

3.0 PROTECTED AREA ZONING

BC Parks uses zoning to assist in the planning and management of provincial parks and protected areas. In general terms, zoning divides an area into logical units to apply uniform and consistent management objectives for conservation and recreational values. The zones reflect the intended land use, existing patterns of use, the degree of human use desired, and the level of management and development required.

At one end of the spectrum, the Intensive Recreation Zone indicates a portion of a park or protected area that is appropriate for high levels of recreation and facility development. At the opposite end, the Wilderness Conservation Zones indicate an area of a park or protected area that receives the highest level of resource protection and minimal human presence. Between these two extremes, there are three additional zones providing a range of conservation and recreation priorities - Natural Environment Zone, Special Feature Zone and Wilderness Recreation Zone.

It should be recognized that Churn Creek does not fit into BC Parks' standard approach to zoning recreation/conservation oriented parks. The focus on grasslands conservation balanced with ranching, wildlife protection and pre-existing uses make zone titles like "Wilderness Recreation" awkward and unwieldy. Visitors should be aware of the ranching history of the area and understand the impacts cattle may have on recreational experiences.

The majority of the Churn Creek Protected Area is in the *Natural Environment Zone*, which is further subdivided into a *Motorized Sub-zone* and a *Non-Motorized Sub-zone*. The *Natural Environment – Motorized Sub-zone* provides vehicle access to two areas - Goose Lakes in North Churn and Iron Gate Road in South Churn - that have traditionally been accessed by motor vehicle. The *Natural Environment – Non-Motorized Sub-zone* allows for non-motorized recreation experiences.

Three areas are categorized as a *Special Feature Zone*. These are intended to be Benchmark Areas that will have minimal human use and no cattle grazing. They will be used for research and to increase understanding of grassland ecosystems.

The area that includes the Calving Barns, Ranch HQ and hayfields is an *Intensive Use/Recreation Zone*, recognizing the future role of the Calving Barns as both a resource for the ranch and as a staging area/campground for visitors.

Map Three:
Churn Creek Protected Area
Zoning

Located in Appendix M: Map Folio**3.1 Natural Environment Zone**

The primary objective of this zone is to conserve natural resources and to maintain the natural diversity and function of ecosystems in the Protected Area while providing a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreation in a largely undisturbed natural environment. The Natural Environment - Motorized Sub-zone is 4,074 hectares, or 6.2% of the Protected Area. The Natural Environment – Non-Motorized Sub-zone is 29,483 hectares, or 81.9% of the Protected Area.

Strategies for this zone include:

- Facility development is minimal, at a level sufficient to satisfy user needs and to protect the overall environment of the Protected Area.
- Relatively low use with limited vehicle access to protect the natural values of the area and recreation experience as well as to limit impacts.
- Livestock grazing continues.

3.2 Intensive Use/Recreation Zone

The primary objective of this zone is to provide for an all-weather road accessible staging area/campground as well as accommodating the intensive non-recreation activities associated with the hayfields and ranch HQ. The management intent of this designation is to continue to allow the ranch operations to use the Calving Barns on a priority basis while allowing horseback riders and other recreationists to use the corrals as a staging area for trips into the Protected Area and backcountry beyond the Protected Area. This zone is 1,011 hectares in size, representing 2.8% of the Protected Area.

Strategies for this zone include:

- Providing a campground in the mid to long-term as demands warrant
- Using the Calving Barns as a staging area
- Providing a small interpretive site and parking lot adjacent to the Empire Valley Ranch headquarters.
- Providing some limited visitor services
- Providing interpretative facilities
- Cattle grazing and hay production continues.

3.3 Special Feature Zone

The primary objective of the Special Feature Zone is to provide a high level of protection to several Benchmark Areas across the Protected Area. The total size of this zone is 1,412 hectares, or 3.9 % of the Protected Area.

Strategies for this zone include:

- Conservation of natural resources take precedence over recreation in this zone
- Benchmark Areas will be monitored to provide a better understanding of how natural processes in grassland ecosystems work. See *Section 7.0 – Benchmark Areas*, for more details.
- Cattle grazing will not continue in these Benchmark Areas.



Photo by Chris Hamilton

Photo One: Looking north along the Fraser River landscape. These lower slopes encompass a portion of the Clyde Mountain Benchmark Area.