

## **2.0 PARK VISION AND ROLES**

### **2.1 Significance in the Protected Area System**

Marble Range and Edge Hills provincial parks protect 6.8% of the Pavillion Ranges Ecosection, which is located in the Southern Interior Ecoprovince of British Columbia. These are the largest parks in the Pavillion Ranges, with a number of smaller parks located to the south, including Cornwall, Arrowsmith and Blue Earth Lake parks in the Thompson River District. These smaller parks contribute another 2%, resulting in a total of 8.74% of the ecosection within protected areas. Map 2 shows the ecosections and biogeoclimatic zones within Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks.

In addition to protecting large , representative ecosystems and backcountry opportunities, these parks encompass a number of special features. Cultural features include examples of ranching, trapping and Chinese mining history, as well as historic aboriginal settlement sites and fishing stations on the Fraser River.

The Marble Range is characterized by bold castellated peaks and ridges of pale gray Upper Permian limestone. This limestone, the upper member of the Cache Creek group, extends northward from the Cornwall Hills on Upper Hat Creek to beyond Big Bar Creek.

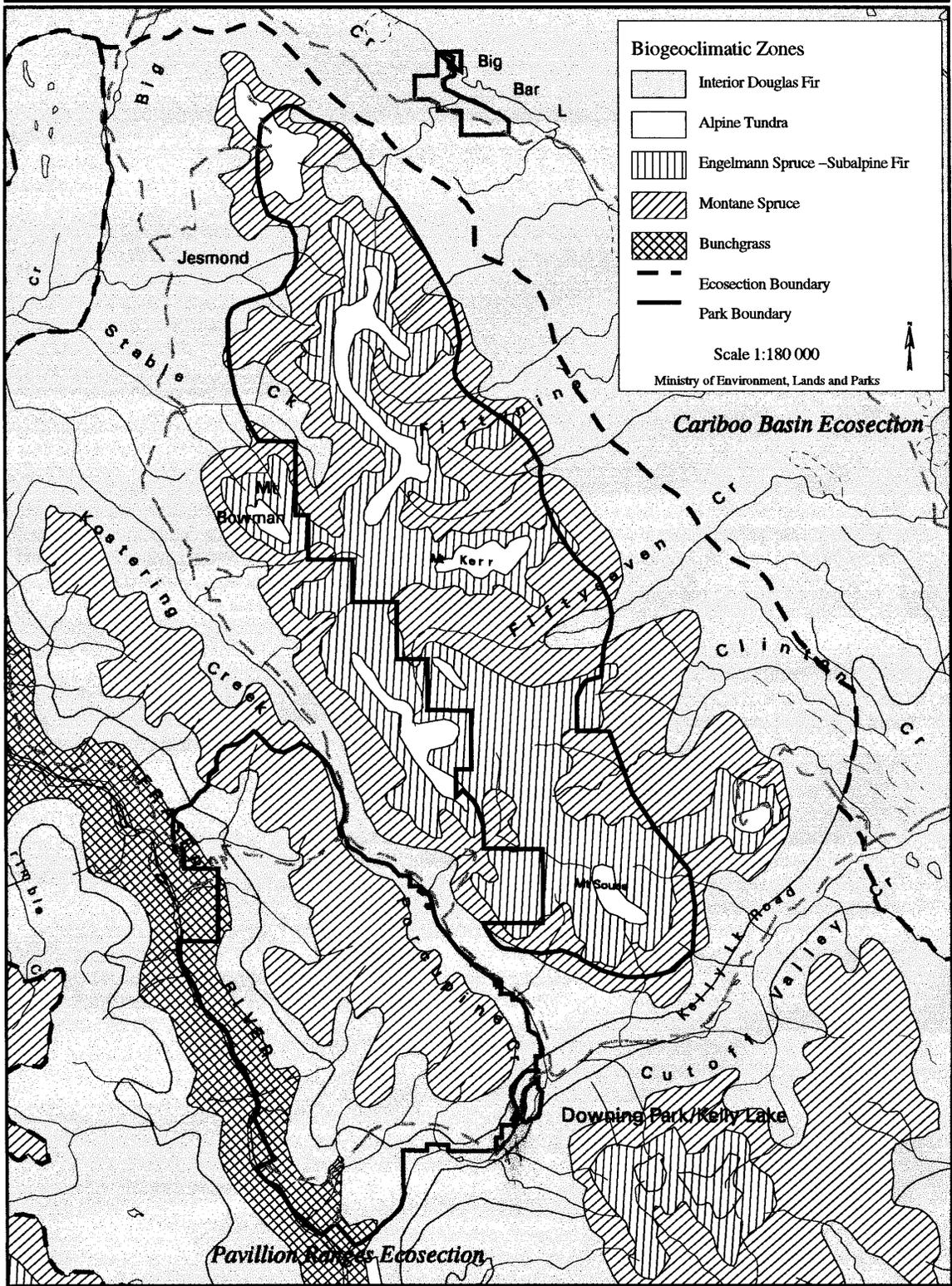
Marble Range Park is particularly noted for its karst topography, with features such as sinkholes, caves, disappearing streams and vertical shafts and vents that are unique to the interior of the province. Karst formations are not well represented in the parks system — examples of other provincially significant karst formations are found in Artilish Caves and White Ridge parks on Vancouver Island. The karst topography supports rare plant communities associated with the calcareous soils that overlay the limestone bedrock geology. The parks also provide important habitat for a number of species that require large, diverse ecosystems, including mule deer and the blue listed California bighorn sheep.

These parks provide outstanding backcountry opportunities for day or overnight recreationists seeking low impact experiences in close proximity to road access. Horseback riding, hiking, photography, hunting and wildlife viewing are all popular activities.

There are no developed day use or overnight facilities in Marble Range or Edge Hills Parks. Other nearby parks offer overnight facilities including Big Bar Lake park with 33 campsites, Downing park with 25 campsites and Green Lake park with 121 campsites.

Although Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks are located close to the community of Clinton and to Highway 97, most park visitors are from the surrounding area and utilize the area for hunting, hiking, horseback riding and wildlife viewing.

Map 2. Ecosections and Biogeoclimatic Zones



The area surrounding the parks is easily accessed by roads developed for mining, logging and settlement purposes. Increasing urbanization and population growth in the southern interior of British Columbia, have resulted in fragmentation of natural landscapes and placed a number of species on the red and blue species lists. Increases in tourist travel from Alberta and the Lower Mainland in the summer months have also created increased demand for accessible wilderness and natural environment experiences. As these trends continue, the role of these parks in protecting ecosystems and providing backcountry recreation opportunities will become increasingly important.

## **2.2 Roles of Marble Range and Edge Hills Provincial Parks**

The respective roles for Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks are described in this section and provide the general purpose of each park. Together with the vision statement, these roles help guide the management strategies and user activities within the parks. These roles are consistent with the broader provincial Protected Area Strategy Goals and with BC Parks System Goals, as described in *Appendix B*.

### **2.2.1 Roles of Marble Range Provincial Park**

#### **Conservation Role**

- Marble Range Park is representative of the subalpine and low alpine environments in the calcareous portions of the Pavilion Ranges Ecoregion. It contains four biogeoclimatic zones including relatively large areas of the Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir zone and smaller areas of the Alpine Tundra, Montane Spruce and Interior Douglas-fir zones.
- The park has a high degree of naturalness including: closed canopy old forests of spruce, lodgepole pine, whitebark pine and Douglas-fir; a variety of younger forests; extensive forest/alpine parklands; and dry meadows. Unusual dry grasslands occur on the southern slopes of the park on Mt. Soues.
- The forest/alpine parkland, which is a major feature of the park, is especially rich in bird species, alpine flowering plants and other wildlife. This parkland environment has high wildlife habitat and wildlife viewing values.
- The park is unusual for its limestone bedrock and calcareous soils. Unusual plant species are present due to this calcareous bedrock, and some plant species occur at elevations higher than their normal distribution on other types of bedrock.
- The park protects important habitat for California bighorn sheep, including ram and lambing areas, and important summer range for mule deer.
- The park includes distinctive karst topography in which the action of water on limestone bedrock over thousands of years has resulted in unusual surface and subsurface features including sinkholes, vertical shafts, caves, disappearing streams and springs, and complex underground drainage systems.

## **Recreation Role**

Under the provincial system goals for recreation, BC Parks has four recreation goals a) tourism travel routes; b) holiday destination; c) backcountry; and d) local and regional recreation opportunities. The focus for Marble Range Park is predominantly backcountry recreation although the park also meets the goal of providing local recreation opportunities.

- The Marble Range is a dominant recreation feature in the south Cariboo and offers exceptional opportunities for enjoying mountain scenery and experiencing the outdoors.
- Marble Range Park provides an informal network of overnight and day use trails and routes that support hiking, horseback riding and backcountry camping in a wilderness setting.
- The park provides opportunities for wildlife viewing and hunting.

### **2.2.2 Roles of Edge Hills Provincial Park**

#### **Conservation Role**

- Edge Hills Park is representative of the non-calcareous portion of the Pavilion Ranges Ecoregion and contains ecosystems of the Bunchgrass, Interior Douglas-fir and Montane Spruce biogeoclimatic zones.
- The west slopes of the park include a unique sequence of ecosystems from dry grassland and sagebrush communities at low elevations, to old Douglas-fir forests at middle elevations, and moist spruce and lodgepole pine forests at upper elevations.
- The park is especially notable for its grassland and dry forest/grassland transition ecosystems which provide habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife species, possibly including several rare, endangered or threatened species.
- The park protects important mule deer winter range and important habitat for California bighorn sheep, including portions of a migration corridor to lambing areas.
- The park includes habitat for cougar, bats, grouse and many other species characteristic of dry Interior forests and forest/grassland transitions.

#### **Recreation Role**

The focus for Edge Hills Park in meeting provincial system goals for recreation is to provide low intensity backcountry recreation and local recreation opportunities.

- Edge Hills provides opportunity for low intensity wildlife viewing, photography, hunting, limited horseback riding and hiking in a backcountry setting.

### **2.2.3 Cultural Heritage Role for the Parks**

- Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks are within the traditional territory of the aboriginal people of the Shuswap area and have a history of aboriginal occupation. Three First Nations continue to use these parks for sustenance, spiritual and cultural purposes.
- Within Edge Hills Park, and potentially within Marble Range Park, are a number of pit houses that date from a time of early settlement by the Shuswap people. These areas are of significant cultural and spiritual importance to aboriginal people, and may hold important archaeological interest.
- Mining, ranching, trapping and guiding activities have occurred in and around these parks for many years and add important historical interest and context for park visitors and local residents.
- Grange Mine, located just outside Edge Hills Park at the mouth of Kelly Creek, operated until the late 1940s. Evidence also exists of extensive placer and hardrock mining in the form of numerous shafts and adits. Miners cabins existed below Pear Lake. There is a history of Chinese people working placer and hardrock claims extensively in this area.



**Plate 2: Lower grassland slopes of Edge Hills Park**

## 2.3 Vision Statement

The vision statement for Marble Range and Edge Hills Parks describes the character and use of these areas as we would expect to experience them 25 years from now (in 2023). Being clear about the long-term vision (state) guides what management objectives and strategies are adopted in the short-term (to achieve the vision). The vision assists park managers when faced with the need to respond to changing environmental conditions, growing recreational pressures or shifts in approaches to conservation management.

The vision statement is also based, in part, on the conservation and recreation contributions of these park areas to the provincial Protected Areas Strategy.

### ***Vision Statement***

Marble Range and Edge Hills Provincial Parks are, and will continue to be known as wilderness parks. The main focus of management is the protection and maintenance of the wild, natural ecosystems, particularly those elements related to the protection of wildlife habitat and conservation of wildlife populations.

These parks continue to fulfill their traditional roles as areas of local and regional, low-impact recreational use in a wilderness setting. Park users continue to cherish the wilderness experience.

Marble Range and Edge Hills are small, rugged parks that provide the visitor with a sense of connectedness to the natural landscape and a feeling of discovery of a special place of beauty and tranquillity. These parks contribute to the natural history of the area.

Marble Range and Edge Hills Provincial Parks are managed as complementary units that together contribute important elements of summer and winter ungulate habitat. Other important features include outstanding limestone geology and cave and vent formations that are protected from recreation impacts.

Park management is integrated with the management of lands and resources on adjacent Crown lands through government planning and coordinated operational activities.

## ***Achieving the Vision***

- Natural ecosystems and ecological integrity are maintained.
- Riparian areas are protected from damage.
- Management across park boundaries is coordinated with other regulatory agencies to enhance park values and maintain aesthetic qualities.
- Wildlife habitat and viable wildlife populations are sustained within the parks and in the vicinity of the parks, particularly with respect to California bighorn sheep and mule deer.
- Park management reflects the historic recreational pursuits of local people and the general public, particularly hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, hunting, backpacking, and nature appreciation.
- Visitor numbers are managed at a level that protects the natural ecological integrity and maintains the backcountry experience.
- Recreation uses are non-motorized and low impact, and do not detract from the natural values, particularly the quality of wildlife habitat and use of critical ranges.
- Commercial facilities and permanent structures are located in appropriate areas outside of park boundaries.
- Commercial backcountry operations are compatible with levels of public recreation use.
- Aboriginal people use the park areas for subsistence, spiritual and cultural purposes.
- Local residents and aboriginal people participate in park management planning and operational activities.