and hiking trails.

The Porcupine Valley has an old, disused trail in its lower reaches, and is otherwise undeveloped.

A backcountry campground within the Ottetail valley at the junction with McArthur Creek provides the only designated overnight public facility in these valleys.

There are Parks Canada patrol cabins located in the Ice River, Ottetail River, and Amiskwi River valleys.

The Tocher Ridge fire lookout cabin is a unique heritage attraction accessible from the Otterhead River trail.

The valleys in this area provide remote, un-crowded “Step into the Wild” and “Immersion in Mountain Wilderness” experiences that allow visitors to experience solitude and physical challenge requiring self-reliance. These opportunities are becoming increasingly rare in the southern Canadian Rockies.

Minimal infrastructure and low levels of use mean that these valleys continue to provide a high degree of habitat security for grizzly bears and critical wildlife movement corridors that link with the Beaverfoot, Blaeberry, Kicking Horse and McArthur river valleys.

Challenges

Trail maintenance in some of these valleys is infrequent. Mountain biking or horse travel can be difficult in the absence of sufficient trail clearing.

There is a lack of infrastructure to support horse use, for both day riders and commercial overnight opportunities.

The former fire roads are mainly located in forested valley bottoms, and do not provide desirable hiking conditions. Scenic views are often limited.

5.7.3 Objectives:

- Visitors have opportunities to experience remoteness and solitude while travelling on foot, ski, mountain bike or horse in mountain valleys with minimal infrastructure.
- High habitat security and effective wildlife movement corridors are maintained.

5.7.4 Key Actions

- Maintain existing, basic trails (former fire roads) that allow access on foot, bicycle, and horseback, where those uses can be supported, relative to trail characteristics and ecological or visitor experience issues. Trail maintenance consisting of the periodic removal of fallen trees and encroaching vegetation, will be undertaken at a frequency sufficient to allow for the intended uses.
- Examine the potential to relocate portions of these trails, or create new hiking trails that move hikers out of the valley bottoms to more desirable areas with improved views.
- Maintain existing designated campsites in the Ottetail River valley at McArthur Creek.
- Permit random, no-trace camping in the Ice River, Otterhead, Amiskwi and Porcupine valleys.
- Evaluate the needs of horse users, and examine the feasibility of staging day use horse riding in the Ice River road area, and commercial horse packing trips in the Amiskwi valley.

6. ZONING AND WILDERNESS AREA DECLARATION

6.1 The National Park Zoning System

The zoning system is an integrated approach used to manage land and water use in a national park. The zoning plan is an important management tool that helps to support the park vision by directing development and visitor use levels to compatible areas of the park, while ensuring that rare, sensitive or exceptional ecological and cultural resources are protected.

The zoning plan for Yoho National Park is illustrated in Map 2, and the individual zones are described below. The following minor changes have been made to the zoning plan found in the *Yoho National Park of Canada Management Plan (2000)*:

- The boundaries of the Ice River Zone I area have been modified to more accurately reflect the limits of this geological feature.
- The Ottetail Flats wetland and Leancoil Marsh, formerly designated as environmentally sensitive sites, have been converted to Zone I areas.

6.1.1 Zone I – Special Preservation

The Zone I designation applies to those areas of the park that are among the very best examples of the features that characterize the natural region, or that support outstanding or rare ecological or cultural features. This zone may also be used to protect areas that are too sensitive to accommodate facility development or large



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numbers of visitors. Preservation is the primary objective. Motorized access is not permitted. Zone I areas in Yoho National Park include the Ice River Igneous Complex, the Burgess Shale fossil sites, the Ottertail Flats and the Leancoil Marsh wetlands.

The Ice River Igneous Complex is the largest igneous intrusion in the Canadian Rockies. This igneous rock unit contrasts sharply with the typical sedimentary rocks that comprise the vast majority of the Canadian Rockies. Even compared to other igneous rocks, the Ice River Igneous Complex is of relatively unusual composition, consisting of alkaline rocks such as nepheline syenite, pyroxinite and carbonatite. Blue sodalite, an uncommon mineral often sought by collectors, has been quarried from the complex just outside the park boundaries.

The Burgess Shale fossil sites, described in section 5.6, are also designated as Zone I areas. These include all the known Burgess Shale fossil sites within the Stephen and Burgess Shale formations in Yoho National Park.

The Ottertail Flats and Leancoil Marsh are relatively low elevation, montane wetlands. This is an uncommon ecosystem type in the central Canadian Rockies, and these are the two best and largest examples in the park. The boundary for the Ottertail Flats Zone I area includes the entire wetland portion along the Kicking Horse River south of the Amiskwi River confluence to Chancellor Peak Campground,

excluding the Canadian Pacific railway corridor (and a 100 m buffer adjacent to the rail corridor).

6.1.2 Zone II – Wilderness

Zone II wilderness includes large areas of natural landscape preserved in a wilderness state. These areas provide visitors an opportunity to experience nature with minimal human intrusion or built facilities. Public motorized access is not permitted.

Most of Yoho National Park is designated Zone II to ensure that large representative landscapes are maintained. Visitor facilities may include trails, bridges, backcountry campgrounds, alpine huts and backcountry patrol cabins.

6.1.3 Zone III – Natural Environment

Zone III areas are managed as natural environments that provide a range of visitor opportunities, often supported by facilities of a basic and rustic nature. Public motorized access is not permitted, however snowmobiles may be used to set Nordic ski trails, and both helicopters and snowmobiles may be used to service backcountry facilities. Facilities within Zone III areas in Yoho National Park include the Takakkaw Falls campground and day use area, Whiskey Jack hostel, Lake O'Hara Lodge, Elizabeth Parker Hut, and the Emerald Lake winter Nordic trail area.

6.1.4 Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

The Zone IV designation is applied to areas that provide a wide range of visitor activities, supported by frontcountry facilities and park roads. Public motorized



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access is one of the primary characteristics of these zones. Zone IV areas in the park include the Trans Canada Highway and Canadian Pacific railway corridors, park roads, the frontcountry campgrounds, and main day use areas.

6.1.5 Zone V – Park Services

Zone V includes those areas of a park where there is a concentration of services and built facilities. The community of Field is the only Zone V area in the park. The Zone V boundary incorporates the community boundary established in the *Field Community Plan (1999)*, and cemetery, water reservoir, and wastewater treatment plant.

6.1.6 Environmentally Sensitive Sites

This designation applies to small areas that are sensitive to development, and which require special protection. Two areas within Yoho are designated as environmentally sensitive sites:

Wapta Marsh – a relatively high elevation montane wetland located in Kicking Horse Pass. Montane wetlands are rare features on the west slope of the Canadian Rockies.

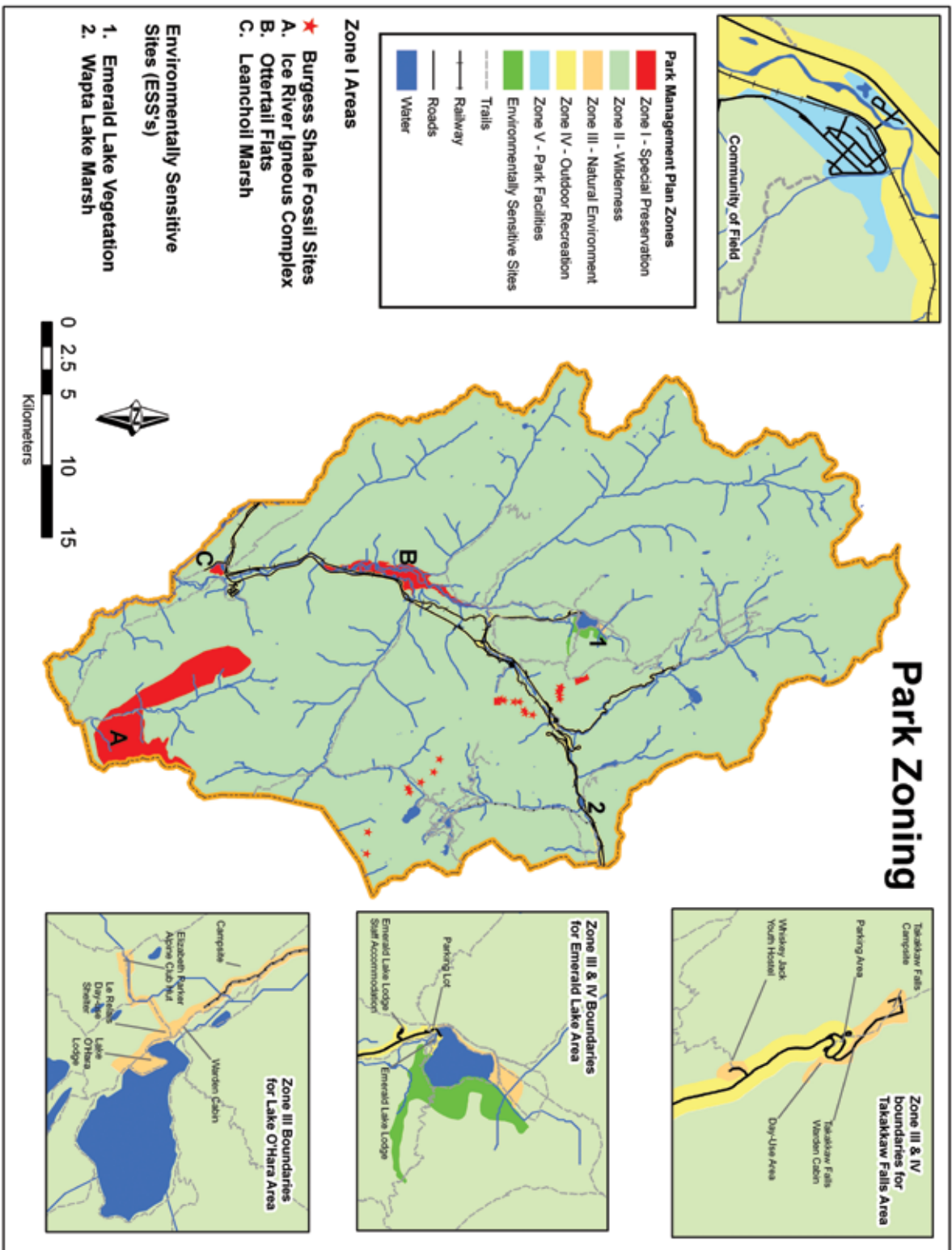
Emerald Lake vegetation – The moist microclimate around Emerald Lake supports vegetation communities unique to the mountain parks. Western hemlock, western red cedar, western yew, and grand fir are found in this habitat. Several plants that occur here are found nowhere else in the park.

6.2 Declared Wilderness Areas

Lands within national parks may be legally declared as wilderness areas under section 14 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. Declared wilderness areas demonstrate Parks Canada's commitment to Canadians that the wilderness character of these places will be respected and protected for the long-term.

Within a wilderness area, no activity that would alter the wilderness character of the place will be authorized. Infrastructure will be of a rudimentary nature, such as hiking trails and backcountry campsites. Motorized access is not permitted, except as may be required for park management purposes.

In October 2000, the majority of Yoho National Park was declared to be wilderness areas within the national park under the *National Parks Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*. Some minor adjustments to the established wilderness area boundaries may be required in future years to support the establishment of communications infrastructure.



Map 2: Park Zoning

7. MONITORING AND REPORTING

7.1 Condition Monitoring

Condition monitoring aims to measure the general state of park ecosystems, cultural resources, visitor experience and education programming. A number of key measures are tracked and rolled up into broad indicators and trends, which are reported in State of the Park reports. See Appendix 1 for more details.

The following indicators will be used in the next State of the Park report, scheduled for completion in 2013/14.

Ecological Integrity:

- Native Biodiversity
- Climate and Atmosphere
- Terrestrial Ecosystems
- Aquatic Ecosystems
- Regional Landscapes

Cultural Resources:

- Resource Condition
- Selected Management Practices

Public Appreciation and Understanding:

- Learning
- Understanding
- Engagement

Visitor Experience:

- Connection to Place
- Visitor Satisfaction
- Attendance
- Learning
- Asset Condition
- Public Safety

7.2 Management Effectiveness Monitoring

Effectiveness monitoring attempts to measure the success of management actions by determining if planned actions achieve the intended results. As the key actions outlined in this plan are implemented, progress will be tracked so that the success of management actions can be evaluated and reported in the next State of the Park Report.

8. SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Parks Canada conducted a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the *Yoho National Park of Canada Management Plan (2010)*, in accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2004)*. The purpose of the SEA is to ensure that the strategies and actions presented in the plan are reviewed for their potential environmental results, both positive and negative, and that the means for avoiding or reducing adverse impacts and enhancing positive environmental effects are identified.

The SEA considers potential cumulative effects of the plan on critical ecological indicators and attributes, such as wildlife, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and processes, by focusing on the key elements of the management plan strategies and performance measures. The SEA also considers potential cumulative impacts to cultural and palaeontological resources and visitor experience as a result of changes in the environment. The scope of the SEA considers the effects of the management plan in combination with external sources of stress.

The management plan itself is the document that outlines policy direction related to protection of the natural environment. This policy direction takes the form of objectives and key actions to address the three elements of Parks Canada's mandate – protection, education and visitor experience.

Public Engagement

The management plan review process offered considerable opportunity for public input, including opportunities for the involvement of regional Aboriginal groups. Public and expert review of the draft plan contributed significantly to the assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and resulted in a final management plan with stronger direction for protection, visitor experience and education.

Assessment and Findings

The SEA and this summary are organized by the key strategies and area concepts in the park management plan. The key strategy *Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems* contains objectives that support the conditions required for a healthy ecosystem and reflect ecological outcomes for Yoho National Park. These objectives are based on long-term monitoring programs and key issues identified in the *Yoho National Park State of the Park Report (2008)*.

For each strategy and concept, the intent is described and potential effects of implementing the strategy or area concept with respect to the plan's ecological objectives are identified.

Key Strategies

The strategy ***Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems*** sets direction for maintaining or restoring ecological integrity, and positioning healthy ecosystems as the basis for engaging visitors. This strategy focuses on achieving the desired outcomes required to reduce the impacts of the park management plan on ecological integrity. Key elements of this strategy include:

Maintaining or restoring ecosystem connectivity:

The management plan recognizes that development of transportation networks and community development has fragmented the landscape and inadvertently created physical barriers to wildlife and aquatic movement in certain areas throughout the valley bottom. Parks Canada will maintain and/or restore wildlife movement to improve connectivity through transportation corridors and reduce human caused mortality. This will reduce the impacts of the physical barriers and the cumulative impacts to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem connectivity. These measures are expected to enhance ecological integrity.

Grizzly bears:

This is a species of special concern and an important indicator species in all the mountain parks. The management plan and State of the Park Report describe securing habitat in land management units and reducing bear-human conflicts and human-caused mortality as a means of maintaining stable populations within Yoho National Park. The *Zoning and Wilderness Area Declaration* section supports the commitment to maintain large natural areas throughout the park with designations under the *Canada National Parks Act*. With these measures in place, cumulative impacts of the plan are expected to maintain or improve conditions for grizzly bears and other wildlife species.

Ecosystem Processes:

Through the management plan, Parks Canada will maintain or restore natural ecosystems that contribute to long-term ecological health at the park and regional level. Key directions include implementing prescribed fires and managing natural fires to attain natural vegetation mosaics.

Protecting the full complement of native species:

Yoho National Park is home to a diverse community of wildlife and habitats indicative of mountain ecosystems. The variety of wildlife and mountain features is the foundation for visitor experience in the park. Maintaining wildlife populations and ensuring habitat remains free of invasive species will protect and restore native biodiversity. Parks Canada will continue to control the spread of non-native plants to minimize the negative impacts on vegetation biodiversity.

A Showcase of National Park Stewardship supports research activities that provide increased understanding of park ecosystems and processes, environmental change and cultural resources in ways that enhance visitor experience and learning. This strategy is intended to have positive environmental effects through environmental stewardship of the park. The objective to reduce the impact of park operations by expanding the use of evolving environmental technologies will have positive impacts on park resources. Key actions are intended to maintain or improve water quality in the park through improved wastewater systems. Involving volunteers in stewardship activities, such as non-native plant control and ecosystem restoration, will ensure the maintenance and enhancement of native species.

Experiencing the Authentic...and the Spectacular is the overarching visitor experience framework for the park and is comprised of two parts. *Welcoming Visitors to Mountain Heritage* focuses on creating communication and learning strategies around the concept of welcoming visitors to the park. No direct impacts or interactions on the assessment factors are anticipated with this particular strategy. *Connecting Visitors to Exceptional Experiences* describes an approach that will enhance visitor understanding and visitor experience. While this strategy is intended to enhance appreciation opportunities for visitors, it is also likely to result in increased numbers of visitors to the park and a greater range of recreational opportunities on the landscape. This has potential to impair valued components such as grizzly bear populations and visitor experience. Increased visitor growth could displace wildlife from secure habitat and give rise to conflicts. Inviting more people on the landscape may contribute to an increase in visitor use conflicts and potential for diminished aesthetic or wilderness experience as a result of more crowded spaces. To avoid adverse cumulative environmental effects on valued components, visitor growth and expanded opportunities will need to be carefully managed. Parks Canada will reduce environmental impact through concentrating human use where possible, and targeting specific new segments to set expectations.

The objectives of the strategy ***Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems*** will be met as the park management plan is implemented. These objectives are intended to address potential negative impacts of increased visitor growth on ecological processes and wildlife. The desired outcomes for wildlife and grizzly bears are expected to maintain the unique character of place that contributes to visitor experience and enjoyment. Parks Canada will also reduce environmental impact by concentrating use where possible; amalgamating or clustering facilities; avoiding incremental expansion; and relocating facilities where appropriate to achieve environmental gains.

Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site aims to increase the profile of cultural heritage in the park. The plan outlines a key objective to conserve and restore significant cultural resources. Natural degradation, past development and future activities may impact cultural resources either through on-the-ground change or loss of knowledge. Key actions such as completing a cultural resource management plan and inventories of heritage buildings, investing in cultural resources, and conducting research and monitoring activities of archaeological resources are expected to improve the condition of cultural and archaeological resources while increasing visitor education and awareness of cultural heritage.

Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live focuses on media and outreach programming in communities and schools to expand awareness of national parks and historic sites among priority audiences. No direct impacts or interactions on assessment factors are expected as a result of implementing this strategy. Fostering understanding and the desire to protect wild places will help visitors embrace environmental stewardship and increase their understanding of the importance of maintaining protected places.

Managing Development provides the framework for planning developments including built infrastructure and activity. The *Canada National Parks Act* and other documents including management plans, community plans, and outlying commercial accommodation guidelines, describe limits to development. These limits enable innovative growth and development to proceed while reducing impacts to cultural and ecological resources. Specific direction in the plan to “Modify, add, renew, or consolidate visitor facilities in the park, such as campgrounds, day use areas and trails, where there are opportunities to enhance visitor experience and achieve

ecological objectives” and to “Restore disturbed areas no longer required for facilities or infrastructure” are expected to produce environmental gains. The development and implementation of a long-term gravel extraction and restoration plan is expected to minimize potential negative impacts on ecological processes and native species populations. Ecological protection goals and associated indicators of success, such as maintaining grizzly bear habitat security and protection of native species will be respected when considering new or changing development, infrastructure and recreational activities. With these considerations, development is expected to maintain viable grizzly bear and other native species populations.

Area Concepts

Area Concepts have been developed for seven (7) select regions of the park. Each concept describes the future best, current condition, objectives and key actions to achieve each area’s future best. All direction and related assessment found in the key strategies above applies to these area concepts. The concepts provide additional detail for specific areas of the park. For this summary, the assessment of selected key actions is provided. More detail on the assessment of area concepts can be found in the SEA.

Kicking Horse Corridor:

Some of the actions are expected to result in positive environmental and cultural impacts. Allowing the lease and associated licenses of occupation for West Louise Lodge to expire and maintaining natural habitat in critical wildlife movement pinch points will have positive effects on terrestrial ecosystems through the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem connectivity. Improved access to the Kicking Horse River for canoes and kayaks may have positive impacts on aquatic resources and public safety provided access planning considers the key objectives for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, such as the maintenance of viable wildlife population levels and water quality as described in the strategy *Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems* and *Performance Management Framework* of the plan. Improved access may increase the number of paddlers on the Kicking Horse River, adding incrementally to existing cumulative effects associated with high human use in the Kicking Horse Corridor. The *Managing Development* and *Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems* strategies are intended to address the adverse impacts associated with potential increased river use.

The Community of Field:

The Field Community Plan (1999) continues to define future development and character of the community. Increases in development or new recreational activities may increase the volume of effluent adding more nutrients to the Kicking Horse River. Targets established for the community’s upgraded wastewater treatment plant will ensure water quality is maintained or improved as development proceeds as outlined in the community plan. Measures have been taken, such as the rehabilitation of the former trailer court, to reduce the village’s footprint and improve wildlife movement. Application of the community plan and compliance with the objectives outlined in the strategy *Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems* is expected to result in positive cumulative effects on aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems through improved water quality and restoration of wildlife movement. Enhancement of visitor’s aesthetic experience is also expected through continued implementation of the community plan.

Lake O'Hara:

This area concept describes maintaining current access control, overnight capacity, seasonal wildlife closures and the trail system in order for continued protection of bears and humans and to allow grizzly bear movement through key travel corridors. The cumulative impact of the strategy with respect to grizzly bears is that habitat security and terrestrial connectivity will be maintained. Visitor experience objectives, such as providing safe and enjoyable visits, will also be maintained through application of these same measures.

Takakkaw Falls - Yoho Valley:

Parks Canada will maintain existing development footprints and visitor opportunities will be improved with upgrades to the area. The concept presents no interactions with the strategic factors being assessed.

Emerald Lake:

The plan describes increasing the profile of the area for winter recreational activities and upgrading existing trails for skiing, hiking and mountain biking. Human use management will integrate ecological and social objectives, such as maintaining terrestrial connectivity, grizzly bear habitat and enhancing visitor enjoyment. Upgrades to existing trails will ensure that conflicts with environmental protection goals are avoided, particularly with regard to carnivores. The key strategy *Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems* outlines objectives for success with respect to wildlife connectivity and habitat security that aim to reduce impacts of increased visitation and new recreational activities. With careful planning that supports ecological integrity, redevelopment of the parking lot to create a setback of the lakeshore will likely have a positive impact on both visitor experience through enhanced aesthetics and viewscape, and aquatic ecosystems through improved water quality.

Burgess Shale:

Fossils are vulnerable to loss due to theft and natural weathering, and to damage caused by unrestricted pedestrian activity. Strategic management objectives for fossil resources include an integration of resource protection (security and preservation of fossils and collections), visitor experience (facilitating guided hiking) and public education (increasing public understanding of resources). Key actions are expected to result in positive effects on palaeontological (fossil) resources through implementation of the Burgess Shale Management Framework, group management limitations, fossil protection measures and zoning systems. Additional fossil excavation will only be considered under certain conditions as described in the plan and framework. These measures are expected to address potential cumulative effects and achieve strategic goals for the management of palaeontological resources.

Yoho Backcountry Valleys: This area continues to offer a remote backcountry experience with low levels of human use while maintaining existing basic trails, designated campsites and the existing random camping experience. The plan introduces a number of actions to investigate opportunities for commercial horse use and associated infrastructure in the Ice River and Amiskwi valley that have potential to result in impairment to grizzly bear habitat security and visitor experience through visitor use conflicts. Ecological outcomes for grizzly bears as outlined in the strategy *Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems* is intended to prevent further displacement and control the potential for habituation and human-wildlife conflicts. Conducting and facilitating social science and ecological research and monitoring programs to better understand park ecosystems, human dimensions, and relationships with visitor use is an important measure in managing potential impacts to visitor experience and minimizing potential visitor use conflicts in this area, should this action be advanced.

Park Management Plan Implementation and Follow Up

The park management plan describes strategic directions that will be implemented over the course of the next 15 years. Some of the initiatives described in the plan are conceptual in nature and individual project planning will be subject to further assessment under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and other applicable assessment processes, as appropriate. Parks Canada will use established monitoring programs and the State of the Park Report to assess the outcomes of the management plan with respect to ecological and social indicators established in the performance management framework of the plan. With these measures in place, additional follow-up monitoring will not be required.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Conclusion

The cumulative effects associated with the management plan were considered with respect to the management objectives for ecological integrity, cultural resources and visitor experience. The management plan is likely to result in many positive environmental effects. Cumulative effects of the plan are expected to address key issues identified in the State of the Park Report by maintaining or improving conditions for grizzly bears and other native species, aquatic and terrestrial connectivity, ecosystem processes, cultural resources, visitor experience and public education. Key strategies such as *Ensuring Healthy Ecosystems*, *Managing Development*, and *Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site*, when implemented in an integrated way, are intended to address potential negative cumulative impacts on key ecological and cultural resources.

In conclusion, the plan is expected to achieve the desired results for ecological integrity, cultural resources and visitor experience in Yoho National Park. The management plan is not likely to result in any significant adverse cumulative effects.

9. SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

Key Strategy or Area Concept	First 5 Year Actions
Key Strategy	
A Showcase of National Park Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new Burgess Shale virtual products and continually update interpretive messages based on current research. • Expand use of environmental technologies in built facilities. • Involve volunteers in stewardship activities such as non-native plant control and ecosystem restoration.
Experiencing the Authentic... and the Spectacular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase promotion of Yoho as a winter destination. • Improve on-line pre-trip information. • Investigate alternative fee collection options, including the creation of a kiosk on the Yoho Valley Road. • Target priority market segments. • Consider proposals for new visitor experience opportunities that support Parks Canada's mandate.
Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an inventory of heritage buildings. • Work with partners to develop the concept of a heritage corridor – <i>From Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape</i>.
Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the ROM and Canadian Heritage to develop the Burgess Shale virtual museum.
Managing Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the <i>Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks (2007)</i>. Restore disturbed sites no longer required for facilities. • Work with Canadian Pacific to reduce grain spillage on the railway. • Prepare a long-term gravel extraction plan.
Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore connectivity of streams and wetlands. • Work with Canadian Pacific to address wildlife mortality on the railway. • Control or eliminate non-native, invasive species.

Key Strategy or Area Concept	First 5 Year Actions
Area Concepts	
Kicking Horse Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the sense of arrival and welcome at the east entrance. • Review campgrounds and day use areas: modify or consolidate facilities to improve visitor experience and ecological conditions. • Build experience and learning opportunities into the planned prescribed fires for Mount King and Ottertail valley.
Community of Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the Field Community Plan. • Renew and expand Parks Canada office space in Field.
Lake O'Hara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the reservation and bus system. • Review access and quotas to the Lake O'Hara area for possibilities to improve visitor experience while maintaining ecological objectives for the area.
Takakkaw Falls – Yoho Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade Takakkaw Falls pedestrian bridge and trailhead information. • Increase visitor awareness of the unique character of the valley before visitors travel up the Yoho Valley Road.
Emerald Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a concept for parking and reducing the impact of vehicular traffic on the lakeshore experience.
Burgess Shale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain association with the ROM, and convey current research to visitors on-site, at exhibit in the park, and through virtual media.
Yoho Backcountry Valleys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to relocate trails to areas with better views. • Evaluate needs of horse users, and feasibility of establishing day riding along Ice River road, and commercial packing in Amiskwi valley.

APPENDIX 1: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Yoho National Park Management Plan Performance Management Framework
(Note: These and additional measures will be tracked and reported in the next State of the Park Report).

Indicators	Measures	Targets
<p>Heritage Resources Conservation Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management actions result in improvements to ecological integrity indicators. • The condition of cultural resources is maintained. 		
<p>Native Biodiversity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grizzly bear mortality. 2. Grizzly bear habitat security. 3. Native Fish populations. 4. Wildlife mortality. 	<p>Improve indicator from fair and improving to good and improving by 2014.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Known, human-caused mortality of independent females does not exceed 1.2% of the population annually, on a 4 year running average. 2. Habitat security is maintained in all Landscape Management Units. 3. Improve condition, currently rated as fair and declining. 4. Improve condition of trend, currently rated as poor and declining.
<p>Aquatic Ecosystems</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water quality – chemical and physical condition. 2. Water quality - biomonitoring. 3. Water quantity. 4. Aquatic connectivity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Condition remains good and stable. 2. Condition improves from fair to good. 3. Condition remains good and stable. 4. Connectivity is improved.
<p>Terrestrial Ecosystems</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exotic pathogens. 2. Non-native plants. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invasive non-native insects are controlled and, where feasible, eliminated. 2. Invasive non-native plants are controlled and, where feasible, eliminated.

Indicators	Measures	Targets
Regional Landscapes	Area of fire disturbance.	50% of the long term fire cycle is achieved in all parts of the park.
Cultural Resource Condition	1. Landscapes and landscape features. 2. Archaeological sites. 3. Objects. 4. Buildings and structures.	1. Condition of cultural landscapes remains good. 2. All known sites are recorded and protected. 3. All cultural objects are recorded and protected. 4. The condition of two priority heritage buildings in Field, currently rated poor and fair, improves to good.
Active Management Projects	1. Reduced grain spillage on Canadian Pacific railway. 2. Additional mitigations to keep bears and other wildlife off the railway tracks. 3. Percentage of natural fire cycle on the landscape.	80% of active management targets are met by 2014 1. Reduced impacts from spilled grain on tracks. 2. Increased mitigation of railway/wildlife collisions. Increased education and awareness of issues related to grizzly bear mortality. 3. Increased percentage achieved through managed natural fires and prescribed burns.
<p>Public Appreciation and Understanding Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadians appreciate the significance of Yoho National Park and support its protection and presentation. • Canadians learn about the heritage of Yoho National Park and understand that it is protected and presented on their behalf. • Stakeholders and partners are engaged in the protection and presentation of Yoho National Park. 		
Learning	Canadians learn about Yoho National Park.	Increase the percentage of Canadians who consider they learned about the heritage of the park by 2014.

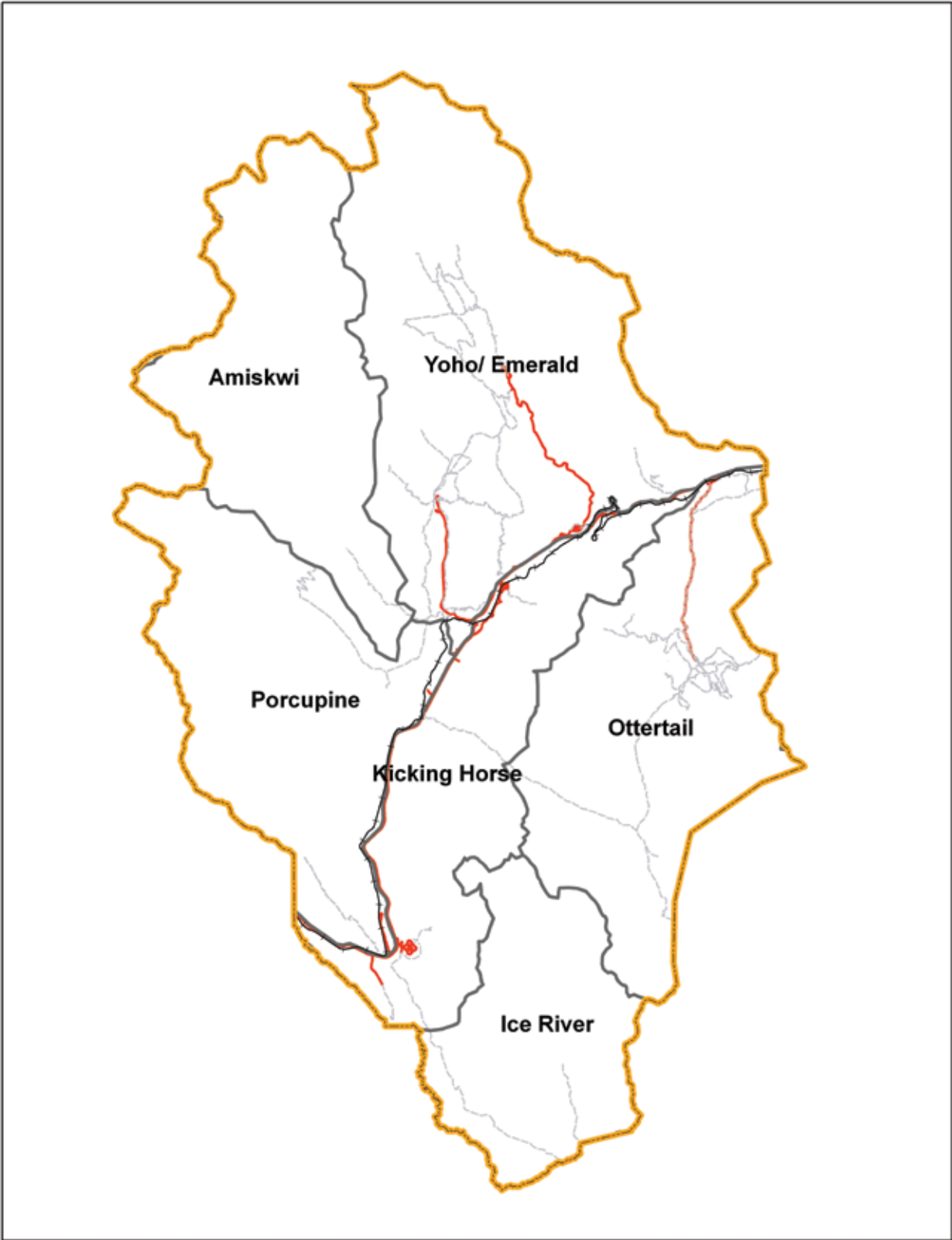
Indicators	Measures	Targets
Understanding	Canadians understand that Yoho National Park is protected and presented on their behalf by Parks Canada.	Increase the percentage of Canadians who understand that Yoho National Park is protected and presented on their behalf by Parks Canada.
Engagement	Stakeholders and partners support the protection and presentation of the park.	Increase the percentage of stakeholders and partners who support the protection and presentation of the park.
Engagement	Stakeholders and partners have opportunities to influence and contribute to park management.	Increase the percentage of stakeholders and partners who feel they have opportunities to influence and contribute to park management.
<p>Visitor Experience Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors feel a sense of connection to Yoho National Park. • Canadians visit Yoho National Park. • Visitors learned from experience and active participation. • Visitors enjoyed their visit. 		
Connection to Place	Sense of personal connection to the park.	At least 85% of visitors at surveyed locations consider the park is meaningful to them.
Visitor Satisfaction	Visitor satisfaction.	At least 90% are satisfied and at least 50% are very satisfied with their visit.
Attendance	Number of visitors.	Visitation to the park increases by 2% annually over the first five years of this plan from a baseline of 543,424 (2008/09).
Learning	Visitors sense of learning about the park.	At least 60% of visitors at surveyed locations consider they learned something about the park.
Assets	Asset condition.	At least 65% of contemporary assets are in good condition.
Public Safety	Public safety is ensured.	TBD

Indicators	Measures	Targets
<p>Townsites and Throughway Infrastructure Expected result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition of contemporary infrastructure is maintained or improved. • Through highways are open to traffic. 		
<p>Contemporary Assets</p>	<p>Asset condition.</p>	<p>All Field contemporary assets rated as fair or poor are improved to good by 2013.</p>
<p>Growth Limits</p>	<p>1. Boundaries. 2. Commercial space.</p>	<p>1. Legislated boundaries remain in place. 2. Commercial space limits outlined in the Field Community Plan (1999) are respected.</p>
<p>Sewage Effluent Quality</p>	<p>1. Total Phosphorous 2. Fecal Coliform 3. pH 4. Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD5) 5. Total suspended solids 6. Ammonia (NH3N)</p>	<p>1. <0.15 mg/l 2. <20/100ml (end of pipe) < 2/100ml (end of mixing zone) 3. meets background levels above outfall 4. <10 mg/l (summer) <20 mg/l (winter) 5. < 10.0 mg/l 6. <1 mg/l (summer) <5 mg/l (winter)</p>
<p>Trans Canada Highway</p>	<p>Condition of through highways is maintained.</p>	<p>0 days of closure due to asset condition.</p>

APPENDIX 2: GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT SECURITY ESTIMATES BY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT UNITS

Landscape Management Unit	% < 2500m elevation not secure due to human use	% < 2500m elevation not secure due to small patch size	Secure habitat below 2500m elevation (%)
Ice River	5	0	95
Ottertail	28	2	70
Kicking Horse	28	1	70
Yoho/Emerald	39	6	55
Porcupine	15	2	84
Amiskwi	1	0	99

Note: areas > 2500m elevation are mainly rock and ice, and therefore do not provide secure habitat.



Map 3: Landscape Management Units in Yoho National Park

