



Kakwa Provincial Park

Management Plan

Public Feedback Summary

October 2006

Background

This document summarizes the public and stakeholder response to the Kakwa Provincial Park Draft Management Plan. The Draft Management Plan was released in May 2004, and was made available to the public via a summary mailout and B.C. Government website (see the website address at the end of this newsletter). Subsequently, stakeholders and interest groups were invited to respond to and comment upon it by means of the *Kakwa Draft Management Plan Review Comment Sheet*, which was included in the mailout and also made available on a government website. The closing date for comments to the Draft Management Plan was Nov. 30, 2004.

In total, 113 written submissions were received by BC Parks. Of the 113 respondents to the comment sheet survey, 51 were from British Columbia residents or organizations, 61 were from Alberta, and one response was received from two individuals in the U.K. In most cases, the responses were from individuals who represented only themselves. In some cases, however, a single individual presented the position of an entire club or organization with an unknown number of members (usually environmental or recreational organizations and clubs). Therefore, the statistics provided in this summary provide only a rough approximation of opinions or proportional interests related to the management plan. Only those categories with the highest response and greatest commentary or interest have been summarized: the Vision Statement; Park Zoning; Access Management; Snowmobiling; and Hunting. The categories with the highest percentage of agreement were the Vision Statement, Hiking / Backpacking, Horse Use and Access Management, respectively. The categories registering the highest disagreement were Snowmobiling, Park Zoning and Hunting, respectively (although in the case of hunting, the number disagreeing – 47.7% – was slightly less than the number agreeing).

The following tables summarize the results of the 'Agree/Disagree' portion of the comment sheet survey for the draft management plan. More than one quarter of the 113 respondents did not fill out the comment sheets in order to provide their feedback, but rather used other formats such as hand-written letters or short e-mail messages. In addition, the comment sheet respondents often chose not to fill out the entire questionnaire. Therefore, the total number of responses for each of the 10 categories (vision statement, park zoning, access management, etc.) in the comment sheets varies. In the following tables, the U.K. respondents have been included in the 'Total' percentages, but not the figures representing B.C. and Alberta, respectively. On average (across the ten comment sheet categories combined), nearly twice as much agreement (65%) than disagreement (35%) with the Kakwa Provincial Park Draft Management Plan was registered by those respondents who checked either 'agree' or 'disagree' on the comment sheets.

Although the survey results do not constitute an authoritative vote or set of directives regarding the content of the Draft Management Plan, BC Parks values the input of all stakeholders and survey respondents. The park management planning process requires that plans are developed with public input, and all input is carefully reviewed and considered prior to the completion of the final plan. Through public input and comment, valuable information is obtained on numerous values, which increases the relevancy of the plan.

1. Vision Statement

| Vision Statement | Respondents | Agree | | Disagree | |
|------------------|-------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| B.C. | 30 | 28 | 93.3% | 2 | 6.7% |
| Alberta | 46 | 40 | 87% | 6 | 13% |
| Total | 76 | 68 | 89.5% | 8 | 10.5% |

The Vision Statement received the highest number of responses among the 10 survey categories: 76 of the 113 respondents indicated their agreement or disagreement with the Vision Statement. In addition, almost 90% of these survey respondents checked 'agree', the strongest endorsement for any of the survey categories. While respondents differed sometimes greatly in their opinions with respect to specific sections or details of the Draft Management Plan, support for the Vision Statement overall appears to be very strong.

Sample comments:

- I think that the Vision Statement is a well thought out statement that describes well the value of Kakwa's wilderness and its place in the wilderness parks complex of the region. I especially like to see the term "free of pervasive commercialization."
- I agree with the objectives of ecological integrity and wilderness preservation, but find this hard to reconcile with hunting and extensive snowmobiling....
- To protect the high wilderness quality of Kakwa, the park must be off-limits to all human activity beyond low-impact wilderness hiking and camping.
- Prevent industrial movement into the park but do not prevent or restrict responsible public use, i.e., snowmobiling, backpacking, hiking. If anything, more areas should be opened up to these activities.
- We would like to see continued partnerships with Alberta and the surrounding B.C. lands to protect the ecological, unspoiled, wild setting of this park.
- I am writing to lend my strong support to the Vision Statement in the Draft Management Plan for Kakwa, with its primary goal of preserving the ecological integrity of the Park.
- Kakwa is renowned as a wild scenic area and a memory of the Rockies as they once were, but this area should not be made an area that cannot be accessed by the general public.
- We support the vision put forward in the plan where the wilderness character of the park and the preservation of its ecological systems is of primary importance.... the remoteness of the area enhances the activities of many of our club's members.
- BC Parks has recognized the truly unique nature of this park within our region, and indeed within the mountain parks; I hope that their efforts will ensure this wilderness remains so into the future.

2. Park Zoning

| Park Zoning | Respondents | Agree | | Disagree | |
|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| B.C. | 20 | 12 | 60% | 8 | 40% |
| Alberta | 39 | 7 | 17.9% | 32 | 82.1% |
| Total | 59 | 19 | 32% | 40 | 68% |

It may be noteworthy that while a clear majority of Albertans (82%) disagreed with the proposed zoning for the park, a majority of British Columbians (60%) appeared to support the proposed zoning. In addition, among those who disagreed, most Albertans disagreed on the basis that the zoning would be too restrictive – specifically to snowmobile use – while a significant number of British Columbians disagreed

with the proposed zoning on the grounds that the zoning would not be restrictive enough. Uncertainty or misunderstanding related to the actual boundaries of the snowmobile restricted access zones may account for much of the strong opposition reported by the Alberta respondents.

Sample comments:

- I generally agree with the zoning and hope that it will be respected so that winter non-motorized recreationists can be assured of areas to visit that will be free from the noise and other impacts of motorized use.
- The park zoning is restrictive to snowmobiling activity in the Kakwa area. I think that the time limits proposed (winter - Nov. 1 to Apr. 30) are important as it provides a snow base protecting the area and snowmobilers.
- I agree with the zoning, basically. I think it is important to preserve parts of the park to be enjoyed as a wilderness free from motorized recreation - both recreational and commercial.
- The no hunting area is much larger than it needs to be. There is no need to prevent float plane access to Cecilia or Dimsdale Lakes.
- The plan achieves a reasonable balance, although I personally feel that motorized recreation does not belong in a wilderness park.
- I believe that the limit on the snowmobile area is unwarranted and unjust. There are no studies done to backup your reasons in limiting the riding areas. In concentrating the snowmobiles to a certain area you are, in fact, creating a more hazardous effect to the environment in those areas. I suggest that snowmobiles should only be restricted in wilderness conservation areas and areas of special interest such as the fossil areas, but be open in the natural environment and wilderness recreation areas.
- Most of the areas that are being blocked from snowmobiling are areas that can only be reached when there is good snow pack, which means there are no animals, which means no need for boundaries.
- I disagree that snowmobiling is a compatible activity in a wilderness park. Just because snowmobilers *can* get into every place these days does not mean that they *should* be everywhere.
- For an area that is to be managed as pristine wilderness a very small portion is given the highest level of zoning protection, wilderness conservation. Any area that is not readily used by visitors could easily be designated wilderness conservation with minimal interference to visitor activities.
- We have no objections to the proposed zoning and support the proposal for separate summer and winter zoning plans. A single zoning plan would not meet the needs.
- I disagree with park zoning. I find park zoning restrictive to snowmobiling activities in many wilderness areas. Areas for snowmobiling access should be discussed first with user groups before it is decided which areas can and cannot be accessed.
- The early spring season closure of the SE corner of the park in anticipation of caribou return is at least a step in the right direction but we are concerned that this is not sufficient.

3. Access Management

| Access Management | Respondents | Agree | | Disagree | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| B.C. | 24 | 18 | 75% | 6 | 25% |
| Alberta | 36 | 24 | 66.7% | 12 | 33.3% |
| Total | 60 | 42 | 70% | 18 | 30% |

While there were strong and divergent opinions and values expressed related to the access management recommendations in the Draft Management Plan, more than twice as many respondents agreed (70%) than disagreed (30%) with these recommendations.

Sample comments:

- I generally agree with the access management proposed, however I think it is reasonable to expect vehicular access to the park boundary.
- I agree that access should stand as it is, *but* should *not* be limited further. You see logging and oilfield in many areas around Kakwa but yet recreation and family outings are very threatened.
- A solution that we feel will increase the use of self-propelled low impact users is to allow the construction of a small mountain hut in the heart of the prime mountaineering and ski mountaineering area of the park.... Self-propelled users such as ourselves can't help but feel like we are being squeezed out of areas that we value highly by people who rely on horsepower (not the equine type) to use our parks.
- Access should not be made easier. There should not be any further development. This will make access for summer motorized vehicles easier.
- I believe access should be available to people from all walks of life, not just people who are fit enough to hike or healthy enough to have horses, or aircraft availability. I would like to see a well maintained road put in to the Kakwa Lake area.
- Difficulty of access protects the wilderness quality and ecology of Kakwa.
- Totally over-regulated.
- The current access to Kakwa is just perfect. Only the people willing to travel the roads required to get into Kakwa should be in Kakwa.
- The proposed restricted access for snowmobiling seems very difficult to know where we can and cannot sled unless you have GPS and topographical maps. "It needs to be simple", and then people will follow it.
- Wheeled access should not be encouraged. Access by helicopter should be severely limited. Visitors should be allowed the freedom to enter the park with restrictions on activities. Development of mining or logging should not be allowed. Focus on keeping this area as undeveloped as possible. Protect the existing peaceful wilderness.
- The FBCN considers the following potential activities as ecologically unacceptable for such a wilderness area and one that is home to a number of endangered species: commercial heli-ski or heli-hiking operations; snowmobile tours; additional cabin construction or expansion of current cabins for the foreseeable future; and motorized boat access. Air access needs to be monitored for volume and potential impacts on wildlife.
- Commercial heli-skiing is an intensely managed activity with a small number of users under direct control of the operator providing maximum economic benefit with minimal impact. We feel that automatically disqualifying this well accepted and successful activity (heli-skiing) is unjustified, that proposals should be judged on their merit and that there are other mechanisms that Parks staff can use to allow this activity while successfully managing Kakwa for all values.
- It is our hope that BC Parks would recognize the need for helicopter drop-off for extended hiking or mountaineering activities and would issue Park Use Permits for these purposes within reason. Without these short access flights significant mountaineering and hiking recreation opportunities could be excluded due to access and logistical limitations.
- I believe BC Parks should accept the fact [that] they are catering to the mechanized recreation, yet are in no way facilitating or promoting non-mechanized (ski touring / mountaineering) use. Parks should investigate the possibility of constructing a proper, low impact mountain hut in the Mt. Sir Alexander area to facilitate, and promote use by non-mechanized users.

6. Snowmobiling

| Snowmobiling | Respondents | Agree | | Disagree | |
|--------------|-------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| B.C. | 22 | 8 | 36.4% | 14 | 63.6% |
| Alberta | 43 | 7 | 16.3% | 36 | 83.7% |
| Total | 65 | 15 | 23% | 50 | 77% |

Next to the Vision Statement, Snowmobiling received the second-highest number of agree/disagree responses (65). Of these, 77% disagreed with some or all of the Draft Management Plan recommendations. The disagreement was strongest among the 43 Alberta respondents, most of whom identified themselves as being affiliated with various snowmobile clubs. The comments received implied in some cases that the respondents may have drawn erroneous conclusions regarding the actual boundaries and extent of the proposed snowmobile exclusion zones in the draft plan.

Sample comments:

- There should be more emphasis by BC Parks on limiting the number of machines inside the parks, and more active enforcement of closed areas that impact other user groups.
- The amount of snow should determine when we snowmobile. Some years we could snowmobile to May, others we could only go to March.
- Snowmobiling should be considered a tenuous use within the Park and subject to future management decisions based on the precautionary principle in relation to ecological concerns (existing and emerging wildlife issues, damage to vegetation, impacts to soil and groundwater from re-fuelling, etc.)... Snowmobile user fees and/or overnight fees could also be established to offset costs of monitoring
- I believe that parts of the Park could be open to snowmobiling but I am glad to see that a portion has been set aside for other users to enjoy as a non-motorized area.
- By restricting areas from snowmobile use you will concentrate snowmobiling into certain areas causing more environmental impact than if you just let the snowmobilers go... Snowmobiling has been going on in Kakwa Park since the 1960s with little or no environmental impact.
- Over the past half-dozen years we have been dismayed to learn of the encroachment of snowmobiles into the Mt. Sir Alexander and Mt. Ida areas; areas that we have valued as true wilderness locations.
- I feel that all areas that are currently open for snowmobiling should remain open and a snow pack conditions policy should be put in place.
- [I] am concerned with the extent and numbers of snowmobiles which have escalated considerably in the last several years.
- I myself love snowmobiling in the Kakwa Area and would not like to see restricted areas. I believe this area is there to be enjoyed, especially when we cannot enjoy it in the summer... I would like to see user pay, i.e., park passes issued for access. These monies could be used for park funding.
- The plan is a workable compromise in the face of a strong lobby, but I would prefer to see motorized recreation within the park phased out over time.
- Disagree with any restricted areas. No proof that we harm wildlife.
- I urge you to manage this park as a naturally functioning ecosystem to protect the park's high wilderness values and the mountain caribou to ensure as little human disturbance as possible.
- I believe that snowmobilers that ride in the park respect everything that the vision statement for the park describes.
- Step by step, we are witnessing the erosion of wild lands to motorized use, and I see provincial parks as a place to make the last stand. Kakwa has much to preserve, and therefore much is at stake. As I see it, the management plan caters to snowmobilers. I see nothing in the plan which indicates

snowmobile numbers will be limited, which leaves the possibility and probability of ever-increasing snowmobile use within the park.

- We ... urge that the numbers of snowmobiles allowed into the park be restricted to approximately the present levels and that MWLAP (now Ministry of Environment) ensure that the areas they are allowed into are not sensitive ones.
- Do not believe limiting or zoning area is the procedure to follow. Education and liaison with clubs is the proper way to go.
- Snowmobiling has little or no impact to wildlife or habitat in the Kakwa area. I myself have never seen any caribou in the higher areas. When there is no snowpack we can't ride there anyway. If there is a revenue issue, I am more than willing to buy a B.C. trail pass.
- Would like to see the limits on the winter season in the Natural Environment Zone changed from dates to actual snow levels or something along these lines. An example would be a minimum snow level to exceed 100 cm.

7. Hunting

| Hunting | Respondents | Agree | | Disagree | |
|---------|-------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| B.C. | 16 | 7 | 43.8% | 9 | 56.2% |
| Alberta | 28 | 16 | 57.1% | 12 | 42.9% |
| Total | 44 | 23 | 52.3% | 21 | 47.7% |

The response to hunting was nearly evenly split, with slightly more than half (52.3%) agreeing with the Draft Management Plan overall. More British Columbians disagreed than agreed, while among the Albertans agreement with the Draft Management Plan was considerably stronger.

Sample comments:

- Hunting helps maintain viable levels of game from becoming overpopulated.
- Hunting should not be allowed at all!
- If they can walk in and hunt, let them!
- Can still hunt but can't snowmobile in areas due to the harm that it does to the wildlife? Confusing.
- Take away sledding and save wildlife so hunters can shoot them. That makes sense.
- I am an active hunter in many areas through Alberta and I recognize the struggle that the hunting community has had in recent years but the impact that hunting has on these species far exceeds any impact that snowmobiling would on any of them. Furthermore, allowing guiding of foreign hunters so they can harvest our wildlife for sport and trophy as opposed to for food is not in the best interest of anyone trying to preserve this area.
- Hunting should continue but only by horseback.
- Hunting is overly restricted in Kakwa Park despite the absence of any ecological rationale. It is also prohibited in areas of very low use where adverse interactions are unlikely. The No Hunting Area should be revised to a smaller space where user group conflict is a real concern.
- I support limited hunting in the park as an historic use, but as society's values change in the future, this should be revisited from time to time.... The present exclusion zone is too small.
- Ban all hunting, fishing, trapping, and guide outfitting to kill animals.... Hunting within the park severely impacts the park's ecological integrity and the long-term viability of Kakwa's wildlife populations.
- Hunting in parks is a bad idea. Parks should be the one place of refuge for animals. People can hunt everywhere else.
- Don't know enough about it to agree or disagree but think that hunting should be minimal to coincide with the Vision Statement. Recognize that it has traditionally been a part of the area.

- The Club would prefer it if there was no trapping or hunting in the park, however, we can live with these activities as they were pre-existing and have been endorsed by the PG and Dawson LRMPs. However, we would strongly recommend that the No Hunting Area be extended to the westerly end of the Jarvis Lakes including to the height of land (Moonias Pass or Netim Mtn) on the north side of the Lakes. This small extension would mean the No Hunting Area would cover virtually all of the Park non-hunting recreationists are likely to use in the summer/fall period.

The **website address** for Kakwa Provincial Park management planning is:
www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/mgmtplns/kakwa/kakwa.html