

Skeena Region

**MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
STATEMENT**

March 2003

**for Swan Lake Kispiox River
Provincial Park Extension**



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

**Ministry of Water, Land
and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship
Division**

Swan Lake Kispiox River Provincial Park Extension

Approvals Page

Forward

Following completion of the Kispiox Land and Resource Management Plan and the Upper Kispiox Land Use Plan, the provincial government approved protection of the 42,201-hectare extension to Swan Lake Kispiox River Park. This extension ensures protection of under-represented old-growth forests, water quality at the source of the Kispiox River, critical salmonid spawning and rearing habitat, and highly valuable and productive grizzly bear habitat. The area is almost completely unroaded, and without infrastructure, and so allows an excellent opportunity for the public to enjoy wilderness recreation activities while conserving the flora and fauna of old-growth ecosystems that may be impacted outside of the park. This management direction statement provides strategic management direction for Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension until preparation of a full management plan for the entire park.

Ongoing consultation with First Nations may result in revisions as appropriate.

Implementation of strategies in the management direction statement (MDS) will be dependent on available funding and Environmental Stewardship Division priorities.

Approvals:



Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division



Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

The Upper Kispiox Resource and Land Use Plan and additional public input provided the direction for the development of this management direction statement.

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Swan Lake Kispiox River Provincial Park Extension

Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and direction statements from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of all these strategies is subject to funding and funding procedures. In addition, all development associated with these strategies within the protected area is subject to the BC Parks' Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

Swan Lake Kispiox River Park was established on April 30, 1996 following the recommendations of the Kispiox Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) which called for the Ministry of Forests' wilderness area to be "upgraded" to a Class A park. The area of the park at the time of establishment was 19,273 hectares. Following the subsequent recommendations of the Upper Kispiox Land Use Planning Group, 43,046 hectares were added to the park on June 29, 1999. The total area of the park is now 62,319 hectares, and the park is listed and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*. The 1999 addition to Swan Lake Kispiox River Park is commonly referred to as the Extension (Figure 1). Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension includes the headwaters of the Kispiox River, is 65 kilometres north of the town of Hazelton and lies within the claimed traditional territory of the Gitx̓san and Gitanyow First Nations.

Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension is a wilderness park, with the primary goal of conserving the natural diversity representative of the Nass Basin and Northern Skeena Mountains ecoregions. Specific goals for the protected area include protection of the freshwater ecosystems contained within the park, principally the headwaters of the Kispiox River, and protection of important grizzly bear habitat and forested ecosystems in the old-growth stage.

Besides Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension, several other large parks in the region protect backcountry and wilderness values. These include Babine Mountains and Seven Sisters parks. Additionally, several smaller parks provide the public with day-use or camping opportunities. For example, nearby day use opportunities include Driftwood Canyon, Seeley Lake and Ross Lake parks. In combination, these protected areas provide the public with a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Provincial Park Attributes

Conservation

Swan Lake Kispiox River Park contains the following conservation attributes:

- Provides the best representation of both the Nass Basin and Northern Skeena Mountains ecoregions. The Nass Basin Ecoregion is well represented (6.2%) in the protected areas system. Swan Lake Kispiox River Park provides 86% of the protected area representation

of this ecosection or 5.3% of the entire ecosection. The Northern Skeena Mountains Ecosection is moderately represented in (3.1%) in the protected areas system. Swan Lake Kispiox River Park contributes 56% of the representation of this ecosection.

- Contains an elevation sequence of biogeoclimatic zones from submontane to alpine. The park provides the best representation of the ICHmc1. In British Columbia, 6.4% of this subzone is protected. Swan Lake Kispiox River Park contributes 93% of this representation. The park also contributes significantly to the representation of the ESSFwv where 4.85% of this ecosystem is protected provincially. Swan Lake Kispiox River Park contributes 23.67% of the representation of this ecosystem, placing it second behind Mount Edziza Park. Old-growth forest structural stage ecosystems dominate the park. The park also protects more than 7,600 hectares of Alpine Tundra (AT).
- Protects a high degree of naturalness and, as a special feature “antique forests” within the extension (i.e. the forest structure is older than the oldest trees and has not been affected by a natural disturbance).
- Conserves three rare plant associations for the subzones that occupy the park and it is highly probable that these ecosystems occur in the Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension. (See Appendix 2).
- Protects and enhances the integrity of grizzly bear habitat of the pre-existing Swan Lake Kispiox River Park by connecting with denning and seasonal foraging habitat in Kuldo Mountains.
- Protects a freshwater ecosystem, the headwaters of the Kispiox River, which is important for salmonid rearing and as a domestic water supply source.
- Protects the following species known to occur or likely occur in the Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension and are either red or blue-listed by the Conservation Data Centre or are listed as Identified Wildlife Species under the Forest Practices Code - Swainson's hawk, trumpeter swan, bald eagle, bull trout, wolverine, fisher and grizzly bear. (See Appendix 2).

Recreation and Tourism

- Protects water quality and fish habitat for internationally significant angling opportunities downstream in the Kispiox River.
- Provides protection of a rare wilderness lake complex.
- Offers rugged wilderness recreation opportunities.
- Offers fishing opportunities in accessible lakes - Footsore, Hodder, Williams.

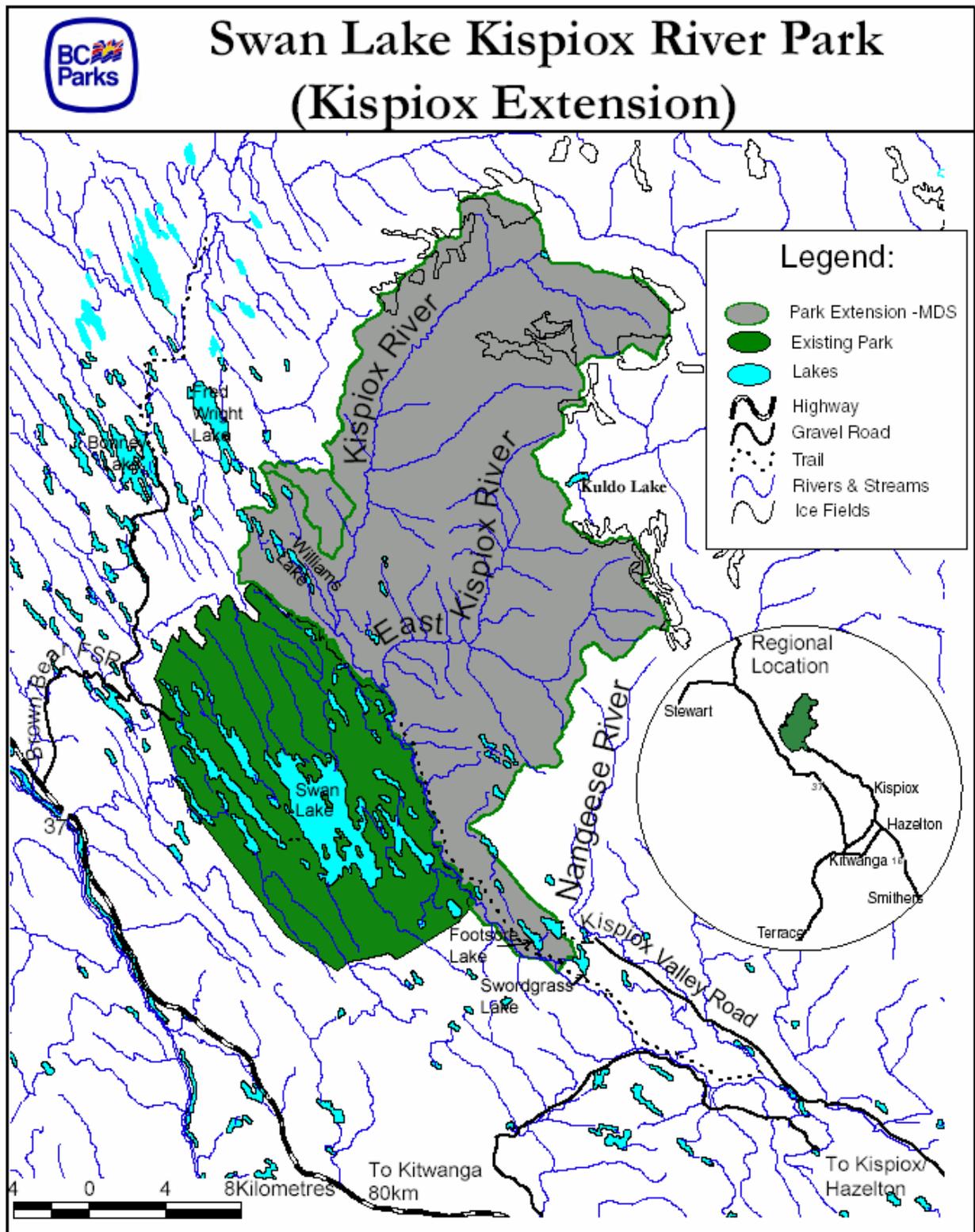
Commercial Recreation Opportunities

- Provides commercial guided hunting and angling opportunities within the park but only for fish and wildlife species not endangered, threatened or vulnerable.
- Contains commercial guided non-consumptive wildlife viewing opportunities.
- Potential for low impact wilderness tourism activities such as guided hiking and horse tours, guided fishing and backcountry skiing.

Cultural Heritage

- Identified by the Gitx̄san and Gitanyow Treaty Offices as being part of the house territory system.
- Included in land claims by both Gitanyow and Gitx̄san First Nations.
- Reported as a site for ancient aboriginal villages.

Figure 1 – Regional Context Map



- Identified as the location and source of aboriginal legends.
- Used by First Nations for traditional hunting and trapping activities.
- Used for aboriginal food gathering, primarily fish and medicinal plants.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

Swan Lake Kispiox River Park is exceptional in its degree of naturalness and many people regard the park as the “heart and lungs” of the Kispiox River. While the park protects the aquatic ecosystem for residential water consumption, it also contains valued spawning grounds for internationally renowned salmon and steelhead runs and provides important landscape representation and protection of vital habitat for a variety of species. In particular, the Swan Lake Kispiox River Park provides:

- The best representation of both the Nass Basin and Northern Skeena Mountains ecoregions. Includes a full elevation sequence of biogeoclimatic variants with the majority of the extension in a non-alpine environment;
- Habitat for a variety of red and blue-listed species (including plant associations and wildlife species) and likely presence of others;
- An important opportunity for scientific research and education on the park’s ecosystems and its flora and fauna; and,
- Important cultural heritage sites and encompasses a number of Gitx̱san and Gitanyow house territories

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension is located about 65 kilometres north of Hazelton. The park extension is unroaded except for the following:

- The Kispiox mainline extends about five kilometres into the southern tip of the park extension, between Hodder Lake and Footsore Lake;
- A 100 metre trail that reaches Footsore Lake;
- A logging road is excluded from the park for about one kilometre on the northwestern boundary near William Lake; and,
- People gain access to the sub-alpine and alpine from the Kuldo area, although the road does not enter the park.

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

- The park extension lies within one guide-outfitter territory.
- One angler guide operates within the park extension.
- Traplines registered with Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.
- Gitx̱san and Gitanyow traplines exist within the park extension.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Previously established portion of Swan Lake Kispiox River Provincial Park borders the extension on the west.
- A special management zone, for forestry operations, abuts the park on the southern boundary.

Figure 2 – Provincial Park Tenures and Uses Map

- The eastern boundary is a watershed divide dominated by alpine and subalpine ecosystems; commercial forestry on Timber Supply Area (TSA) land operates extremely close to the eastern boundary in the Kuldo Lake area.
- The north and northwest boundary of the extension abuts TSA land actively managed for commercial timber production.

First Nations Interests

- Most of the extension is within asserted traditional Gitx̱san territory and the Gitx̱san identified chiefs are Delgamuukw, Antgulilbix, Tsii Basaa and Geel.
- Southern boundary and the adjacent special management zone on the Nangeese are within asserted traditional Gitanyow territory and the identified Chief is Maali.
- The pre-existing park is also within asserted Gitanyow Territory (Chief Haizimsque) and the portion within the Nass drainage is subject to consultation with the Nisga'a Lisims government as per the Nisga'a Final Agreement.
- The Upper Kispiox Planning Group report listed the following Gitx̱san needs: traplines to be undisturbed; no damage to fish and wildlife habitat (especially grizzly bear habitat); no disturbance to fish spawning grounds; no disturbance to medicinal plant areas; use to benefit future Gitx̱san generations.
- Gitanyow representatives have expressed an interest in the following issues:
 - Establishing opportunities for cooperative management of the park;
 - Clarifying the roles of Gitx̱san-Wet'suwet'en Watershed Authority (GWWA) and Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) in the park. These authorities presently run under the auspices of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. First Nations want to know how the authorities will relate to Environmental Stewardship Division's management of the park; and,
 - Identifying opportunities for First Nations employment and training.
- The Gitx̱san expressed some of their concerns in the Upper Kispiox Land Use Plan. In addition, the Gitx̱san participated in the selection of consultants to prepare the draft management direction statement. The Environmental Stewardship Division tried to involve the Gitx̱san in a review of the draft plan but with limited success. Previously, the Gitx̱san expressed their concern and interest to the Environmental Stewardship Division about the continuance of trapping within the extension including having a reasonable means of access to traplines.
- The Gitx̱san and Gitanyow expressed an interest in cooperative management within the park extension. The province agreed to discuss cooperative management with the Gitanyow as part of the 1999 Treaty Offer to the Gitanyow. Treaty negotiations with the Gitanyow are ongoing. The Gitx̱san have signed a reconciliation agreement with the province and are currently discussing various methods of consultation. The Gitx̱san also resumed treaty negotiations and are working towards other initiatives with the province.

Other Agency Interests

- The Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection and the Ministry of Forests provided statement of interest responses to the Upper Kispiox Planning Group, and the present list of concerns incorporates those interests.
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans presently regulates anadromous fish (i.e. fish that ascend rivers from the sea to spawn) and is interested in referrals from Environmental

Stewardship Division about any changes in management within the park that may affect anadromous fish.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Recreational users: because of poor access, recreational use is quite low; angling and hunting pressure is low and boating opportunities are few.
- Local residents: the area has been the subject of conservation efforts by Kispiox Valley residents for more than 25 years; a core group of people maintain a reasonably high level of interest in the area; many of them were part of the Swan Lake Park Monitoring Committee.
- The guide-outfitter has taken clients to hunt grizzly bear and mountain goat in the past, but has not done much hunting lately in the park; the park is only a portion of the guiding area and poor access within the park limits hunting and guiding opportunities.

Park Role Statement

Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension's primary role is the conservation of a natural wildland environment that provides representation of two under-represented ecosections (the Nass Valley and Northern Skeena Mountains ecosections) and protects vital habitats and ecosystems for the survival of a variety of rare, endangered and threatened plant and animal species. The park also performs an equally important conservation role of preserving significant First Nations cultural heritage values and archaeological sites. The Swan Lake Kispiox River Park Extension serves a secondary role of presenting to the public outdoor recreation opportunities dependent on an intact wilderness environment. Visitors to the park can participate in challenging backcountry camping, hiking, canoeing, boating, angling, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Management Commitments and Issues

Management Direction from Previous Planning

The Kispiox Land and Resource Management Plan initially deferred the Upper Kispiox River area from land use decisions so that further detailed work by the Upper Kispiox Land Use Planning Group could take place. The planning group presented its recommendations in a report, *Upper Kispiox Land Use Recommendations*, including two unresolved areas, to the provincial government for a final decision. The provincial government decided to protect all of the area recommended for protection by the Upper Kispiox Planning Group and one of the unresolved areas. The provincial government designated the other unresolved area as a special management area that abuts the park to the south. A key recommendation by the Kispiox Land Use Planning Group was that Environmental Stewardship Division adopts the Swan Lake Wilderness Area Management Plan developed and approved by the Ministry of Forests as the basis for management of the additional area. This management direction statement maintains the level of conservation focus identified in that plan and reconciles these objectives with Environmental Stewardship Division policy and additional public input.

Management Issues

Theme	Issue
Protecting ecosystems and biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park's flora and fauna are relatively unknown as inventory of these values is incomplete. • The park's forests may be at risk because of potential forest fire and insect pest damage. • The survival of large mammals (e.g. grizzly bear) and predator-prey relationships are at risk because the park is too small to conserve required wildlife ranges. • The survival of rare, threatened and endangered animal species may be at risk because of hunting activities within the park. • Resource use activities on lands next to the park may pose a threat to the park's fish and wildlife values.
Protecting recreational values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilderness outdoor recreation opportunities may be at risk because of poorly located and designed recreation facility developments.
Protecting cultural heritage values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park's cultural heritage values are relatively unknown as inventory of these values is incomplete. • Gitksan and Gitanyow concerned about the protection of spiritual and social values, as well as historical values and heritage sites, because the Upper Kispiox is now a provincial park.
Defining First Nations involvement in park management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitksan and Gitanyow concerned about their role in future park management because of their expressed interest in cooperative management and local employment opportunities. • Gitksan and Gitanyow concerned about their position in future park management because the roles of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Watershed Authority (GWWA) and Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) remain unclear. • Gitksan and Gitanyow concerned about the commitment to ensure required fish and wildlife for asserted traditional activities (gathering, trapping, hunting and fishing) because the area is now a provincial park with new policies and regulations.
Park Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park visitors may not be aware of the park because of a lack of information signs and boundary markers.

Management Direction

The majority of the park is unroaded and receives little use from trappers, hunters, fishers or other users because of poor access. Consequently, the conservation values within the park are not presently at a high level of risk.

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

Objective	Strategy
To protect the park's ecological values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an inventory of flora and fauna with priority focused on old-growth forest, red and blue-listed plant associations, and grizzly bear habitat. • Develop a long term plan to manage large scale disturbance (wildfire, epidemic level forest pests) with an aim to ensure conservation of old-growth forest, red and blue-listed plant associations, and habitat for species of concern (See Appendix 2) • Undertake effective liaison with land users next to the park to define and maintain wildlife corridors through adjacent forests to essential wildlife habitats. • Maintain an effective liaison with adjacent land users paying particular attention along the north and south boundaries of the park to ensure adjacent industrial activities consider park conservation objectives. • Work with other agencies such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) (salmonid fisheries issues), the Biodiversity Branch and Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, (wildlife and fisheries issues), Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (archaeology issues) and Ministry of Forests (forestry issues) to ensure co-ordination between management agencies and that management activities do not affect the ecological integrity of the park.
To protect the park's ecological values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor, in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection the impact of hunting on grizzly bear populations inside the next to the park. • Monitor, in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, the effect of trapping on furbearer and other wildlife species populations in the park. • Evaluate, in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Recreation and Allocation Branch of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, present pressure from guided and public fishing on fish populations in the context of maintaining population levels, aquatic biodiversity, and ecosystem integrity.
To protect the park's wildland recreational values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the trail leading from the road between Hodder and Footsore Lake; remove this trail if it creates circumstances that threatens wildlife species, especially grizzly bears, or places the public at risk. • Develop an access management plan for the area zoned Natural Environment. This plan should be oriented toward maintaining the natural character of the area and properly defining access to trails and routes beyond the Natural Environment Zone. • Apply, where appropriate, the 12 management principles as stated in the <u>Swan Lake Wilderness Area Management Plan</u>. • Monitor park visitor use levels within the extension to determine if adjacent logging roads are increasing visitor use levels beyond current figures. • Discuss with Transport Canada the possible voluntary avoidance of low elevation over-flights of the park.
To protect First Nations values and involve them in a more active stewardship role within the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate with the Gitanyow First Nation the exercise of defined Gitanyow treaty rights within the portion of the park within Gitanyow claimed territory and explore a co-operative park management regime. • Work with the Gitksan and Gitanyow to define a shared vision for the park, including sustenance activities as well as spiritual, social and heritage values. • Identify park management opportunities for First Nations involvement. • Identify employment opportunities within the park for potential First Nations consideration. • Meet with the Gitksan and Gitanyow First Nation as issues require.
To protect the park's cultural heritage values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and collect information on cultural heritage values within the park.

Objective	Strategy
To provide information to park visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform park visitors of the area's park status by placing appropriate signs in the park. • Develop public education and interpretive material (bear safety, wilderness etiquette, and safety) specific to this provincial park.

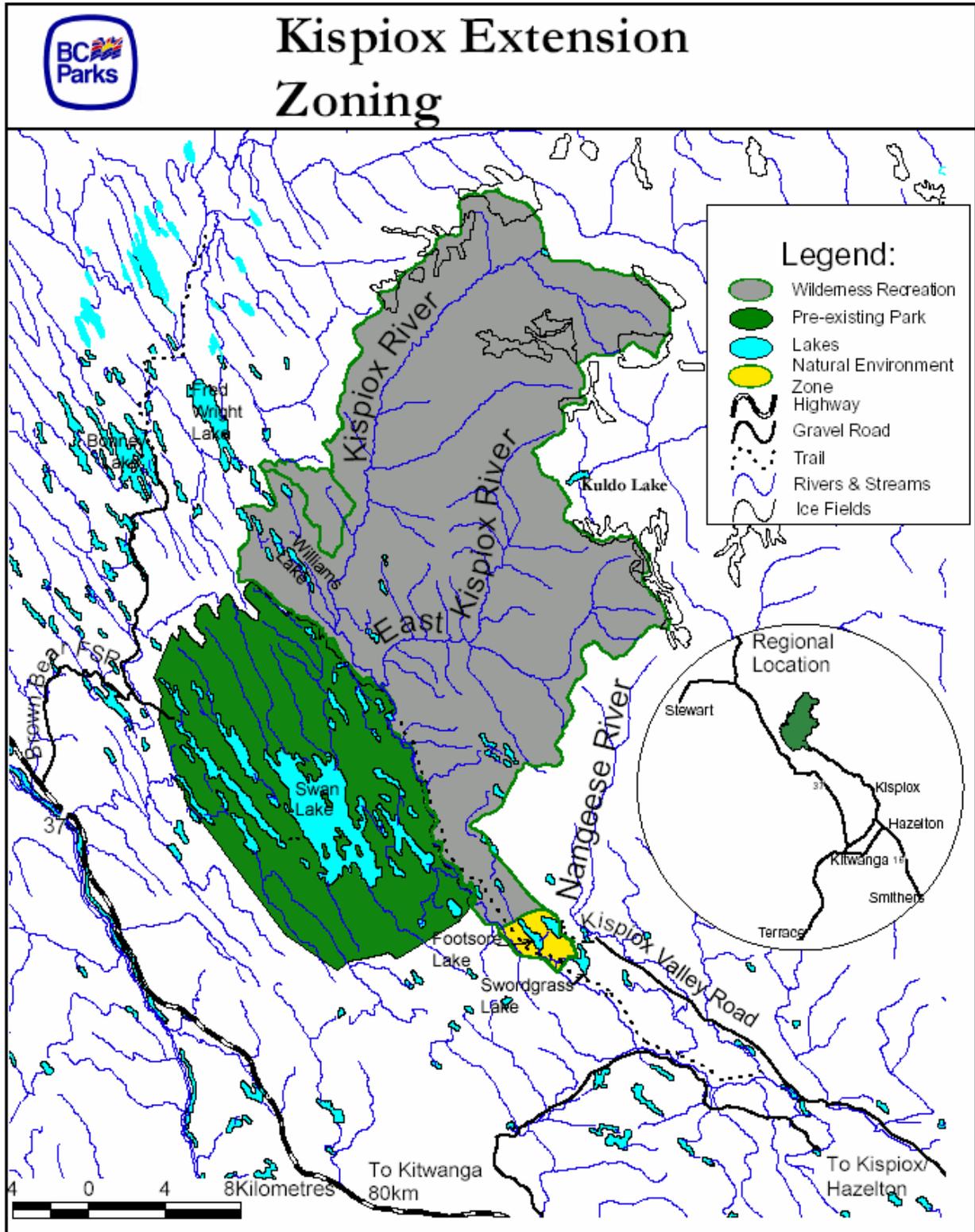
Consultation and Future Planning

The Environmental Stewardship Division will cooperate with other agencies, the public, and First Nations in developing a full park management plan for the park. The Environmental Stewardship Division ranks the development of a full management plan as low to medium. An interim management plan (based on the principles outlined in the Swan Lake Wilderness Management Plan, BC Forest Service, 1996) exists for the original boundaries of Swan Lake Kispiox River Park. The Environmental Stewardship Division will lead a review of this management direction statement and the Forest Service management plan in five to seven years time.

Zoning Plan

Wilderness Recreation Zone applies to the about 41,568 hectares of the park extension's area (Figure 2). Within this zone, trapline holders and First Nations trappers will be permitted to use snowmobiles to gain access to their traplines. The Environmental Stewardship Division will monitor trapping intensity to ensure maintenance of the park's conservation objectives. Intensive Recreation Zone covers approximately 633 hectares of the park extension containing a road along the Kispiox River between two adjacent special management zones administered by the Ministry of Forests. This area provides access to Footsore and Hodder Lakes. The boundary for the Intensive Recreation Zone includes the area from the north end of Footsore Lake to the southern park boundary along the corridor next to the Kispiox River.

Figure 3 - Park Zoning Plan Map



**Appendix 1. Swan Lake Kispiox River Extension Provincial Park
Table of Acceptable Uses, Activities and Facilities.**

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	M
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	Y
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N
Ski Hills	N
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	M
Backcountry Huts	N
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N
Road Access	N
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N2 (Trappers)
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorized Water Access	N
Aircraft Access	N
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	M
Fire Management (prevention)	M
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1
Noxious Weed Control	M
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	M
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan
M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed
N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only
N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed

Appendix 2

Conservation Data Centre (CDC) Rare Vertebrate and Rare Plant Associations relevant to Swan Lake Kispiox River Park

List of CDC listed animals and plant associations that may occur in the Upper Kispiox

BC Conservation Data Centre: Rare Vertebrate Animal Tracking List, Kispiox Forest District, November 1, 1998

Scientific Name	Common Name	Global Ranking	Provincial Rank	Provincial List
Amphibians				
<i>Ascaphus truei</i> coastal pop?	Tailed frog coastal pop	G4T4	S3S4	Blue
Birds				
<i>Asio flammeus</i> *	Short-eared owl	G5	S2N,S3B	Blue
<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i> ?	American Bittern	G4	S3B,SZN	Blue
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i> **	Swainson's hawk	G5	S2B,SZN	Red
<i>Cygnus buccinator</i> **	Trumpeter swan	G4	S3S4B,S4N	Blue
<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> *	American peregrine falcon	G4T3	S2B,SZN	Red
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> ***	Bald eagle	G4	S4	Yellow
Freshwater Fish				
<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i> ***	Bull trout	G3	S3	Blue
Mammals				
<i>Gulo gulo luscus</i> ***	Wolverine, luscus subspecies	G4T4	S3	Blue
<i>Martes pennanti</i> **	Fisher	G5	S3	Blue
<i>Ursus arctos</i> ***	Grizzly bear	G4	S3	Blue

*unlikely in Upper Kispiox

**likely in Upper Kispiox

***known in Upper Kispiox

? status unknown but possibly in Upper Kispiox

Identified Wildlife Species Addressed by the Forest Practices Code: bull trout, tailed frog, trumpeter swan, northern goshawk¹ mountain goat, grizzly bear.

CDC Listed Rare Plant Associations in Upper Kispiox Park

Subzone/Variant/Site Series	Plant Association	Status
ICHmc1/02	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i> - <i>Arctostaphylos</i> - <i>Cladonia</i>	S3
ICHmc1/06	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i> - <i>Menziesia</i> - <i>Cladonia</i>	S3
ESSFwv/02	<i>Abies lasiocarpa</i> - <i>Pinus contorta</i> - <i>Cladonia</i>	S3