

ORIGINAL PURPOSE To protect the Ospika Cones complex and representative surrounding mountain slopes.

OVERVIEW

Date established:	Feb 2001	Location:	50 km ENE of N end of Williston Lake
ORC #:	8291	Latitude:	57°01'N
Map number:	94 M/66	Longitude:	124°13'W

Total Area:	1,282 ha	Elevation:	1,200-2,000 m
Land:	1,282 ha		

Access: Accessible by helicopter only.

Biogeoclimatic Zones: Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir (ESSF), Spruce Willow Birch (SWB), and Boreal-Altei Fescue Alpine (BAFA)

Biogeoclimatic Variants: ESSFmv4 Graham Moist Very Cold; ESSFmvp Moist Warm Parkland; SWBmk Moist Cool; BAFAun Undifferentiated

Ecosection: Western Muskwa Ranges

Region: Omineca

Management Area: Omineca

COMPOSITION

Physical: The reserve protects a representative area within the Western Muskwa Ranges Ecosection comprising mainly west-facing mountain slopes, from the Ospika River up to alpine ridges.

Calcium-rich springs are located on a bench-like flat area at the foot of the mountain slopes. Calcium deposits built up by the springs have formed a complex of colourful terraces and raised cylindrical spring pools which have become known as the "Ospika Cones". As the lime-rich water warms when overflowing the rim of the pools and terraces it precipitates calcium which builds up natural dams. The highest of the spring pools is contained by a tall, circular limestone dam. The turquoise water of the deeper pools contrasts with the white, ochre and rusty coloured dams and cascading terraces. These formations are fragile, as evidenced by pools whose dams have been breached and drained of water.

A second area of mineral springs with calcium deposits is located about 1,000 metres to the south at a similar level above the river. Here the springs form a broad band of rusty coloured lime pavement descending down a gentle slope, however, without the dam formation.

Biological: The main spring area is surrounded by open, lime-rich sedge fens. The vegetation on, between, and around the springs is very diverse and ranges from white spruce swamps and dwarf shrub communities to herbaceous, graminoid and moss-dominated wet meadows. Floristic elements of ericaceous heath, calcareous fens, alpine meadows, and even peat bogs mix in unusual

combinations.

Unsurveyed wetlands, variously interspersed with individuals and stands of white spruce, continue 1.5 km north in a small valley paralleling the Ospika river.

Extensive forests occur on the slopes which show intermediate features between Boreal White and Black Spruce forests and the more southerly Engelmann-Spruce-Subalpine-Fir forests. The most common forest on well-drained sites is a white spruce – subalpine fir – black huckleberry – step moss community.

Higher subalpine and alpine sites in the reserve remain unsurveyed.

Moose, Elk, Grizzly Bear and Grey Wolf are resident in the reserve. In places where calcium deposits are in a less solid form, they are used by Moose and Elk as mineral licks.

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	BC LIST STATUS	COSEWIC STATUS	CF PRIORITY
Grizzly Bear	Blue-listed	Special Concern (2002)	2

THREATS

Climate Change:	Changes in the hydrology in this area may effect the mineral springs and the associated flora and fauna.
Recreation:	Commercial and private helicopters land in reserve to observe tufa formations.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES	Reserve protects a good site for study into mineral spring formation and ecology.
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SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE OSPIKA CONES ER ACCOUNT

Flora

fir, subalpine (*Abies lasiocarpa* var. *lasiocarpa*)
huckleberry, black (*Vaccinium membranaceum*)
moss, step (*Hylocomium splendens*)
spruce, black (*Picea mariana*)
spruce, Engelmann (*Picea engelmannii*)
spruce, white (*Picea glauca*)

Fauna

Bear, Grizzly (*Ursus arctos*)
Elk (*Cervus canadensis*)
Moose (*Alces americanus*)
Wolf, Grey (*Canis lupus*)