

Protected Area Zoning

Introduction

BC Parks uses zoning as a tool to assist in the planning and management of a provincial park. In general terms, zoning divides a park into logical units for management. It applies uniform and consistent management objectives based on natural, cultural and recreational values, and existing and projected patterns of access and recreation use in relation to specific conservation goals. The zones reflect the intended land use, the degree of human use, level of management and development permitted. The spectrum includes five zoning options: Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment, Special Feature, Wilderness Recreation and Wilderness Conservation. The BC Parks Zoning Policy is in Appendix B.

Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks are separated into three management planning zones (figure 3): Wilderness Recreation Zone, Natural Environment Zone and Special Features Zone.

Wilderness Recreation Zone

The intent of this zone is to place a high priority on conserving the natural environment while providing some level of backcountry use that is consistent with its wilderness atmosphere. Facility development is minimal, at a level sufficient to satisfy user needs and to protect the overall environment of the park.

Areas zoned Wilderness Recreation are large natural areas where natural ecological processes occur largely uninfluenced by human activity. Low levels of recreational use are permitted but evidence of human presence is confined to specific primitive facilities and sites. The Wilderness Recreation Zone encompasses approximately 98.45% of the parks.

While large portions of these parks are essentially unmodified, the presence of facilities and the significant hunting occurring in many areas, prevent them from being considered for the Wilderness Conservation Zone designation. The Wilderness Recreation Zone allows for the continuation of dispersed, traditional recreational activities and primitive support facilities for horse packing, guided outfitting, hunting, fishing, backpacking and hiking. Areas of the parks with high grizzly bear activity are included in this zone to reduce the potential for bear and human conflict through low levels of use and facilities. Although snowmobiling has occurred in the Abruzzi Creek area for many years it is a non-conforming use of this zone that has been made subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Process and review.

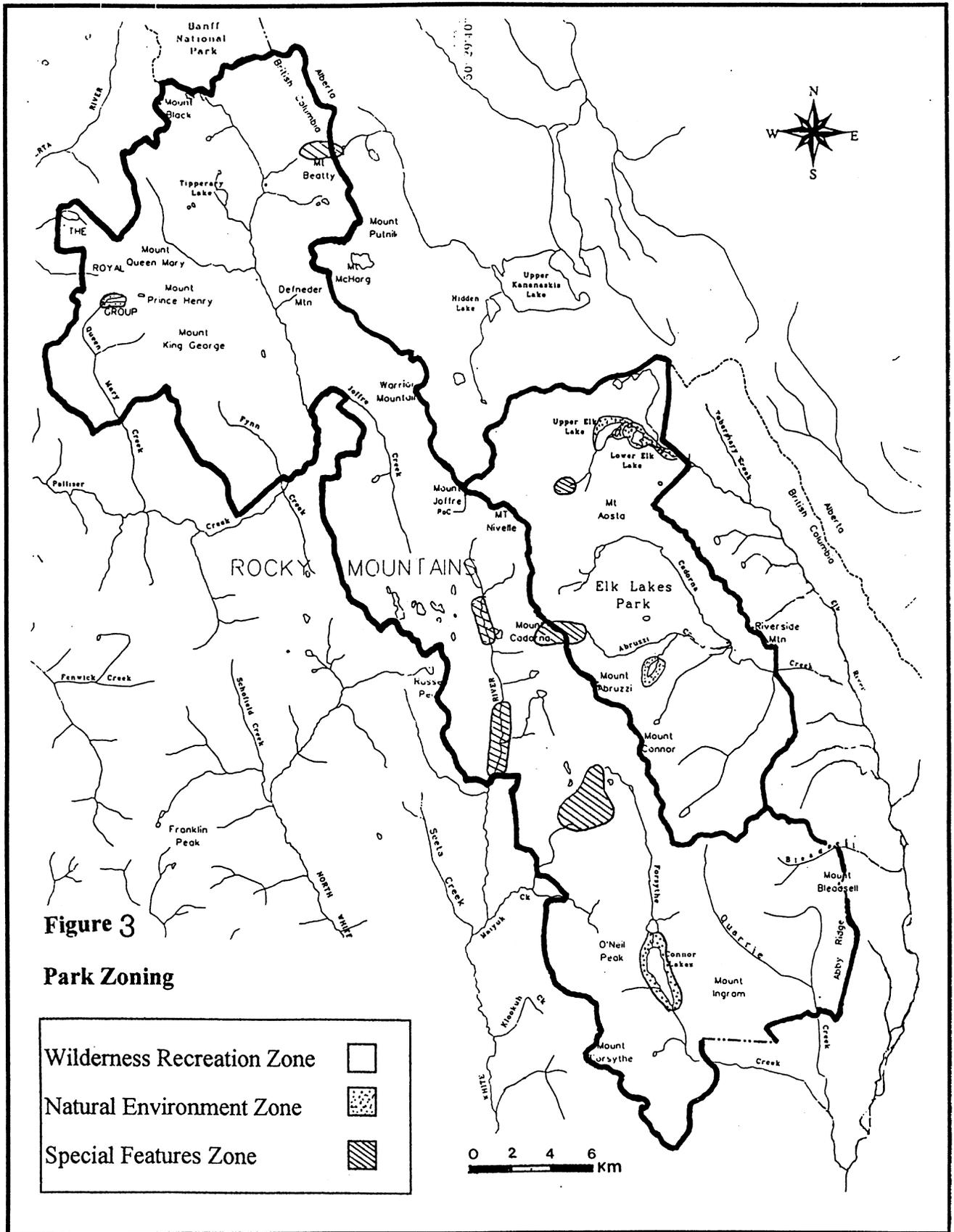


Figure 3
Park Zoning

Wilderness Recreation Zone	
Natural Environment Zone	
Special Features Zone	

The objective of this zone is to provide for a variety of recreational activities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. The intent is to ensure that the activities and facilities do not dominate the natural setting and to provide for a higher level of recreation use than is provided for in the Wilderness Recreation Zone.

In Height of the Rockies Provincial Park, the Natural Environment Zone encompasses an area around Connor Lakes and Queen Mary Lake. This designation is intended to reflect the current level of use at this site, including the number of horse parties, hikers, anglers, cabins and campgrounds found here.

In Elk Lakes Provincial Park, the Natural Environment Zone surrounds the Elk Lakes area and Abruzzi Lake. This designation is due to the level of facility development, recreational use and ease of access. Although Lower Elk Lake has very easy access, higher use levels and a little higher standard of development than the rest of the park, this area is used by inexperienced visitors as an introduction to backcountry recreation. The use of the Natural Environment Zone in this case is not only to reflect the management needs of the area but to facilitate a transition to the Wilderness Recreation Zone. The Natural Environment Zone covers approximately .05% (350 ha) of Height of the Rockies and Elk Lakes provincial parks.

Special Features Zone

The objective of the Special Features Zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values. Management emphasizes a high level of protection and ongoing monitoring and limits facilities to those used for interpretation.

The Special Features Zone protects several alpine and valley meadows, Petain Falls, two historic passes and areas encompassing fossil features. The latter feature will be managed as a Special Features Zone once identified through the proposed inventory. The location of fossils will be kept confidential to protect them from being removed from the park. Although Upper and Lower Elk lakes are special features, recreational use by visitors precludes them from being managed as a Special Features Zone.

The Special Features Zone for known features covers about 1.5% or 1100 ha of the parks.