

2021

Banff

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

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BANFF NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2021.

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Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Note to readers

The health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians are of the utmost importance. Parks Canada is following the advice and guidance of public health experts to limit the spread of COVID-19 while allowing Canadians to experience Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have unforeseeable impacts on the Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public of any such impacts through its annual implementation update on the implementation of this plan.

For more information about the management plan or about **Banff National Park:**

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1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

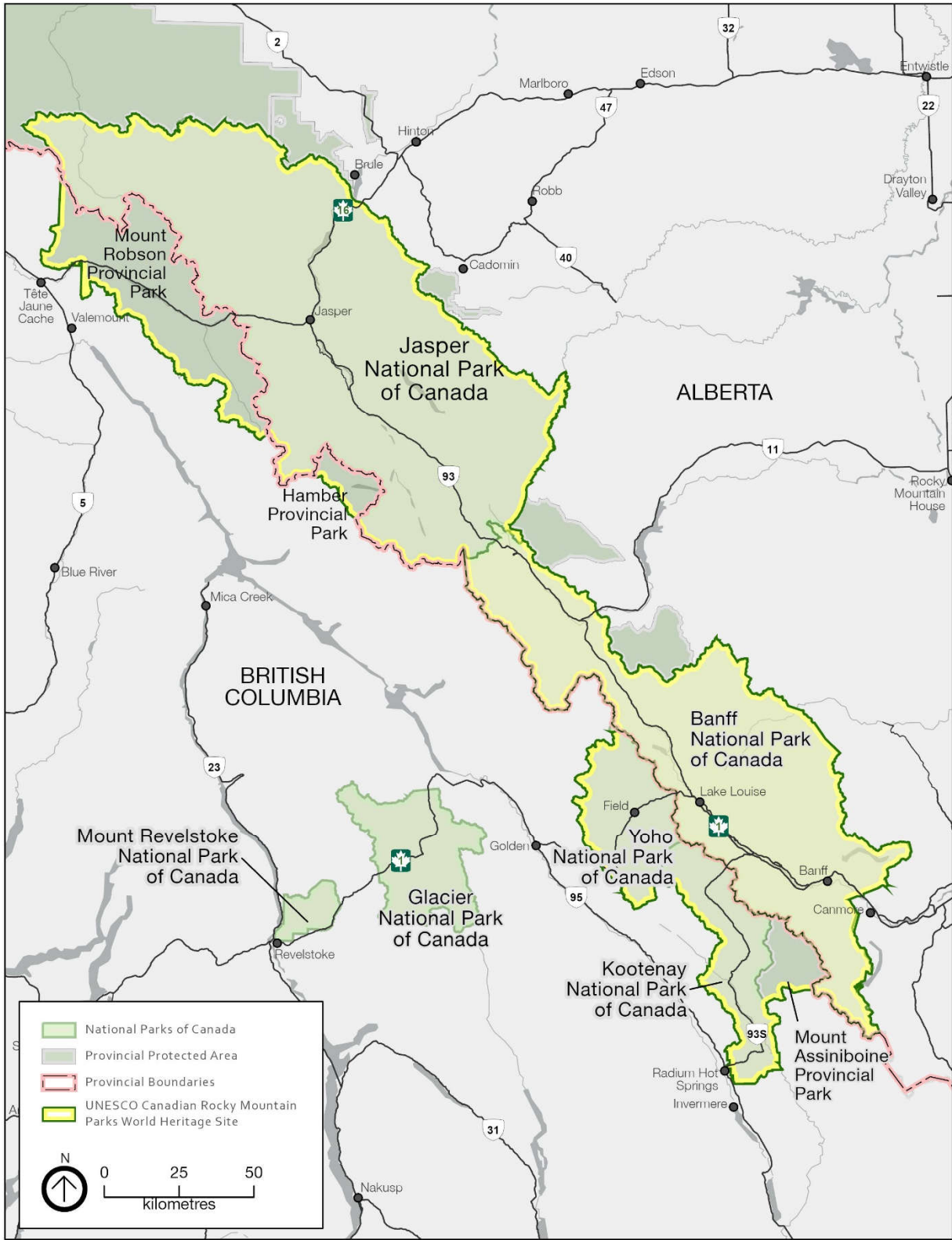
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how park management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

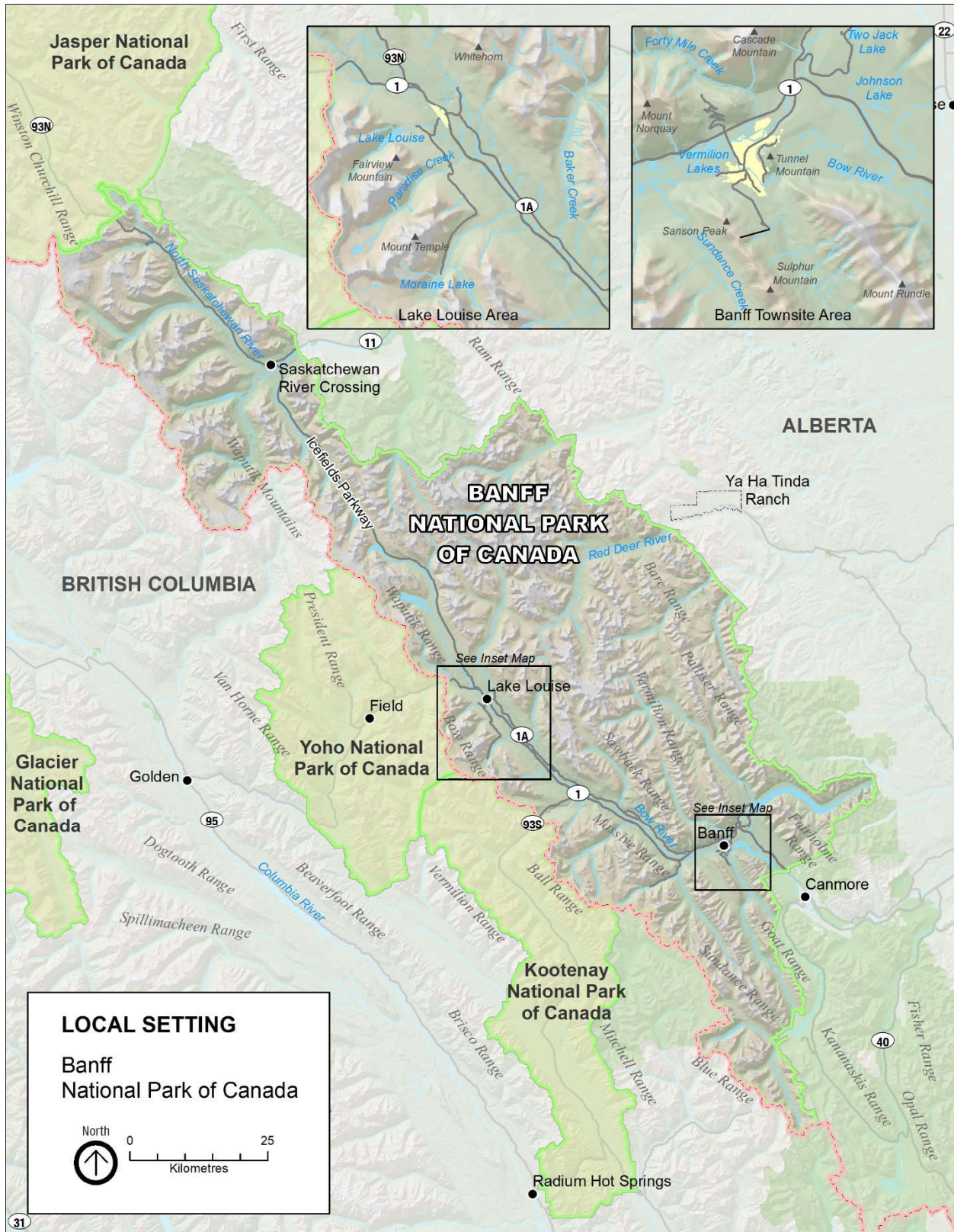
Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Banff National Park by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan's objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Banff National Park in the years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Banff National Park



2.0 Significance of Banff National Park

Long before Banff was established as a national park, the lands and waters of the area were of high significance to Indigenous communities living on both sides of the Continental Divide for ceremony, travel, trade and sustenance. In particular, the Bow and North Saskatchewan River valleys were important east-west travel corridors and places of residence for Indigenous peoples for millennia.

Like many of Canada's earliest national parks, Banff was established in a time when Indigenous peoples were separated from their traditional lands and waters through government policy and law. In Banff National Park, hunting by Indigenous peoples was prohibited starting in 1890. Enforcement of this prohibition, combined with other Government of Canada policies such as those restricting the ability of First Nations to leave reserves, precluded Indigenous peoples from travelling through, harvesting and exercising cultural practices in the area of the park.

Modern-day Banff lies in the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8 Nations, and is within the asserted traditional territories of numerous Indigenous groups from both sides of the Continental Divide. The lands within the park remain highly significant to these groups. They have been and still are the subject of various land and title claims by multiple nations, including the Siksika and Stoney Nakoda First Nations. For example, the Siksika First Nation's claim concerning a historical 26.5 square mile timber limit in the Castle Mountain area (known to the Siksika as the Miistukskoowa Area) was settled between the Siksika Nation and Canada in 2016. As a result, this area remains as part of the park with special considerations for the Siksika Nation for ceremonial, educational and other purposes.

Banff National Park was established around the Sulphur Mountain hot springs in 1885, as part of a young nation's efforts to connect Canada by rail. Thus the country's national park system was born and the stage was set for the then-emerging global idea of land conservation and protecting heritage places for the long-term benefit, education and enjoyment of all.

The park contains the headwaters of the Bow River (the water source for millions of people living downstream) and provides important habitat for 56 species of mammals, 300 species of birds, and more than 800 species of plants. Rare and sensitive wildlife, including important predators such as wolves, wolverines and grizzly bears, are more common and widespread today than in the 1970s, and they range freely throughout more of the landscape than in the past.

Known for its beauty, wildlife diversity, and dramatic wilderness, the park has long been an inspiration to explorers, artists and writers who continue to add to a rich body of work that embodies the spirit of the mountains and people's sense of connection with mountain landscapes. It remains a centre of mountain culture and outdoor adventure where Canadians build relationships with nature, adventure and one another.

Banff is also renowned for its long history of wildlife research and conservation, its innovations in the applied science of ecological restoration, and its role in the tourism industry as Canada's most visited national park. It is one of seven parks comprising the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site as designated by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and a global symbol of Canada. Canadians and others from around the world look to Banff for leadership and innovation in the theory and practice of protected area management, and to represent the best of Canada's national park system. It contributes significantly to the local regional and national economy, and to the social well-being of its many visitors.

The park provides unparalleled opportunities to see, experience and learn about natural and cultural heritage in Canada, including the history that helped shape the nation. Its lands and waters are of special cultural and spiritual significance to Indigenous peoples from both sides of the Continental Divide. Other specific features that make Banff unique include:

- Western Canada's southernmost roadless wilderness areas large enough for multi-day travel;
- landscape features (Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Peyto Lake and Vermilion Lakes, thermal hot springs, mounts Rundle and Temple) that are symbols of Canada;

- the northern limit in Canada for alpine larch, limber pine, westslope cutthroat trout and other important species;
- eight national historic sites and one designated Canadian Heritage River -- the North Saskatchewan;
- with Yoho and Glacier national parks, Banff was the birthplace of Canada's mountaineering and alpine skiing heritage;
- wild populations of bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, wolves, mountain goats, elk, mule deer, golden eagles, the American dipper and other Rocky Mountain wildlife;
- the hydrological apex of North America (the Columbia Icefield), where water drains into three oceans;
- Castleguard Cave, one of Canada's longest caves at 20 kilometres in length and extending under the Columbia Icefield;
- Parks Canada's most popular national park, attracting more than 4.1 million visitors in 2019-20;
- the spectacular Bow Valley and Icefields parkways; and
- the community of Banff, with its unique-in-the-world governance regime and remarkable array of visitor services, museums, galleries, heritage buildings, and the world-renowned Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

3.0 Planning Context

The tradition of welcoming visitors from around the world has been a part of Banff National Park's identity and operation since its inception. Shortly after the creation of the original 26 km² Hot Springs Reserve in 1885, the Canadian government and the Canadian Pacific Railway began working to develop the hot springs as a tourist destination to increase traffic on the railway. In support of the burgeoning tourist industry, the community of Banff was established in 1886 as a transportation and service centre for visitors.

Over the next 135 years, Banff National Park continued to develop infrastructure, programs and services for visitors. Today, of all national parks in Canada, it has the greatest amount of roofed accommodation accessible by motor vehicle and situated in the backcountry. It also has 1,500 kilometres of official trails, 320 kilometres of roads, 13 frontcountry campgrounds offering over 2,400 sites, 51 backcountry campgrounds, dozens of picnic areas and viewpoints, three ski areas, a golf course, and two well-known communities providing a wide range of services for Banff's residents and visitors.

To ensure that infrastructure development and use do not compromise the park's ecological integrity or the other qualities that draw people to it, the amount of allowable commercial development and the boundaries of the communities and ski areas has been limited through various means. Commercial development space in the communities of Lake Louise and Banff has been fully allocated. Once this allocation has been fully constructed commercial activity in the communities will be restricted to redevelopment of existing facilities and structures. Although their growth and development limits have been prescribed in approved site guidelines for each resort, none of the ski areas have reached their maximum development.

The *State of the Park Assessment (2018)* provided a 'report card' on the condition of certain natural and cultural resources, and other aspects of Parks Canada's work, and how this condition has changed since the last park management plan. It identified the need to improve important habitat quality and the effectiveness of movement corridors for both land-based and aquatic species. These systems have been negatively affected by the loss of connectivity through decades of historic road and rail construction practices, and in the case of aquatic communities, through hydro development that resulted in barriers to fish passage on many streams, and through stocking of non-native fish species. It is anticipated that addressing this will take a considerable period of time, particularly with respect to aquatic ecosystems, however progress has been made in recent years through initiatives such as removal of the 40 Mile Creek

Dam, restoration of Cascade Creek and connectivity in several others during twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway, and removal of non-native fish from a number of locations in the park.

Another important conservation challenge identified in the *State of the Park Assessment* is the need to improve the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems. Fire suppression throughout most of the 20th century has created a forest that is less diverse than expected in both age and species composition. This older, more uniform forest is vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire, insects and disease. Climate change may also affect forest ecosystems in various ways, including: alteration of the fire regime, changes in species composition and distribution, and a shift toward more open forest types over time. Returning fire to the landscape is important for forest ecosystem restoration and resilience to climate change.

Other key areas for attention from the *State of the Park Assessment* are the need for improved management of the park's cultural resources (including archaeological sites, heritage buildings, and objects), and for increased maintenance of other Parks Canada built assets. While the Federal Infrastructure program afforded the opportunity to make significant progress on the latter over the last 5 years, there is still much work to be done.

Park visitation has grown 30% over the last decade and Banff now welcomes more than four million people annually, primarily during the summer and ski seasons. Trends indicate that during peak periods, visitors are arriving earlier in the day, and visiting more in fall and spring than was noted when the previous park management plan was written. When surveyed, visitors consistently rate their satisfaction as high and would recommend the park as a destination to others. Recognized as one of National Geographic Traveler magazine's 'Best of the World' destinations, Banff's visitation now accounts for 26% of all visits to Canada's national parks.

While it is a source of pride for Parks Canada and Canadians, Banff's high visitation is also one of the park's greatest challenges and the subject of rising public concern. While the park as a whole is becoming busier in all seasons, the most significant visitation increases are in spring and fall, with daytime visitors taking in key attractions accessible by vehicle. For many years, Parks Canada's services (e.g. reservation and transit systems, communication programs, online information) and on-the-ground active management of visitors and wildlife have mitigated the effects of rising visitation on the park's resources and the visitor experience; however, as noted in the *State of the Park Assessment* some park infrastructure and facilities in key locations are now at or near capacity, more frequently and for longer periods. Finding safe, effective, sustainable approaches to shaping visitor expectations, managing further visitation increases, and minimizing congestion-related delays, while sustaining the heritage qualities and values intrinsic to Banff and the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, is a fundamental challenge of the next decade.

In addition to increasing in number, Banff's visitors are becoming increasingly diverse. To ensure the park is welcoming, fully inclusive and relevant to changing visitor expectations and social profiles, future park services and programs will need to be based on a thorough understanding of the significance of the place, the patterns of visitor use, the carrying capacity of specific locations, the desired visitor experience, and the impact on ecological values. They must also take into consideration people's diverse abilities, motivations and interests in visiting the park.

The Trans-Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific Railway bisect the park. Wildlife mortality from vehicle strikes on the highway has been largely mitigated through a world-renowned system of crossing structures and fencing, and work continues on mitigating wildlife mortality from vehicle and train strikes. There have been proposals for twinning the rail line for passenger rail between Calgary and the community of Banff, and for expansion of the rail sidings in the park to allow for movement of longer trains. These proposals may be tabled again during the span of this management plan.

Climate change figures prominently among the park's challenges. Anticipating, understanding, and adapting to the impacts of climate change on all aspects of park management is essential if Banff is to fulfill its role in the national park system and the expectations of Canadians.

Another key goal for Parks Canada is to advance the Government of Canada's commitment toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, through meaningful, on-the-ground action and activities. At the time the park was established, the historical conservation ethic resulted in severing of the connections of Indigenous communities from their ancestral homelands; this in turn has meant that colonial thinking and values have shaped park management and conservation. Parks Canada is working to set a different approach for the future, one in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems are both valued and applied to park management.

Current relationships between Parks Canada and Indigenous communities with cultural connections to the area vary widely, with most in their nascent stage. Cultural practices by some groups have been undertaken for decades, while others are only recently contemplating or undertaking these activities within the park. Some inroads have been made in recent years, but there is still much work to be done to ensure Indigenous peoples feel welcomed, meaningfully included, and able to practice their culture on the land. There is also substantial room to grow for others to see and experience the rich and vibrant contribution that Indigenous peoples can make to the park.

4.0 Development of the Management Plan

Banff National Park is privileged to have a large, diverse group of keenly interested Indigenous communities, park users, business operators, volunteers, residents, academics, and others who wish to contribute to park planning, decision-making, long-term sustainability, and cultural continuity. This plan was informed by the values, views and aspirations of these groups, as summarized in the *What We Heard Report*, as well as:

- the lessons, successes and direction of previous management plans;
- Parks Canada's legislative obligations including but not limited to the *Canada National Parks Act* and *regulations*, *Species at Risk Act* and the *Accessible Canada Act*;
- the *State of the Park Assessment (2018)* presenting the current condition of key indicators and measures over the last decade;
- Parks Canada Agency and Government of Canada priorities and direction;
- relevant research and trends; and
- changes in the local and regional environment, technology, and best practices.

5.0 Vision

Banff National Park reveals the majesty and timelessness of the Rocky Mountains and true expanses of wilderness. This is a place where nature comes first -- evolving and flourishing without boundaries, where people can experience nature on its own terms. It is also a place where human use, knowledge, and beliefs influence, and in turn are influenced, by the ecological systems of the park: a place where biodiversity of the species, land, and culture all play a role in maintaining the park as it should be, and where ecological integrity is the first priority in park management.

Experiences in Banff are firmly rooted in its distinct wilderness landscape, history and cultures. The park's natural rhythm, its waters and wildlife, the art and literature it inspires, and the traditions of wilderness adventure, conservation leadership and learning that evolved here, are valued and celebrated by people from around the world. Indigenous peoples, as the original inhabitants and stewards of the lands and waters of Banff, have a meaningful role in its presentation management and decisions. Their history, their contemporary experiences and contributions are shared with visitors with integrity and accuracy. The Indigenous presence in the park adds to its richness and sense of place.

People may enjoy the park virtually or in person. However they connect, they are inspired by its unique blend of mountain wilderness, culture, and adventure. As a result, visitors are motivated to become part

of the shared enterprise of sustaining and preserving all that is valued about Banff, the national parks system and the environment as a whole.

People visiting the park in person will find it welcoming, inclusive and environmentally sustainable. They will enjoy authentic experiences that reflect Banff's unique history and landscape, in ways that are safe and respectful of the park's fragilities and character. Infrastructure, facilities, programs, services and equipment are planned, designed and implemented with a broad spectrum of visitor characteristics in mind including age, ability, ethnic and cultural background, gender identity and expression, and economic status.

Visitors of all abilities find a broad complement of services to facilitate their exploration of the park centralized in the village of Lake Louise and the town of Banff. Both communities are thoughtfully planned and sustainably managed.

Visitor experiences are supported with safe facilities and infrastructure that are compatible with the national park setting without dominating it, and by an integrated, efficient system of trails and transportation choices that encourage them to explore the park in a sustainable fashion. They can conveniently plan and book their activities, transportation, accommodation and parking through an integrated online portal before leaving their homes.

The park is managed in an inclusive, open fashion, never losing sight of the fact that it is intended as a legacy for all Canadians. It continues to be known around the world for its innovative, sustainable approach to protected area management. Above all else, Banff National Park is a place of wonder and connection, where the richness and importance of the place are appreciated and respected.

6.0 Key Strategies

The following key strategies outline the broad approaches that will be used to manage Banff National Park, consistent with the mandate of Parks Canada and its inclusion as part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. They describe how the main challenges and opportunities identified for the park will be addressed over the ten-year span of this plan. Objectives describe the desired outcomes after successful implementation of each strategy. Targets identify tangible steps that demonstrate measurable progress toward achieving each objective. Where a time frame is not mentioned in the target, it should be considered an ongoing activity deliverable within the span of this plan. Barring the unexpected, the commitments in the plan are feasible within the scope of the park's funding and human resources.

It is important to note that the key strategies do not sit in isolation from each other; they must be considered as a whole in order to understand the cumulative effect geared toward achieving the vision of the park and the Parks Canada mandate.

Key Strategy 1: Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage

The protection of natural and cultural resources, park landscapes is core to the reason for the park's existence, and maintaining and restoring ecological integrity is the first priority in park management. Parks Canada's approach to conserving these important aspects will be guided by an understanding of and respect for the significance of the place, and natural and cultural values. Knowing that uncertainties exist, Parks Canada's ecosystem management, conservation and restoration initiatives will be built on the best available science and Indigenous knowledge in support of a precautionary, adaptive approach that provides for evolution of management policies and practices based on the monitoring of outcomes.

Cultural resources are often the least well-understood of all the park's resources. They may include tangible heritage such as built places, landscapes, objects, songs, and art, or intangible heritage associated with past and present human use such as stories, customs, beliefs, traditions, knowledge, and language.

Their preservation and protection are important as they represent our collective, yet diverse experience and values, and they shape who we are today. Parks Canada's efforts in this plan will focus on identifying the park's cultural resources and understanding their significance from non-Indigenous and Indigenous perspectives, caring for them appropriately, and presenting them in a way that is culturally appropriate, accessible and gives them meaning and respect in the contemporary world.

To date, there remains a clear gap with respect to appropriate and respectful recognition and weaving together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems, for the purpose of better understanding and managing natural and cultural resources. As the protocols and interest of Indigenous knowledge holders allows, Parks Canada will seek input and advice on new restoration and conservation projects and current resource management challenges.

The park's natural resources are generally more familiar and better understood. These resources include aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, natural vegetation communities and habitats. For the park's ecological integrity to be maintained, it is important to ensure not only the natural diversity of these resources, but also the on-going presence of their natural processes, composition and abundance.

Recognizing that the functioning of Banff's aquatic and riparian areas is critical to the park's overall ecosystem integrity and to the well-being of downstream communities, the protection, restoration and maintenance of these areas will be a priority for the park.

Similarly, vegetation communities have a large role to play in the park's ecological integrity. Besides their ecological benefits, forests, alpine meadows and riparian areas also have great cultural, aesthetic and spiritual importance. Maintaining natural vegetation to preserve dynamic plant communities, patterns and abundance is a key goal for Parks Canada. This will occur by allowing natural processes to safely occur, as well as taking additional action through prescribed fires, non-native plant management, re-routing trails or other management actions to avoid sensitive or at-risk vegetation species such as whitebark pine and limber pine.

Grizzly bears, mountain goats, wolves, cougar and wolverines are iconic species for Banff National Park. It is important to note that to a significant degree, their long-term sustainability relies on managing impacts related to human use such as habituation, displacement, and food-conditioning. In the interests of seeing stable (non-declining) populations of these sensitive and important species, Parks Canada's management efforts will concentrate on improving public awareness and minimizing human-wildlife conflict, preserving access to habitat and improving habitat conditions where possible, and minimizing mortality.

A variety of activities will continue to be employed including:

- working with CP Rail on mitigating the effects of the railway and on efficient sharing of information in emergency management and/or incident response situations;
- collaborating with land managers in neighbouring areas on shared challenges and initiatives;
- assessing opportunities to decommission and relocate trails and other facilities out of high-quality habitat to settings that offer improved recreational experiences but lower habitat value;
- actively managing human disturbance in corridors so that current levels of use by wary species are maintained or improved;
- educating visitors as to safe enjoyment and responsible behaviours around wildlife, reconfiguration or relocation of facilities; and
- managing access or group size. Access management will be used only to the degree necessary to effectively protect resources.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that the park's natural and cultural resources are protected for future generations. Key efforts and initiatives from the previous management plan, such as restoring the connectivity, function and natural biota of streams and lakes; the use of prescribed fire, forest thinning, and other measures aimed at ensuring a natural vegetation mosaic; and enabling bears, wolves and other carnivores to safely use important habitat areas and movement corridors, will continue.

This strategy is intimately connected to strategies pertaining to climate change, regional connectivity, and stewardship, outreach and communication activities that help park visitors, residents, and businesses understand the benefits of conservation and how to adapt their actions to support Parks Canada's efforts. It is also linked with strategies and activities that will improve visitor experience and the inclusion of Indigenous groups and their knowledge systems in the management of park resources.

Objective 1.1: The park's significance as a cultural landscape is better understood and its cultural resources are identified, preserved and protected in ways that respect their diverse origins, and their past and present significance.

Targets

- As the protocols and interest of Indigenous knowledge holders allows, an updated inventory of cultural sites and objects in the park that are important to Indigenous peoples, and improved protocols and practices for their management is completed in a way that respects the origins and ownership of the material.
- By 2028, an updated inventory of cultural resources in Banff National Park is integrated with the park's other comprehensive resource data bases (GIS systems), and in collaboration with internal and external Parks Canada stakeholders, a plan is developed describing the most appropriate care and long-term treatment for these resources.
- Parks Canada's understanding of the variety of cultural resources in Banff National Park, including tangible and intangible resources and cultural practices, is enhanced through collaborative research and projects.
- By 2028, the condition ratings of Banff's Federal Heritage Buildings rated as good will increase from 22% to 50%, and building conservation maintenance plans will be completed for all 22 buildings.
- The approved management plans or statements for each of the national historic sites that Parks Canada manages directly in Banff National Park are implemented to ensure protection and presentation of those important resources. These sites include: the Cave and Basin National Historic site, the Banff Park Museum National Historic site, the Sulphur Mountain Cosmic Ray Station National Historic Site, Howse Pass National Historic Site, and Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin National Historic Site (managed by Parks Canada but operated under a licence of occupation by the Alpine Club of Canada) and Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site, the latter two resting in both Banff and Yoho national parks.
- The effect of changing snow and ice conditions on the stability of the Abbot Pass Hut is assessed and potential mitigation strategies are evaluated in order to determine options for the management of the hut.
- In collaboration with Indigenous groups and others, a Cultural Resource Values Statement that identifies human history themes and cultural resources is completed.
- Key aspects of Banff's human history, cultural resources and its national historic sites are linked to the broader landscape, park management challenges, and modern visitor experiences, using a range of innovative and engaging learning opportunities to keep these stories alive and relevant.

Objective 1.2: With consideration for the landscape-level context and the need to adapt our management approach in response to climate change, more of the park's aquatic ecosystems reflect water quality and levels at benchmark standards, support native species at self-sustaining population levels, and provide for effective species connectivity.

Targets

- Over the life of this plan, there are stable or improving measures related to freshwater ecosystems.
- By 2025, the park's wetlands are mapped, including clear identification of high-priority areas where amphibian occupancy may be affected by park management. Remediation plans are in place for areas where development is occurring.

- By 2030, at least four high-priority waterbodies (stream segments or lakes) in the park are restored to a condition that will support native fish and other aquatic life.
- In collaboration with the Province of Alberta, and adjacent mountain national parks the introduction of non-native species into the park’s aquatic ecosystems from recreational boats and gear is prevented.
- The water quality in all reaches of the Bow River is maintained or improved, and so as to meet or exceed reference conditions at the monitoring locations downstream of Lake Louise and where the river flows out of the park; and the highest water quality is maintained in all other rivers originating in the park.
- Important values are maintained, such as nesting and rearing habitat for waterfowl in the Bow River and its associated riparian areas, and the likelihood of transmission of non-native invasive species is reduced through careful management of activities.
- All outlying facility wastewater effluent treatment and management systems consistently meet or exceed applicable provincial standards of practice or higher federal standards. Where wastewater effluent is discharged to surface waters, all communities and outlying facilities consistently meet or exceed Parks Canada mountain parks targets for treatment system end-of-pipe parameters as follows:

Parameter	Parks Canada Targets
Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	<0.15
Fecal Coliforms (CFU/100ml)	<20 (end-of-pipe)
Solids, total suspended (mg/L)	<10
5-Day Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD ₅) (mg/l)	<10 (summer) <20 (winter)
Ammonia (NH ₃ – N) (mg/L)	<1 (summer) <5 (winter)
Chlorine (Alberta standard)	0.10mg/L

Where the treated effluent is discharged to ground or to receiving waters where there is insufficient dilution, site-specific evaluations are required and applied to address human health or ecological risk factors.

- Groundwater and wastewater treatment systems are effectively managed through a groundwater monitoring network in nodes of high human use where groundwater resources may be limited such as Lake Louise and Johnson Canyon.

Objective 1.3: The ability of keystone species to thrive in Banff National Park improves.

Targets

- By 2030, the effectiveness of wildlife corridors in the park will be maintained or improved from ratings in the 2018 State of the Park Report with a focus on the Fenlands, Fairview, Whitehorn, Cascade, Sulphur Mountain and Golf Course corridors.
- By 2029, the linear density of informal trails around the community of Banff is reduced from 2019 levels by 10 percent.
- By 2023, human-wildlife conflict within the park is reduced from 2019 (as a percentage of total visitation) through implementation of an updated Human-Wildlife Co-Existence Management Plan that reflects current visitor use patterns, identified issues and key sites. The plan describes: proactive activities to reduce risk, criteria for intervention, and the scope of possible actions; and approach to visitor education.
- Priority wildlife corridors extending beyond park boundaries are maintained and improved through work with neighbouring jurisdictions.
- Grizzly bear habitat security is maintained or improved.
- The long-term feasibility of bison reintroduction in Banff National Park is determined through evaluation of the Bison Reintroduction Five Year Pilot Program as described in the re-introduction plan.

Objective 1.4: The ecological integrity of the park is improved through targeted restoration actions.

Targets

- By 2029, invasive vegetation species diversity, extent and distribution is decreased from 2019 values in the backcountry and sensitive habitats where introduction or proliferation of non-native vegetation would have significant impacts on ecological integrity.
- By 2029, the diversity and extent of priority invasive vegetation species in frontcountry areas does not increase from 2019 values.
- Landscape reclamation/restoration plans are prepared and implemented for all major construction projects in the park.
- By 2029, improved ecological integrity is supported through prescribed fire and wildfire, with 50% of the annual expected burned area (1,400 ha based on long-term fire cycles) achieved, and Indigenous groups having the opportunity to be engaged in and contribute to fire management actions.

Objective 1.5: The status of local species-at-risk populations is improved through park management, conservation and education measures.

Targets

- Recovery measures described in the *Multi-species Action Plan for Banff National Park of Canada* (Parks Canada Agency, 2017) are implemented.
- Stakeholders and visitors have the tools and information needed to ensure their actions support conservation of species at risk.

Key Strategy 2: True-To-Place Experiences

National Parks provide exceptional opportunities for Canadians to develop a sense of connection to their natural and cultural heritage. The opportunity to be immersed in nature, history and diverse cultures while surrounded by true wilderness and mountain landscapes is truly distinctive. Maintaining the authenticity and quality of this experience while ensuring that visitors understand its uniqueness is central to Parks Canada's mandate. Visitor opportunities will be characterized by sustainability and responsiveness to diverse visitor needs and expectations. Activities and communications will be designed to advance understanding and stewardship of natural and cultural resources, encouraging all to share the responsibility of conserving these special places for future generations.

National park experiences are intended to capture the real places, activities and stories that define Canada; in short, they stem from and are genuinely rooted in authenticity and place. Authentic experiences have more meaning for most visitors and can foster their sense of attachment to and appreciation for the value of national parks. This is critical for respectful park use and for long-term support of Parks Canada's efforts where relatively undisturbed natural environments form the primary attraction or setting.

An authentic experience in Banff is one that clearly arises out of the park's distinctive landscape and views, its special cultural and natural features, and the specific human history of the area. It is designed to share something unique to Banff and invites active engagement with the park's core ideas and themes. It cannot be transferred elsewhere without losing meaning. Similarly, visitor experiences found in other locations and settings, may not be authentic in Banff National Park.

An authentic experience where visitors can hear about Indigenous culture from Indigenous voices also acknowledges the histories, cultures and spiritual beliefs of Indigenous groups by presenting them openly, with integrity and truth.

For many, undeveloped, natural landscapes where native vegetation and wildlife are present, is integral to Banff's authenticity. It is important not only because of its ecological benefits, but because of its social,

recreational and spiritual value. By virtue of the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations, 97% of the park is designated as wilderness. This encompasses those areas of the park that are largely or entirely in a natural state, with limited infrastructure, where motorized access is not permitted and human presence is moderate or light. Offering visitors the opportunity to enjoy these areas is essential to achieving Parks Canada's mandate, and to fulfilling the intended legacy of national parks to Canadians.

Welcoming visitors and offering them opportunities to enjoy the park environment and to develop the personal connections with the park is central to Parks Canada's mandate. Quality visitor opportunities should actively accommodate and include people of different social identities and abilities. They should also be authentic, safe and not imperil the visual, natural and cultural aspects of the park that draw people to it. Visitor experience objectives and allowable uses will be founded in the site-specific resource conditions necessary to preserve the integrity of the park's resources in the patterns and levels of visitor use, and in the potential risks to people in an emergency. This requires a detailed understanding of the demographics of Banff's current and future visitors, their patterns of park use and expectations, and the physical capacity, condition and use characteristics of the associated facilities and infrastructure, and any known or potential safety issues.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure diverse high-quality visitor experiences that reflect and respect both the place and the environment. It is strongly linked to strategies for: outreach and communication activities that help park visitors and residents plan their trip and understand the special context of a national park visit, as well as strategies for managing development and protecting natural and cultural resources.

Objective 2.1: Banff's visitor experiences are rooted in its distinctive culture and nature, and supported by re-vitalized and well-maintained core components that include camping sites, trails and scenic drives.

Targets

- Indigenous histories and presence in the park are represented with truth and integrity and shared through Indigenous voices.
- Authenticity is a priority criterion for Parks Canada when reviewing and determining whether or not to support applications/proposals for businesses, visitor activities, and attractions.
- The capacity of others to accurately and effectively present Banff-specific stories and information is increased.
- In collaboration with other mountain parks, the commercial guiding licensing process is reviewed and refined to maintain or improve the quality of guiding services, confirm consistent standards for all guides, ensure fair and equitable opportunities to obtain business licenses, and provide a fair return to Canadians.
- Special events that provide opportunities for people to respectfully enjoy and learn about the natural and cultural features of the park, and which can be implemented safely, meet high sustainability standards, and are compatible with other ongoing visitor uses and park operations, are permitted.
- A 20-year Visitor Asset Sustainability Plan is completed detailing the strategies, resources and actions necessary to optimize asset performance, climate change resiliency and sustainability, for the park's key facilities and supporting infrastructure, prioritising those for action where there are safety, ecological or cultural resource concerns.

Objective 2.2: Banff's visitor experiences are sustainable, within site-specific physical capacity, and do not harm the park's ecological integrity.

Targets

- Sound planning and decision-making with respect to visitor use is supported by a database that describes: the characteristics of Banff's visitors, their patterns of park use, and the physical capacity, condition and use characteristics of key visitor facilities and infrastructure and any known or potential safety or sustainability issues.

- High-priority areas are identified where mitigations for safety and/or ecological reasons are needed, and plans are in place to address these issues.
- A variety of methods are used to manage the type, amount, timing, location and nature of human activity in areas that are ecologically sensitive, contain important habitat for sensitive species or species-at-risk, both in wilderness, and locations where potential issues exist.
- Emergency preparedness plans are in place for each community, for all outlying commercial accommodations, and for areas with high daytime use such as Moraine Lake and Lake Minnewanka. The Business Continuity Plan for Banff National Park is up to date, and the necessary emergency mutual aid agreements are in place.

Objective 2.3: Visitor experiences in Banff's wilderness areas are sustainable, within site-specific physical limits, and do not harm the park's ecological integrity.

Targets

- Outdoor recreation activities within the capacity of the park's ecosystem that require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities are supported. Development of commercial roofed accommodation in these areas is not permitted with the possible exception of new huts at or above treeline in cases where there are demonstrable and persistent public safety issues. They must be of the smallest size needed to address those safety issues, and subject to environmental review.
- The size of groups using the wilderness areas overnight will be limited to a maximum of 10 people, with existing larger guided groups permitted by exception only. No increases in size or number of group camps are permitted.
- Motorized conveyances such as e-bikes (whether pedal assist or throttle controlled) used for recreational purposes are not permitted.
- Commercial and private horse use occurs only in designated areas, and is managed in such a way as to allow impacted natural resources to recover and/or to reduce impacts.
- The intensity and patterns of wilderness use is monitored to evaluate effects on habitat security and wilderness character.
- Trails and facilities in wilderness areas are reviewed against Parks Canada standards, and priority areas requiring management attention have been identified.
- By 2025, the Bryant and Egypt Lake shelters are replaced consistent with Parks Canada standards for such facilities and with zoning.

Key Strategy 3: Strengthening Indigenous Relations

The Government of Canada has committed to deepen and strengthen relationships with Indigenous peoples. Accordingly, many places administered by Parks Canada are managed through cooperative management bodies or advisory relationships with local Indigenous communities. These structures recognize the important and ongoing roles and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples as stewards of heritage places. With approaches founded in renewed relationships, respect and cooperation, the mountain national parks will continue to recognize Indigenous connections and work with Indigenous peoples to advance priorities of mutual interest.

Long before Banff National Park was established, Indigenous peoples were the original residents and stewards of the land and waters in the area, which were used for sustenance, ceremony, travel and trade. They have a deep, longstanding connection with the area and have expressed a clear interest in supporting its conservation and protection by weaving Indigenous cultures, histories, stewardship principles and methods grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems into park management.

Established in 2018, the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle has been an important means for Parks Canada to better understand Indigenous perspectives and priorities for their future relationship with Parks Canada and their desired role in the park. This interest-based group, comprised of the Treaty 7 Nations

and the Métis Nation, meets four times each year and works together according to a Terms of Reference developed by the group. There is potential for the Circle to expand in future.

The goal of this strategy is to affirm the important and ongoing role of the Indigenous Advisory Circle, and with their guidance, ensure that there is an open, welcoming environment for Indigenous peoples with connections to the park; an environment that respects the integrity of Indigenous knowledge systems, and engages those systems in collaborative, meaningful ways. This strategy also seeks to: restore the connection of Indigenous peoples to their traditional territory and cultural practices, support them in sharing and preserving their cultures, and facilitate their participation in the economic benefits associated with this special place.

Parks Canada's work with Indigenous communities in Banff National Park also supports broader Government of Canada initiatives, such as implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the actions in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Objective 3.1: With the guidance of and in collaboration with the Indigenous Advisory Circle, Banff National Park will be a respectful, inclusive and safe place for Indigenous peoples.

Thinking seven generations into the future, the Circle will guide Parks Canada and others in upholding the accuracy and integrity of the Indigenous presence in Banff by:

- directly advising and making recommendations to the park Superintendents on: cultural values and awareness, resource conservation, Indigenous inclusion in the life and work of the park, authenticity and other matters of mutual interest;
- acting as a conduit between the member nations and Parks Canada, local government and other organizations;
- sharing information regarding Indigenous history, practices and values within the park as protocols allow;
- describing meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the life and management of the park;
- facilitating the connection to and use of the land by member nations, particularly youth; and
- offering expertise and observations.

Targets

- Parks Canada supports Indigenous Advisory Circle work as described in the Terms of Reference that were developed and ratified by the group itself, in which representatives identify protocols and priorities for their ongoing work together.
- Parks Canada reports back annually to the Indigenous Advisory Circle on implementation of its recommendations.

Objective 3.2: The lands and waters that comprise modern-day Banff National Park are managed in ways that respect the cultural and spiritual significance of the place to Indigenous peoples.

Targets

- With the support and guidance of Indigenous groups with connections to the park, Parks Canada better understands, acknowledges and includes their perspectives on the histories and importance of the area, and how the park and its resources should be protected and managed in future.
- The historical presence and contemporary importance of Indigenous peoples in the area is consistently recognized by delivering the land acknowledgement vetted by the Indigenous Advisory Circle at the start of all formal Parks Canada public programs and events.
- As the protocols and interest of Indigenous groups allows, the inventory of cultural sites and objects in the park that are important to Indigenous peoples is updated, and the protocols and practices for their management are improved. As part of this collaborative effort, the role for Indigenous groups in the ongoing care and management of these resources is defined, and the

feasibility of cultural internships that provide opportunities for Indigenous youth to learn about these sites and objects with mentoring from Elders is explored and implemented where possible.

- Indigenous representation in park advisory groups concerned with resource protection and land use is encouraged and welcomed.

Objective 3.3: A shared future characterized by sustained mutual respect, understanding and commitment is established through:

- creating opportunities for interaction between Parks Canada staff and Indigenous peoples;
- ensuring Parks Canada staff understand the context of reconciliation, and the history and perspectives of Indigenous groups with an interest in Banff;
- facilitating access by Indigenous groups with historical connections to the park and their use of it consistent with the *Canada National Parks Act*; and
- identifying ways to engage Indigenous youth in Banff National Park.

Targets

- Indigenous groups and Parks Canada work together on projects of mutual interest.
- Parks Canada staff in Banff participate in cultural awareness and other appropriate training to prepare them for engaging positively with Indigenous groups, the public and stakeholders regarding reconciliation and related conversations.
- Parks Canada's 'Indigenous Peoples Open Doors' Program is fully implemented with Indigenous groups with traditional connections to the park, to ensure their access to and use of, the park's lands and waters according to their cultural and spiritual practices. Policies are refined to facilitate these practices.
- As the interest and priorities of Indigenous groups allow, at least one co-developed in-park program to foster the connections of Indigenous youth with the park landscape and their heritage, are implemented.
- As the interest and priorities of Indigenous groups allow, at least one co-developed program / event / initiative for Indigenous youth in their home communities, aimed at increasing awareness of Banff National Park and Parks Canada, identifying barriers to access, and encouraging park visits, are implemented.
- As the interest and priorities of Indigenous groups allow, and supported by networks of key contacts in local and regional Indigenous organizations, a co-developed Indigenous hiring program with an emphasis on youth, is implemented.
- All park managers are aware of and apply contracting and procurement policies and practices aimed at maximizing the participation of Indigenous peoples in economic opportunities with Parks Canada in Banff.

Key Strategy 4: Connecting with Canadians

It is important to Parks Canada that Canadians understand Banff National Park's special features, its challenges and opportunities, its role in the regional ecosystem and in the history and culture of the many people who were part of the landscape before and since the park came into existence. It is Parks Canada's hope that as people come to understand these aspects of the park, they will come to value and support national parks into the future, and be inspired to engage in conservation and stewardship activities wherever they may live.

To this end, Parks Canada will demonstrate leadership in conservation and education, operational practices, management effectiveness monitoring, and engaging others in the life and work of the park. This will be supported by inclusive opportunities for Canadians and others to follow and meaningfully participate in the programs, planning, challenges and key decisions of the park, not only when they are visiting but from their home communities as well. Inclusion, clear objectives, respect for participant time, needs and contribution, and timely communications will be key factors in this regard.

The goal of this strategy is to build a constituency of knowledgeable, enthusiastic park supporters, particularly among young adults, youth and newcomers to Canada, and to enable them to learn about, engage in, and contribute to the park's conservation efforts and decisions. It is connected to and supports strategies concerning protection of natural and cultural resources, addressing climate change and sustainable operations.

Objective 4.1: A constituency of knowledgeable, enthusiastic park supporters is established through the broad, consistent sharing of information, research and monitoring results with Canadians and others around the world.

Targets

- In collaboration with local or regional organizations, Parks Canada builds public understanding of the key scientific questions, findings and conditions in Banff National Park.
- In collaboration with the tourism industry, trip planning and visitor behaviour is influenced positively through investments in promotional activities.
- Parks Canada's exemplary leadership in the development of protected area policy and science is demonstrated by: hosting at least one international delegation every three years, contributing to the development of national policy or best management practices, leading in implementation as the opportunity arises, and publishing peer-reviewed papers or reports.
- The stories featured by Parks Canada in personal and non personal media consider and reflect the full diversity of the park's cultural histories and perspectives.
- All key large-scale development projects and all key Parks Canada projects such as natural area restoration, historic building conservation, salvage or research archaeology and trail relocation, include a learning component that is concurrently implemented.

Objective 4.2: Canadians have meaningful opportunities to be engaged in key park management activities.

Targets

- By 2023, two new cultural resource volunteer engagement programs, with one targeted specifically at young adults and another at youth are developed. In collaboration with Indigenous groups, educational institutions, Parks Canada Campus Clubs, etc. one or more of these new programs is accompanied by an outreach strategy so participants and others may stay connected with the park from their own communities.
- Participation in the park's volunteer program is increased by 10% from 2018 levels.
- Indigenous groups and others are consistently notified and engaged and appropriately consulted on the development of park regulations and community plans, the formulation and review of management plans, and proposals for large-scale development.
- The Advisory Development Board, the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle, the Lake Louise Advisory Board, and the Banff National Park Round Table, convene regularly as described in their respective Terms of Reference.
- National park content is shared with audiences in Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary through national stories in social and electronic media, in-person activities, and partnered programs with organizations.

Key Strategy 5: Managing Development

Ecological integrity will be the first priority in park management, including in managing development. Parks Canada's approach will be transparent and consistent, and will continue to respect limits, zoning and declared wilderness designations. Any development considered must demonstrably support the vision and objectives of each park as described in its Park Management Plan. Development will facilitate greater awareness and connection to natural and cultural spaces, and aim to protect for future generations the qualities that make these places distinctive.

Some development is essential-to allow visitors to explore, experience and learn about the national park. If thoughtfully designed and located, development can directly reinforce the natural, cultural and human history of the park, and encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of mountain landscapes. It can also protect the natural environment from degradation that sometimes accompanies high human use.

Development must complement and support the park's heritage values, and generate a net benefit to Canadians. It must also support accessibility and inclusion, as well as ecological, cultural, visitor safety and experience objectives. However, it must not compromise the scenic splendor for which the park has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the distinctive natural, cultural and wilderness qualities that draw people to Banff, or otherwise detract from the ability of future park users to have the same opportunities that today's visitors enjoy.

Over many decades, stakeholders have consistently affirmed the importance of limiting commercial development in the park. Accordingly, through policy and legislation, Parks Canada has put in place a framework that limits the amount of commercial development that may occur within each community, at ski areas, and at outlying commercial accommodations. Adherence to these legal limits and respect for the policy framework will continue to be a cornerstone for Parks Canada's approach in managing future development. Redevelopment of existing commercial facilities to the maximum allowed under the lease or licence of occupation and consistent with applicable policy, may be considered subject to environmental considerations.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that the park's distinctive scenic viewsapes, wilderness expanse, and ecological integrity are protected and preserved intact for the future, while allowing for development that considers the needs of visitors, and is sustainable, accessible and inclusive. It links to and is supported by other park strategies and actions related to authenticity, and quality experiences that are genuinely true-to-place.

Objective 5.1: Long term protection of the park environment is assured through land use and development that respects Parks Canada's policy framework and is consistent with applicable legislation.

Targets

- Development or redevelopment in the park communities is within the legislated community boundaries. Commercial development – which includes but is not limited to development for the primary purpose of providing or supporting, in whole or in part, the purchase, rental or sale of goods, services, overnight accommodation, and other commodities - conforms to the approved Community Plan, does not exceed the maximum permitted floor area and is within the commercial zones described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.
- All development outside the park communities, conforms with the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations, *the National Parks of Canada Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*, and site-specific *land use agreements*, with respect to the objectives and zoning of this park management plan, the *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks*, *Parks Canada's FireSmart Guidelines*, the *Ski Area Management Guidelines*, approved ski resort site guidelines and long range plans, and other relevant policy or legislation.
- Outside park communities, no new lands are alienated for commercial development through lease, licence of occupation or agreement, except for essential infrastructure (e.g. infrastructure

for water, wastewater) ancillary (*i.e.* secondary, subordinate to, and in support of) the primary existing use, unless there is a clear ecological or public safety benefit to doing so.

- The developed footprint at the park level is maintained or reduced from 2021 levels.

Objective 5.2: Barriers to park users and staff with disabilities are identified, prevented and removed.

Targets

- According to the standards developed by the Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization under the *Accessible Canada Act*, a remediation plan for Parks Canada facilities and services in Banff is in place, with identified priorities and timeframes.
- Parks Canada works with local individuals, organizations and experts to ensure accessibility is considered early as part of developing or upgrading facilities and services to be used by the public in the park.

Objective 5.3: New development or redevelopment reflects the purpose, importance and character of the park, does not interfere with or dominate park features, has no significant adverse impacts on park resources, and where possible, contributes positively to the local environment.

Target

- By 2023, the process documentation and application forms for development proposals clearly communicate that in addition to accessibility, the following will be evaluated in reviewing and making a decision on development or redevelopment-proposals:
 - reflects and supports the park's distinctive character, and ecological and cultural values;
 - efficient use of energy and water; use of sustainable or recycled materials in construction;
 - inclusion of pollution and waste reduction measures;
 - use of design standards that allow for retention and treatment of storm water for on-site absorption;
 - use of siting standards to create buffers for sensitive areas; and
 - supports permeability and habitat security for wildlife and landscaping with native, non-flammable vegetation, that is not attractive to wildlife.

Objective 5.4: The process for reviewing and considering large-scale development proposals is open and transparent, and one in which Indigenous groups and the public may access information and express views before permitting decisions are made.

Target

- By 2021, projects outside the town of Banff, that are 'designated projects' as per the *Impact Assessment Act*, or require a Detailed Impact Assessment, or where the Superintendent determines there may be strong public concern, will undergo review by the Development Advisory Board for Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks.
- For projects inside the Town of Banff, public notification of developments is consistent with the approved municipal bylaws respecting notices of development permit applications.

Key Strategy 6: Regional Connectivity and Landscapes

The mountain national parks will strive to contribute to landscape-scale conservation in Canada by being ecologically and socially connected across boundaries. Many aspects of park management such as ecological restoration, emergency preparedness, climate change mitigation and adaptation, wildlife corridors, and tourism function over a broad region within and beyond park borders. Parks Canada will aim to maintain and expand regional collaboration to better monitor, understand and address these and other landscape-level issues.

Protected areas, their biodiversity and cultural relevance are intimately connected to their surrounding landscapes. Collaborative planning and action at the landscape scale can-maximize the quality of existing habitat and effectiveness of corridors, increase habitat through protected area establishment or other

management actions, minimize the impacts of specific land use, and help increase resilience to climate change by linking landscapes and allowing ecological processes to take place across previously fragmented areas. It can also foster coordinated or enhanced visitor opportunities and disseminate the benefits of tourism on a broader scale.

The land bordering Banff National Park is designated for multiple uses including agriculture, resource extraction, tourism and recreation. Consideration of this regional context is critical to developing an early, shared understanding of priorities, and to identifying opportunities for coordination and consistent public communications, and the potential impacts and synergies of management actions.

Coordinating regional land management strategies with Indigenous groups and neighbouring jurisdictions is a priority. This includes actively seeking, encouraging and participating in the development of regional resource management, tourism, transportation and tourism/recreational plans.

The goal of this strategy is to improve services to the park's visitors and management of its natural and cultural resources by sharing best land management practices and tools, and by coordinating, collaborating, monitoring and planning at the landscape level in Alberta and British Columbia. It is strongly linked to and supports other strategies relating to quality visitor experiences, visitor communication and education, and resource conservation will help ensure collaborative protection and presentation of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

Objective 6.1: Land management, protection of natural and cultural resources and the provision of visitor experiences is coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries.

Target

- Parks Canada's contribution to addressing landscape level challenges and opportunities increases through participation in pan-boundary and interagency groups where Parks Canada's focus is on issues and regional initiatives concerned with: joint prescribed fire planning and fuel management, coordinated response to human-wildlife conflict, recovery of species-at-risk, watershed management, control of invasive species, tourism and visitor management, wildlife corridors and bison conservation.

Key Strategy 7: Climate Change and Adaptive Management

The mountain national parks were established to protect and represent specific features of Canada's natural heritage. They include some of Canada's most significant landscapes and natural and cultural resources, which are already affected by climate change. As such, these parks offer excellent opportunities to contribute to an understanding of climate change and its impacts over time. Parks Canada is committed to protecting park ecosystems for future generations by demonstrating leadership in sustainable operations and adaptive management in response to climate change impacts. The mountain national parks will continue to collaborate with others on climate change research, monitoring and education.

It is clear that the future cumulative impacts of climate change on the park's natural and cultural resources and its use could be substantial and affect all aspects of park management. In particular water will become an increasingly precious resource, and its careful management is integral to ecological integrity, park communities and visitors, and to downstream communities.

To ensure that Banff National Park continues to provide a full range of ecosystem services to the region and can successfully deliver on its legacy to Canadians, climate change considerations and actions must be reflected in and across all of Parks Canada's core work, including asset maintenance and operations, land use planning, natural and cultural resource research and management, community and visitor services, visitor safety and communications.

The goal of this strategy is to: integrate climate change thinking and action into existing Parks Canada management approaches and operations (including transportation systems), increase the capacity of park

specialists and managers to identify, predict and effectively respond to local and regional climate-related impacts and contribute to the Government of Canada and Parks Canada's target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% of 2005-06 levels by 2029-2030.

Objective 7.1: Park decision-making, actions and operations consider and adapt to climate change.

Targets

- Potential climate change impacts on park resources, assets and visitation are better understood by:
 - seeking advice, input and best practices from Indigenous groups, scientists and others on climate change effects and strategies;
 - monitoring changes in temperature, precipitation / snowpack, river flow regimes, and alpine extent;
 - supporting or otherwise collaborating on research relating to climate change impacts on natural or cultural resources or visitation in alpine environments; and
 - completing risk assessments on core components of the park's resources, assets, operations and services that may be affected by climate change and extreme weather events.
- Climate change and sustainability considerations are integrated into park decision-making, programs and operations through a Climate Change Action Plan for Banff National Park that contains:
 - guiding principles for park management and operations;
 - priority areas (based on research and risk assessments), and adaptation options where they exist;
 - targets and timeframes for mitigating risks to people, key assets, operations and services in the case of extreme events;
 - targets and timeframes for reducing park contributions to scope 1 and scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions by transitioning the fleet to include a higher percentage of zero-emission vehicles or hybrids, increasing the energy efficiency of existing facilities, increasing use of clean energy from 2020 levels by 25% through the use of renewable electricity generated on-site or purchased off-site, waste reduction and improvements to waste diversion practices; and
 - a plan for encouraging businesses operating in the park to take actions to reduce carbon emissions, promoting public and stakeholder understanding of climate change impacts, the role of national parks as benchmarks for how climate is impacting the natural world, and fostering environmentally sensitive choices both while they are visiting the park and in their home communities.

As climate change is an evolving and complex challenge, the plan is reviewed and updated at five year intervals or more frequently if required.

Objective 7.2: Parks Canada leads in sustainable operational practices.

Targets

- Aggregate resources required for facility construction and ongoing road maintenance are obtained from outside the park, or when not feasible, from existing disturbed sources within the park in Zones 4 and 5 in accordance with the *Mountain Parks Aggregate Management Strategy (2019)* and appropriate environmental review.
- By 2023, a decommissioning plan is in place to address Parks Canada assets that are no longer required. It includes a remediation, reclamation or restoration strategy for soil and vegetation where appropriate, and cultural resource and species habitat evaluations as required.
- By 2023, an approved spill management protocol is completed and implemented to protect groundwater, watercourses and terrestrial resources from toxic substances.
- The park's freshwater resources are managed so that ongoing operations and proposed new developments are not using water at rates that will affect the ecosystem or diminish the quality of life for users outside the park.

Key Strategy 8: Moving People Sustainably

For a sustainable future, Banff National Park needs to go beyond accommodating increasing visitor demand with more traffic-related infrastructure. Instead, the strategy is aimed at a system that goes beyond buses and parking lots, to capture the whole experience of being in and enjoying a national park. That is, a system where the ways of getting to places and moving about are as much a part of the national park experience and legacy, as its landscapes, and natural and cultural resources. Rather than relying solely on large-scale mass transit and built infrastructure, it would be comprised of multiple medium and small-scale components that can be assembled, added to, increased or decreased, as visitor preference, circumstances and technology change. It would recognize the unique context of national park exploration and that one approach does not fit all. Such a people-moving system would be an example of how big-picture thinking, comprehensive planning and 'green' transport can help secure an environmentally and economically sustainable future for the park, and solidify Parks Canada's reputation as a leader in environmental protection and a provider of heritage experiences.

As is the case throughout much of North America, roads in the park are becoming busier. In total, vehicle traffic in the park has increased by 30% over the last 10 years, with some specific locations such as Lake Louise Drive showing increases of up to 70%. About 8.3 million vehicles travel into the park each year, with approximately half of these carrying park visitors and the other half travelling through to other destinations.

This means that at certain times, transportation-related infrastructure such as parking and pull-offs can be stretched to capacity. Research has shown however, that building more parking and pull-offs is, at best, a temporary solution. Additional parking capacity, especially if it is free encourages, more personal car use (Christiansen, Engebretsen, Fearnley, and Hansen; 2017). In turn, this adds to both traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions as light-duty vehicles such as cars produce more than four times the greenhouse gas emissions of all domestic aviation (*Greenhouse Gases Sources and Sinks in Canada*; 2019). Additionally, building new infrastructure such as parking lots generally requires use of undeveloped park lands, which means long-term loss of the ecosystem services and wildlife habitat that would otherwise be provided by those lands, and potentially the permanent loss of cultural resources such as archaeological sites on those lands.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that park visitors and residents are able to move about the park comfortably, efficiently, and sustainably, while optimizing visitor access and quality visitor experiences. This will involve consideration for infrastructure capacity, visitor experience and ecological objectives, and for reducing potential visitor conflicts and safety issues. This may occur through use of a variety of tools, including maximizing use of current transport-related infrastructure, integrated reservation systems or trip scheduling, preferred access for high occupancy or zero-emission modes of transport, parking space management, and timed limits to length of stay in peak periods. This goal is strongly connected to and supported by other strategies and actions related to reducing impacts of climate change on park resources, and visitor experience.

Objective 8.1: Travel to and within the park will be enhanced, sustainable and integrated into the visitor experience.

Targets

- A comprehensive people movement plan for the park is developed that: sets 10-year goals, objectives and measurable targets, and considers local, regional, municipal and private transportation offers, existing pathways and trails, key attractions, and current and projected levels and patterns of visitor use. As reliability, frequency and affordability are known factors in promoting public uptake of mass transit, the plan clearly addresses these factors in its approach.
- Based on the plan above, in collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders, a communications strategy focused on encouraging a shift to sustainable modes of exploring the park is implemented.

- A park-wide program aimed at making more efficient and effective use of existing parking infrastructure during peak periods is implemented.
- Potential avenues to allow visitors to book green transportation to and within the park are available online through a single portal. The potential for linking this to other in-park experiences and accommodation is also identified
- Safe bike parking is available at key park attractions outside the communities and all components of the transit system will support taking bikes on board.
- Electric vehicle charging stations are available at key locations in the park where access to the electrical grid exists.
- Expressions of interest by businesses for small- and medium- scale sustainable or self-propelled transportation solutions to be piloted in the park are solicited.
- The work of municipalities, the Improvement District, regional businesses, the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission, and others is supported by Parks Canada to the degree possible, as they develop transportation systems for the Bow Valley to reduce traffic congestion within and outside of park communities, and enhance access to trailheads, campgrounds, parkways and day-use areas.

Key Strategy 9: Park Communities

As centres for visitor services, communities in the mountain national parks play an essential role in delivering Parks Canada's mandate. There will be continued respect for the spatial and development limits, and national park communities will provide services and facilities that directly support broader park objectives and are characterised by environmentally sustainable practices.

National park communities exist primarily as service centres for park visitors. They are also tasked with offering comfortable living communities for eligible residents of the park. They must fulfill these roles while maintaining a community character that is consistent with and reflects the national park. In order to preserve this character and to ensure protection of surrounding lands, each community's boundaries and its maximum commercial floor space are specified in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.

During their time in Banff, an estimated 80% of the park's 4 million visitors stop in the community of Banff or Lake Louise or both. For many, a visit to one of the communities and the lands adjacent to them might be their entire experience, while for others it is a jumping off point to greater park adventures. The communities offer a venue for showcasing all aspects of the park's natural and cultural heritage through enhanced educational opportunities, and well-informed staff and residents. They also provide the opportunity to introduce new visitors to respectful and appreciative national park use, and safe enjoyment of the outdoors.

While residents of the community of Banff elect a mayor and council who are responsible for the management and operation of the community within certain bounds, the Lake Louise community is administered directly by Parks Canada with assistance and feedback from a community advisory board.

Housing for eligible residents is a challenge in both communities. While it is not anticipated that all of the housing requirements will be addressed within the two communities, providing affordable and appropriate housing for eligible residents, supported by sustainable land use and transportation planning, will continue to be a priority.

Further, Parks Canada will ensure that persons occupying residences within the communities meet the eligible resident requirements as described in the lease and *National Park Lease and Licence of Occupation Regulations* by requiring an affidavit or solemn declaration and, if needed, other documentation from lessees before consenting to lease transactions and by investigating all complaints.

Each park community is guided by a community plan, which must be consistent with the park management plan and applicable legislation. The community plans for the village of Lake Louise and the

town of Banff were approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament in 2003 and 2008 respectively. Both plans require updating.

The goal of this strategy is that visitors feel welcomed to the park, and their experiences are enhanced by thoughtfully planned communities that offer a range of services, facilities and opportunities while maintaining a community character that respects the national park context and this management plan, and is consistent with the limits to growth described in the *Canada National Parks Act*. It is strongly linked to and supports other strategies relating to quality visitor experiences, visitor communication and education, and environmental protection.

Objective 9.1: The village of Lake Louise and the town of Banff remain as sustainable visitor centres and places for welcoming, orienting, and staging visitors' exploration of the park while providing comfortable living environments for eligible residents.

Targets

- An interpretive plan for the Lake Louise community is implemented, aimed at fostering knowledge of the ecology and human history of the park, and appreciation and respect for the national park environment.
- The wayfinding and trail network connecting the broader park environment with the communities of Banff and Lake Louise is improved to ensure it supports easy exploration of the national park. As part of this effort and where feasible, associated programs and services such as communications, interpretation and trail amenities are considered.
- New wildfire risk reduction work around the communities of Banff and Lake Louise is implemented and existing projects are maintained so as to reduce the risk to the communities. In addition, wildfire risk within the Bow Valley will be reduced by conducting new research and continuing to implement landscape-scale fuel thinning projects and prescribed fires.
- According to the interests and priorities of Indigenous groups, Parks Canada encourages and supports discussions between Indigenous representatives and community businesses to ensure authentic representation of Indigenous cultures and histories, and to facilitate participation of Indigenous peoples in the social, cultural and economic life of the park communities.
- Within five years of approval of this plan, an updated community plan for the communities of Banff and Lake Louise is tabled in Parliament. The community plans are:
 - consistent with this management plan and the principles of no net negative environmental impact, environmental stewardship and heritage conservation, and accord with any guidelines established by the Minister for appropriate activities within the park community. They must describe:
 - the purposes and objectives of the community;
 - the lands comprising the community and its commercial zones, and the maximum permitted commercial floor area in those commercial zones as described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*;
 - the strategy for commercial growth management;
 - the highest and best use of community lands while preserving the intent and character of residential, public service, environmental protection and public park lands in the community;
 - the strategy for preservation, protection, and commemoration of heritage resources;
 - the approach to becoming a model community in respect of environmental management, sustainable development and tourism with a goal of no net negative environmental impact; and
 - a description of the regular monitoring and reporting on no net negative environmental framework of the community.

7.0 Management Areas

Area management focuses on certain areas of the national park that have complex management challenges such as those with important natural and/or cultural values combined with high visitation, substantial public interest, and significant physical (built) infrastructure. These areas often require careful consideration and actions to protect natural ecosystems and maintain ecological integrity while fostering high-quality experiences. In the case of Banff National Park, the areas that have been identified as requiring this level of attention are the town of Banff, the Lake Louise area, and the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir area.

7.1 Town of Banff

The community of Banff was formally incorporated as an Alberta municipality in 1990; it strives to be a global environmental leader and model of sustainable tourism. As a national park community, its policies, programs and practices should continue to demonstrate commitment to exemplary environmental stewardship, and to encouraging visitors to appreciate the natural and cultural heritage, beauty and grandeur of one of the world's most significant protected areas.

Map 3. Town of Banff



The town has a unique governance framework which is legally linked to Parks Canada's legislative and policy framework – in particular the *Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan*, the *Canada National Parks Act* (S.C. 2000, c. 32), and environmental laws and policies.

The Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement consolidated (with amendments up to and including May 21, 1998) between the Province of Alberta and Canada describes the purposes and objectives of the town as follows:

- to maintain the townsite as part of a World Heritage Site;
- to serve, as its primary function, as a centre for visitors to the park and to provide such visitors with accommodation and other goods and services;
- to provide the widest possible range of interpretive and orientation services to park visitors;
- to maintain a community character which is consistent with and reflects the surrounding environment; and
- to provide a comfortable living community for those persons who need to reside in the townsite in order to achieve its primary function.

The Incorporation Agreement also describes the rights, obligations, powers, duties and functions of the municipal government, while reserving ownership of the land, authority for environmental matters (including mitigations required for development) and approval of land use bylaws for the Minister responsible for Parks Canada. It requires that the town's bylaws and the decisions of Banff Town Council and Administration be consistent with the park management plan and any other applicable legislation, including those which establish the town's boundaries and limit the amount of allowable commercial development (*Canada National Parks Act*, 2000).

The maximum commercial floor area permitted in the community under Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act* is 361,390 m². This was based on development that already existed in the commercial districts of the town as of June 1998, or that Parks Canada had approved prior to that date, plus an additional 32,516 square metres (350,000 sq. ft.) of commercial floor space.

This amount of commercial space has now been fully allocated. Once it has all been constructed, any future development will necessarily be in the form of re-development. While development and re-development are at the discretion of the municipal government, Parks Canada maintains an interest in ensuring that any development or other activities that take place meet environmental standards, are consistent with this management plan, and with the limits described in law.

It is intended that commercial development in the town be limited to the commercial zones as described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*; however, it is important to note that there has been commercial use in other areas of the town that pre-dates this zoning. In most cases, these commercial uses are ancillary to the principle use of the site and occur on residentially zoned lands (e.g. bed and breakfast homes or inns, and home-based businesses) and occasionally in lands zoned as public service (e.g. information centers and museums may have gift shops as an accessory use). It is anticipated that these uses will continue but will require careful management over time.

Areas of attention for the Town over the next decade include implementing efforts to address the impacts of climate change, the ongoing promotion and development of more active and sustainable transportation choices including public transit service between Calgary and the Bow Valley (including Canmore, Banff and Lake Louise), reducing traffic congestion, promoting active transportation, emergency preparedness, achieving housing for eligible residents whose needs are not currently being met through the market, and ensuring Banff remains a vibrant, culturally rich place to live, visit, and work for generations to come. The Town will work with partners to develop strategies to accommodate increased visitation.

Objective 7.1.1: The town achieves its objectives as described in the *Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement*, in a manner that is sustainable, and conforms with applicable national park policy and legislation.

Targets

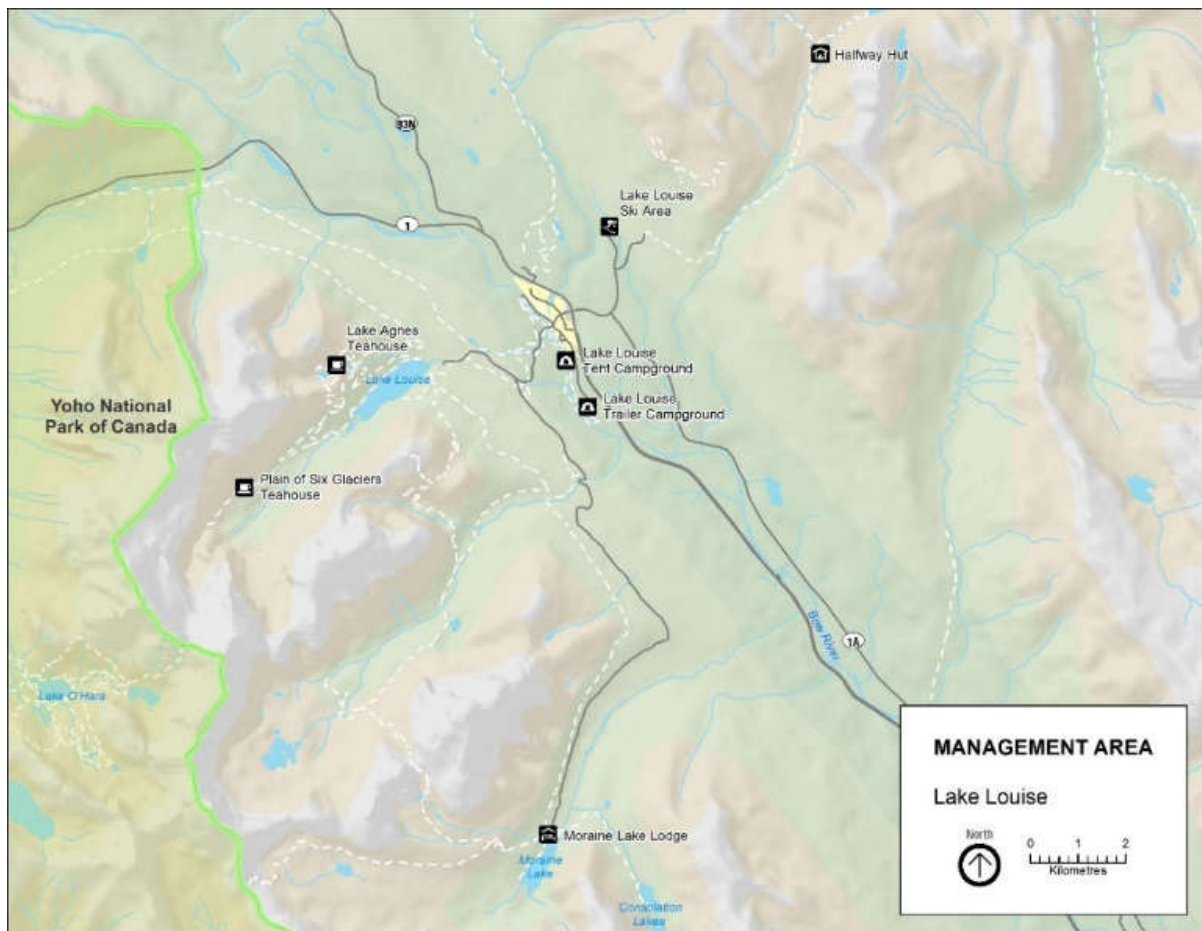
- Development in the townsite:
 - does not interfere with viewscales for pedestrians in the downtown core from Banff Avenue, Bear Street, Buffalo Street, Beaver Street, Bow Avenue and the Bow River pathway. These viewscales include: the view along Banff Avenue and Muskrat Street to Cascade Mountain, the view of Mount Rundle from Buffalo Street and Central Park; and the view of Mount Bourgeau from the Bow River pathway and the Banff Avenue Bridge;
 - adheres to FireSmart principles; and
 - respects natural processes to the highest degree possible. This includes but is not limited to remaining highly permeable to wildlife, and minimizing light pollution and the impacts of non-native vegetation.
- The available space and character of residential land-use districts is maximized for use as housing by eligible residents through:
 - clear limits on the number of home occupation businesses that will be permitted, including bed and breakfast homes, as established by the Town of Banff by the end of 2023;
 - not permitting new bed and breakfast inns, and not re-licensing those that have had a gap of 6 months or more in their operation and/or licensing. Further, the gross floor area forming part of a separate dwelling/area for a resident staff may be increased provided it complies with all other stipulations in the *Town of Banff Land Use Bylaw*. However, increases in the gross floor area used in whole or in part to accommodate or serve guests is not permitted. Changes in the location of a bed and breakfast inn to lots or parcels not already used for that purpose are not permitted.
In cases where the existing commercial development is the principal use of a site in a residential land use district (e.g. a Bed and Breakfast Inn, eating and drinking establishment or service station), neither these uses nor the amount of commercial floor area shall increase.
- The community reflects its national park setting and blends with the surrounding landscape by not decreasing the amount of land designated as Public Parkland (PP) and Environmental Protection (PE) from that existing as of December 31, 2020, and by not allowing further commercial development in these areas.
- Land uses within the Public Service (PS) District are limited to non-commercial uses of an institutional, government, educational or community service nature required to meet the needs of eligible residents. Commercial uses may not occur in this area except as they may be ancillary (i.e. subordinate or incidental to, and in support of) to the primary or principal institutional, government, educational or community service use of the building or site. Non-conforming commercial uses in this district that existed as of June 1998 are grandfathered.
- The municipal government ensures that the impacts of known, ongoing project and operational activities within the town are understood and any required environmental management and mitigation strategies are identified by submitting the following documents to Parks Canada for approval:
 - a Pre-Approved Routine Impact Assessment for applicable routine activities inside the community and those areas proximal to it where the municipal government has responsibilities, due in 2023;
 - an Impact Assessment for the *Town of Banff Water Permit* for the community's potable water supply and wastewater disposal due in 2023; and
 - an analysis and assessment of storm water systems to guide future storm water management policies to inform the storm water management plan due in 2025.
- Parks Canada completes the assembly of lands on the east side of the 200 block of Banff Avenue in the town for national park purposes, specifically for the development of facilities that enhance the connection of visitors in downtown Banff to the rest of the national park, and that foster knowledge and understanding of the ecology and human history of the area, and the larger regional ecosystem. Future redevelopment of these lands respects the location in the civic heart of the town, incorporates high standards for urban design, landscape architecture, and

environmental sustainability, and reflects the town's strong mountain aesthetic and architectural guidelines. This also extends to the public spaces associated with the development. In the near term Parks Canada and the Town of Banff work together to foster a more dynamic and integrated open space within the downtown core.

7.2 The Lake Louise Area

The Lake Louise Area encompasses 22,500 hectares in the core of Banff National Park. It is bounded by the Banff-Yoho boundary in the west, and Boulder Pass in the east, and encompasses Upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, the village of Lake Louise, and the Lake Louise Ski Area. The area is bisected by the Upper Bow River, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the 4-lane Trans-Canada Highway, and several secondary roads. The turquoise alpine lakes situated beneath peaks of the Continental Divide provide majestic and iconic views that attract millions of global visitors every year. It is one of the most popular destinations in the mountain parks, with visitation of approximately 3.25 million in 2018¹.

Map 4. Lake Louise Area



There are approximately 72 kilometres of trails on the west side of the Bow River, and 18 kilometres of trails on the east side. During the summer most visitors do not venture far from the lakeside viewing areas and lakeshore trails, or the sight-seeing areas at the Lake Louise Ski Area gondola. A smaller percentage of visitors explore one of the day-use trails to Lake Agnes, Plain of Six Glaciers, or Consolation Lakes. Some seek a deeper immersion in nature by exploring longer wilderness trails or pursuing alpine climbing. Winter recreational opportunities include ice skating, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, backcountry ski touring, ice climbing, and downhill skiing at the Lake Louise Ski Area.

¹ Based on traffic counter data and an estimated 2.4 persons per vehicle.

Lake Louise is also an important area for wildlife. Two wildlife corridors traverse the valley parallel to the river. The Fairview corridor on the southwest side lies between the village of Lake Louise and Upper Lake Louise, and the Whitehorn Corridor on the northeast side is bounded by the Trans-Canada Highway fence and the forested mid-slope of Whitehorn Mountain. These corridors provide important movement pathways for wary wildlife in an area otherwise constrained by infrastructure and steep mountain terrain. They also provide core habitat for resident animals that may not travel far beyond the area. The Lake Louise area is also part of a core reproductive range for grizzly bears. Maintaining secure habitat for bears, and reducing potential for human-wildlife conflict are key objectives.

High visitor volumes during the snow-free seasons have created a number of management challenges in the Lake Louise area. Vehicle traffic frequently exceeds the capacity of parking and roadway infrastructure. Parking lots at Lake Louise and Moraine Lake are often full by sunrise while roadways are congested with vehicles that create backups which can extend to the Trans-Canada Highway. Infrastructure to accommodate visitors' needs, such as washrooms, picnic sites and rest areas, is insufficient to meet this high demand. As a result, visitor experience may suffer due to delays, frustration and overcrowding, and environmental impacts that include wildlife disturbance, reduced wildlife corridor function, and vegetation damage may expand and intensify.

Parks Canada has taken many actions to improve ecological integrity and visitor experience in Lake Louise. Measures to reduce human-wildlife conflict have been implemented, including 'group of four' hiking restrictions, improved sightlines on hiking trails, and temporary area closures when needed. Visitor facilities including washrooms, visitor reception centres, and interpretive signage have been upgraded. A transit system has been implemented to improve visitor experience and reduce traffic congestion. Integration with the regional public transit system is being improved.

Continuing work to maintain and restore ecological integrity will focus on improving habitat connectivity, reducing human-wildlife conflict and enhancing habitat diversity to benefit wildlife and reduce wildfire risk. Efforts to improve visitor experience will focus on developing an integrated public transportation system, enhancing communications, and improving accessibility and inclusivity of visitor facilities and services. The Lake Louise area will continue to be busy but transportation systems, visitor facilities and management strategies will work to accommodate a sustainable volume of people while ensuring that wildlife can continue to use and move through the area. Visitors will be well-informed before they arrive so they can plan accordingly and be prepared.

Parks Canada will develop a Lake Louise Area Strategy based on the following objectives and take an adaptive approach as knowledge improves or conditions change. A sustainable transit system with one or more centrally located staging areas and an intercept parking lot will be key to delivering this strategy. The system will be designed to maximize use of local infrastructure, support high quality visitor experiences, and allow safe access to and egress from the main visitor-use areas.

Objective 7.2.1: Maintain and restore ecological integrity and ensure wildlife can safely use and move through the Whitehorn and Fairview wildlife corridors.

Targets

- Low traffic volumes are maintained during sensitive periods on Lake Louise Drive and Whitehorn Road to allow wildlife movement.
- Trails between Lake Louise Village and Upper Lake Louise are evaluated and reconfigured where prospects exist to improve corridor effectiveness while maintaining appropriate visitor opportunities.
- An evaluation of the Fairview picnic site is completed that considers alternate uses for this location that support visitor experience and ecological objectives for the area.
- Wildlife crossing structures are developed where necessary to maintain connectivity.
- Forest thinning designed to reduce wildfire risk and enhance wildlife habitat is implemented on 375 hectares in the Fairview and Whitehorn corridors.

- Measures to reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflict are implemented, including the removal of wildlife attractants and enhancement of wildlife habitat away from areas of high human use.
- Off-track vegetation management adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Railway is conducted to reduce wildlife attractants, improve sightlines and open escape pathways for wildlife.

Objective 7.2.2: Visitor experience throughout the Lake Louise area is improved through development of an integrated public transportation system, and the provision of accessible, inclusive facilities and services.

Targets

- A strategic plan for a fully functioning, sustainable public transportation system in Lake Louise is developed as a component of the park's broader sustainable people-moving system.
- The feasibility of relocating the Lake Louise Park and Ride transit stop to the Lake Louise Ski Area is investigated.
- Visitor facilities in the village, and at Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, including washrooms, day-use areas, walkways and viewing areas are enhanced to improve accessibility for visitors with a broad spectrum of social identities and abilities, and to accommodate peak demand.
- Pre-trip communication enables visitors to plan their experiences and arrive with appropriate expectations for their Lake Louise destinations.

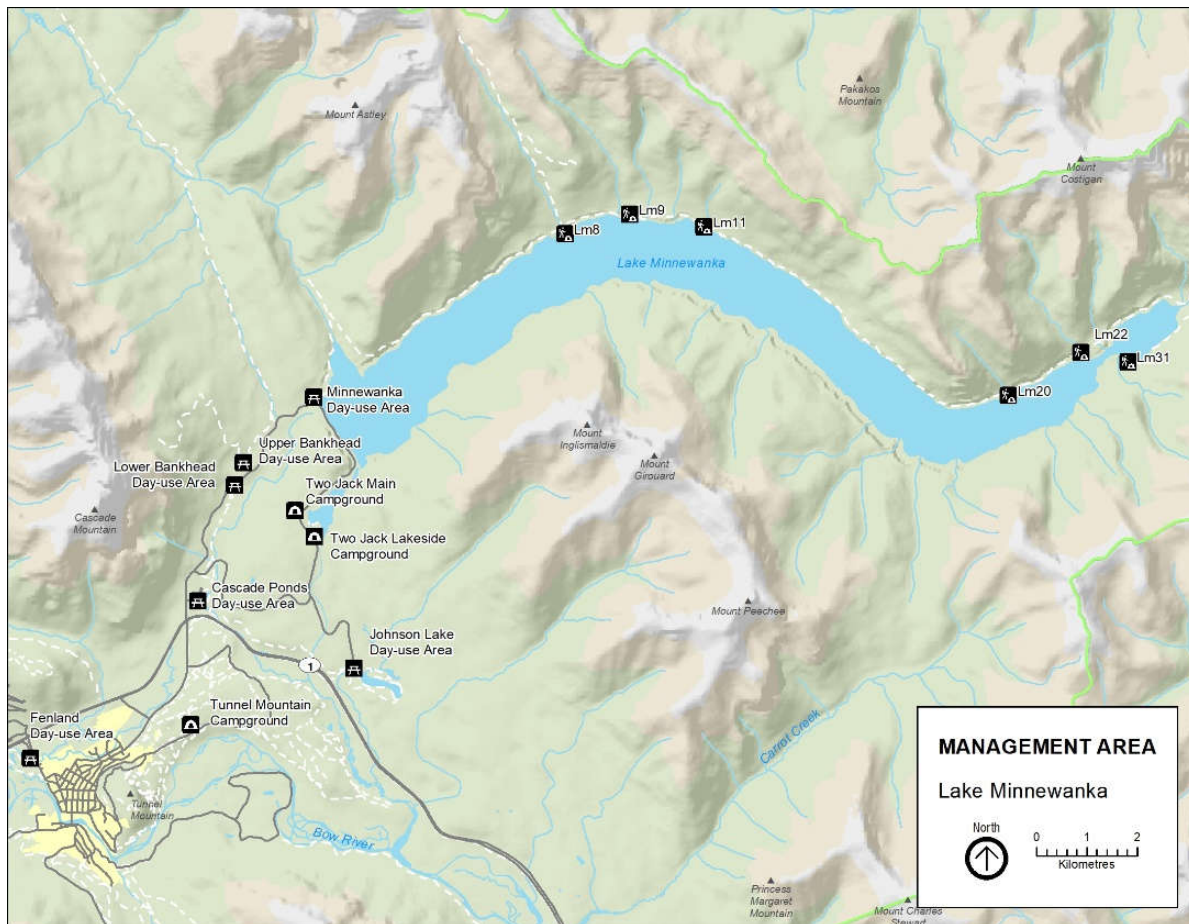
7.3 Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area

The Lake Minnewanka Reservoir area is one of the park's best known day-use areas. It encompasses the Minnewanka Loop Road, Johnson Lake Reservoir, Two Jack Lake and Lake Minnewanka Reservoir to the western shore of the lake. The area contains a number of day-use areas including Cascade Ponds and Upper Bankhead, Two Jack Main and Lakeside campgrounds, backcountry campgrounds along the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir shoreline, and day-hiking trails. It also contains a number of cultural and industrial resources including Sheep Point, Lower Bankhead, Anthracite and the 1912 dam and Minnewanka Landing underwater sites.

Motorized access, alpine scenery, cultural features and a large variety of recreational opportunities have made the Minnewanka Area one of the most sought-after accessible, edge-of-wilderness experiences in Banff National Park. Residents and park visitors can engage in hiking, on/off road biking, camping, swimming, picnicking, scuba diving, cross-country skiing, paddling, motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, wildlife viewing, ice skating, snow-shoeing, fishing, sightseeing and commercial scenic tours. Day-use areas and picnic shelters at Cascade Ponds, Johnson Lake Reservoir, Two Jack Lake and Lake Minnewanka Reservoir are the busiest in the park, and the Two Jack Lakeside and Two Jack Main campgrounds are fully occupied throughout the summer season. The area also provides access to the northern front ranges of the Rocky Mountains, which in turn offers extensive and unparalleled multi-day wilderness hiking, camping and horseback riding.

It is estimated that roughly one-quarter of the park's annual visitation - about 1 million people - visit the Lake Minnewanka area. While there are some interpretative products at various locations in the area, there are missed opportunities to convey additional information about its value and importance. Similarly, while wayfinding and orientation signage has improved considerably, there is still room for improvement particularly around Lake Minnewanka itself.

Map 5. Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area



Notwithstanding the high number of visitor facilities in a relatively small area, they are not well linked by trails; as a result, notwithstanding the introduction of public transit to the area in recent years, most users tend to arrive at and move around the area by personal vehicle. Traffic volumes have increased about 50% over the last 10 years, with 75% occurring between May and the end of September.

The area has experienced intensive human influence over the last century as a result of coal mining, hydro-electric development, gravel extraction, road building and the creation of recreational facilities.

The area contains a portion of the park's montane ecoregion, which provides significant wildlife habitat and it also contains the Norquay-Cascade and the Two Jack wildlife Corridors. A number of environmentally important features occur in the area as well as several significant cultural sites including abandoned mines at Bankhead and Anthracite and submerged archaeological resources at Lake Minnewanka. The biggest ecological concern in the area is the potential for the introduction of invasive aquatic species into one of the lakes or streams through recreational use.

High levels of congestion on the Minnewanka Loop Road and in the main parking areas at Minnewanka, Johnson and Two Jack lakes have been noted, as have user conflicts between motorized vehicles and cyclists, and between hikers and mountain bikers. During the winter months the western portion of the Minnewanka road is closed to allow wildlife to move undisturbed around the Norquay-Cascade corridor. The impacts of increasing and evolving winter activities in the area such as winter mountain biking and kite skiing are not well understood.

Parks Canada's goal is that the Lake Minnewanka area will continue to welcome visitors and residents seeking high quality authentic national park recreational experiences accessible by vehicle or self-propelled transport within a stunning, natural landscape. The area will be a key attraction for people to: enjoy water-based recreation, learn about the park's human and cultural history, and engage in a range of other activities that reflect and are sympathetic to the area's proximity to wilderness and which support its site-specific ecological goals and limitations. Linked to visitor services in the town of Banff via convenient mass transit and a trail system, the Lake Minnewanka area will continue to provide recreational opportunities. It will fill the role of a day-use area, and consequently, no overnight visitor accommodation may be developed. Redevelopment of existing facilities may occur within the parameters described in this plan, applicable policy and law.

Objective 7.3.1: In collaboration with stakeholders and Indigenous groups, Lake Minnewanka area is managed according to an area plan that is consistent with the goal above and which considers the ecological integrity of the area, as well as safe access and egress for park users. The plan considers:

- as part of the sustainable people-moving strategy, linking of recreational opportunities including the feasibility of a connector multi-use trail between the Two Jack Lakeside and Two Jack Main campgrounds with Johnson Lake, Cascade Ponds and the community of Banff and Lake Minnewanka,
- visitor use levels and visitor expectations,
- points of congestion and user conflicts,
- expanding, linking and improving opportunities for interpretation / information on ecological and cultural heritage features,
- use of innovative approaches and green technology,
- sustainability of evolving activities,
- the appropriate type, timing, distribution and amounts of recreational use/visitor use,
- management of people in the event of an emergency,
- the ecological values and impacts of use,
- potential development or redevelopment proposals, and
- managing water-based activities and access in the context of the potential for the introduction of invasive species.

Subject to environmental review of the plan, some reconfiguration of facilities and services within the area may be considered if it serves to address environmental and public safety issues, while improving the visitor experience.

Targets

- Alone or with partners a description of the patterns, types and demographics of visitor use, as well as infrastructure capacities in the area, is developed.
- A Lake Minnewanka Area Plan and Strategic Environmental Assessment is completed for public and Indigenous review and comment.
- Parks Canada works with Trans-Alta to ensure the latest regulated river science is applied to their operations and to ensure modern mitigations are applied to their operations to mitigate the impacts of the reservoir. This is reviewed every five years.

8.0 Zoning and Declared Wilderness Area

8.1 Zoning

Parks Canada's national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water based on the ability to support those uses. The zoning system has five categories:

- Zone I – Special Preservation
- Zone II – Wilderness
- Zone III – Natural Environment
- Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation
- Zone V – Park Services

Zone I or Special Preservation areas includes features that merit special care and attention because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access is not permitted. The Zone I areas in Banff National Park include: the Clearwater-Siffleur area, the Castleguard Cave system and Meadows, the Cave and Basin Marsh area, and the Christensen Archaeological Site. These comprise approximately 10% of the park. There are no changes for Zone I areas proposed in this plan.

Zone II or Wilderness areas contain features that are good representations of a natural region to be conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration for these areas, which offer visitors the opportunity to experience, first-hand, the park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities which depend upon the park's intact ecosystems, and require few if any rudimentary services and facilities. For this reason, motorized access and circulation is not permitted. About 87% of the park is Zone II.

There are some additions to Zone II in this management plan resulting from:

- the formalization of the boundaries for the Mount Norquay, Sunshine Village and Lake Louise ski areas stemming from the leasehold reductions associated with approval of each resort's site guidelines (This is consistent with Parks Canada's longstanding policy for Ski Area Management and each was subject to impact assessment and public review); and
- small mapping corrections to more clearly show consistent buffers for leaseholds and developed areas outside the main Trans-Canada Highway corridor.

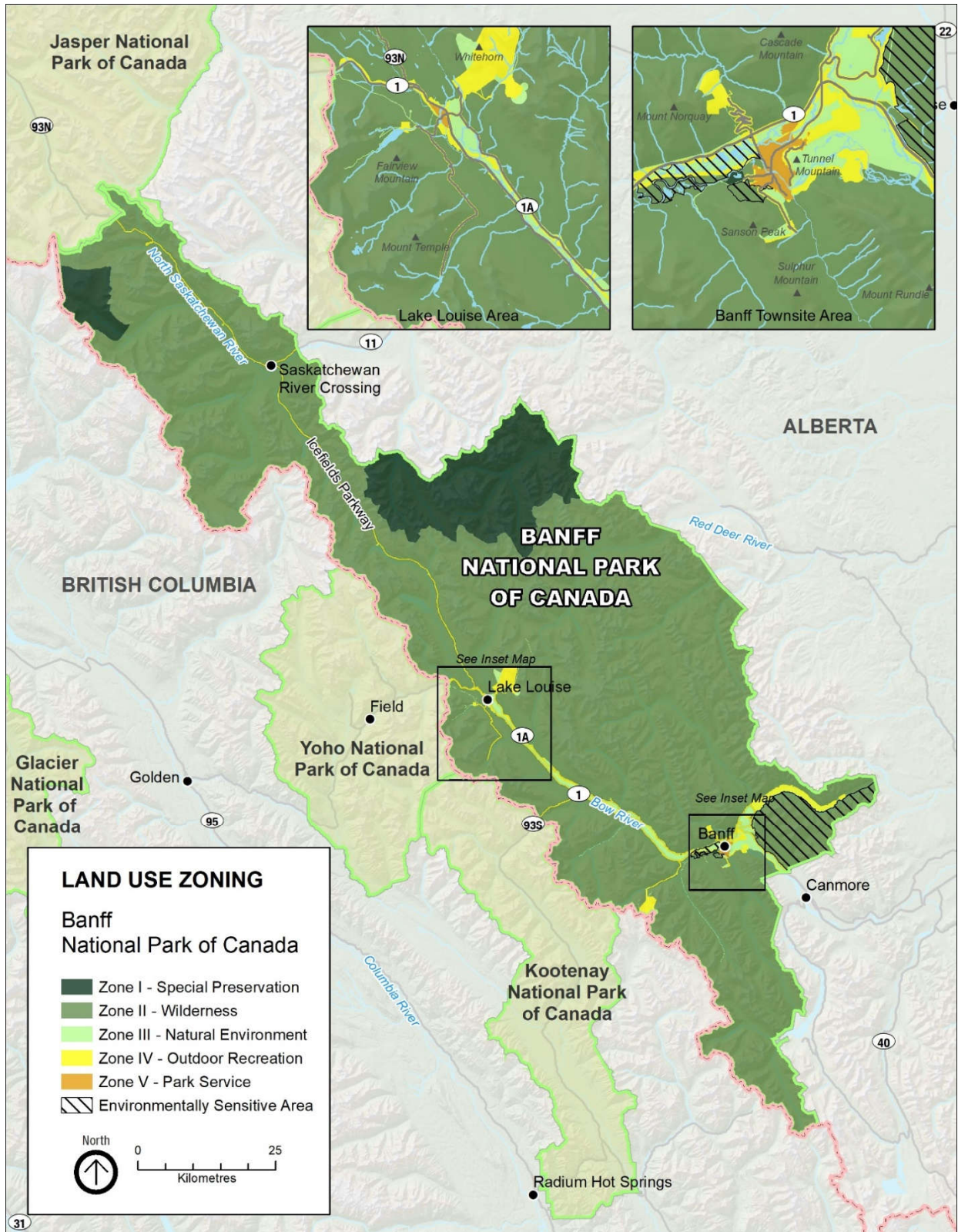
This results in a total increase of 594 hectares to Zone II Wilderness (with a commensurate decrease in size to Zone IV).

Zone III or Natural Environment areas provide opportunities for visitors to experience the park's natural and cultural heritage through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. While motorized access may be allowed, it will be controlled. Access routes and land associated with backcountry commercial lodges are in Zone III, which comprises slightly less than 1% of the park.

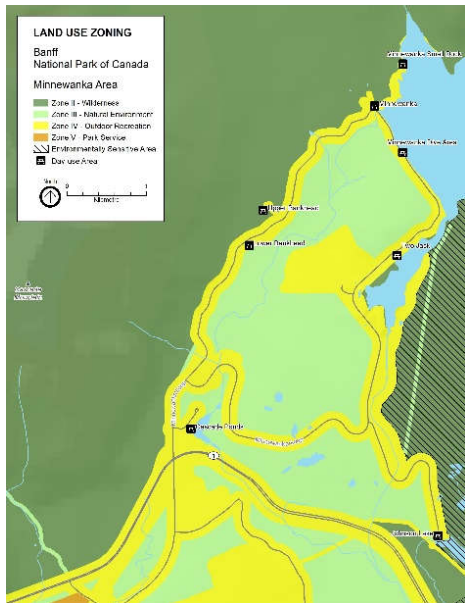
At the Lake Louise Ski Area, the feature known as 'West Bowl', and several small areas required for avalanche control operations on the periphery of the ski area, have been designated as Zone III areas under this management plan.

Zone IV or outdoor recreation areas are limited areas capable of accommodating broad range of opportunities for understanding appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage values and related essential services and facilities, in ways that impact the ecological integrity of the park to the smallest extent possible, and whose defining feature is direct access by motor vehicle. Park management plans may define provisions for limiting private motorized access and circulation. In Banff, this zone includes the Trans-Canada Highway corridor and railway, day use areas, ski areas, and Lake Minnewanka.

Map 6: Zoning in Banff National Park

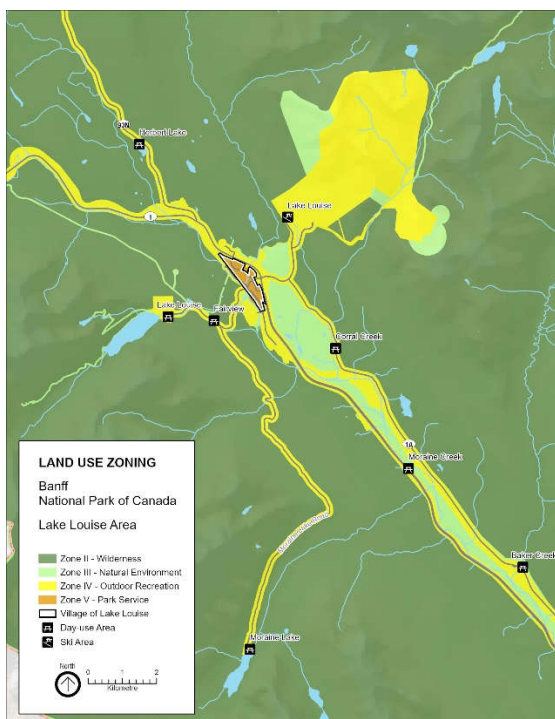


Map 7. Zoning in the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area



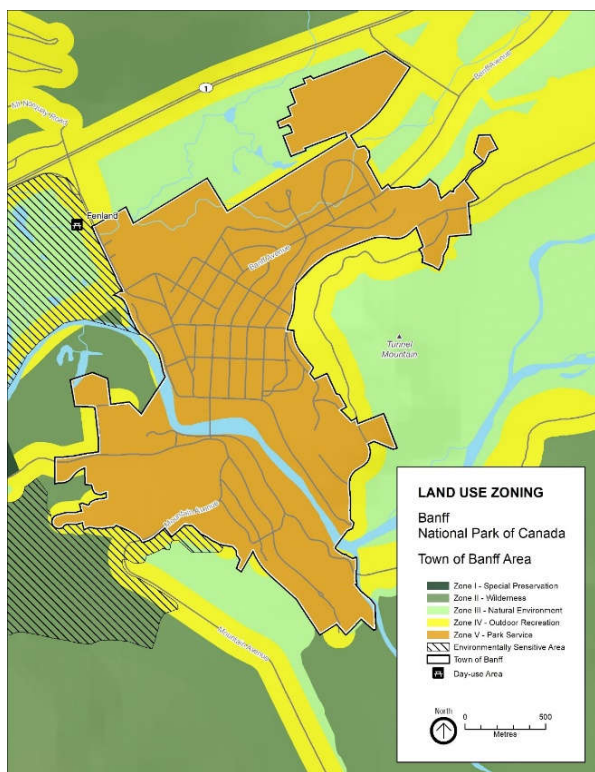
As a result of approval of the Lake Louise Ski Area’s Long Range Plan and its Detailed Impact Assessment, a feature known as ‘Hidden Bowl’ has been removed from Zone II and added to Zone IV to permit future commercial ski operations, while a larger area in Purple and Wolverine Bowls has been converted from Zone IV to Zone II. There are some additional reductions to Zone IV areas in this management plan associated with reducing the boundaries of the ski areas and converting those areas into Zone II, and addressing relatively small buffering inconsistencies from the previous plans as noted earlier in this section. Zone 4 comprises about 2% of the park.

Map 8. Zoning in the Lake Louise Area



Zone V or Park Services areas are those where visitor services and support facilities are concentrated. In the case of Banff National Park, these areas include the town of Banff and the village of Lake Louise. This plan does not contain any changes to Zone V which comprises about .07% of the park.

Map 9. Zoning in the Town of Banff Area



Environmentally Sensitive Sites (ESS)

This designation applies to areas with significant and sensitive features that require special protection measures.

Vermilion Lakes Wetlands ESS

The Vermilion Lakes Wetlands support a diversity of vegetation and many rare and significant plant species. These montane communities are important habitat for a variety of birds and mammals. The area contains many special features: lakes, ponds, springs, rare birds, moose winter range, elk calving areas and ungulate mineral licks. The alluvial landforms on the north and east shores of the lakes and adjacent wetlands are rich in significant archaeological resources from at least 10,700 years ago.

Middle Springs ESS

The upper and lower Middle Springs remain the only relatively undisturbed hot springs on Sulphur Mountain. The warm mineral waters create a unique habitat for rare plants and invertebrates. This area's importance is increased by its location in an important wildlife movement corridor along the lower slopes of Sulphur Mountain.

Fairholme-Carrot Creek Benchlands ESS

The Fairholme Range area from the East Gate to Johnson Lake is the largest remaining intact block of secure montane wildlife habitat in the park. Human use of this area, particularly during the summer, can displace wildlife and diminish habitat security. Off-road bicycling is not permitted and trails are not

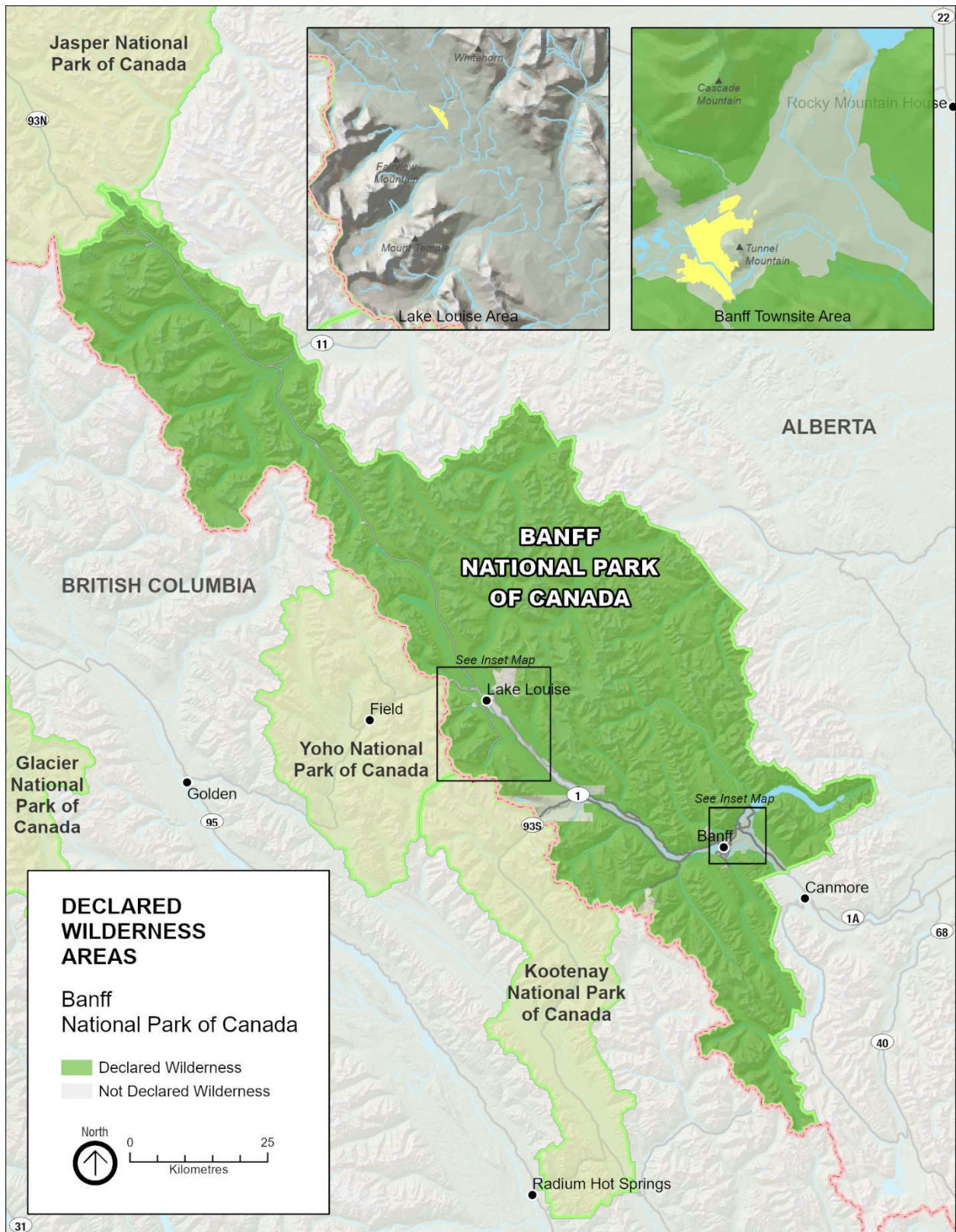
maintained in this area. Human use is restricted by means of educational measures and a voluntary access closure.

8.2 Wilderness Area Declaration

Under the *Canada National Parks Act* (Article 14) and the *National Parks of Canada Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*, any area of a park that exists in a natural state or that is capable of returning to a natural state may be declared as wilderness, and no activities that are likely to impair the wilderness character may be carried out in these areas. The intent of legally designating a portion of the national park as wilderness is to maintain its wilderness character in perpetuity. Only activities that are unlikely to impair the wilderness character of the area may be authorized within the declared wilderness area of Banff National Park.

In Banff, legally declared wilderness areas largely mirror the Zones I and II areas, with the result that approximately 97% of the park is declared wilderness. With this plan, there is an additional 594 hectares to be added in association with the confirmation of the boundaries for all three ski areas and the concomitant re-zoning of those areas from Zone IV to Zone II.

Map 10. Banff National Park Declared Wilderness



9.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and on cultural resources. The *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, requires a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) be completed for all plans and policies deemed to have important positive or negative environmental effects and which are submitted to the federal Cabinet or to a Minister for approval.

A strategic environmental assessment was undertaken on this management plan, and the management direction contained therein has been adjusted to respond to findings. The assessment considered all of the Parks Canada-managed Rocky Mountain Parks in the context of the potential cumulative impacts on the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

All national park management plans are assessed through a strategic environmental assessment to understand the potential for cumulative effects. This understanding contributes to evidence-based decision-making that supports ecological integrity being maintained or restored over the life of the plan. The strategic environmental assessment of the Management Plan for Banff National Park considered the potential impacts of climate change, local and regional activities around the park, expected increase in visitation and proposals within the management plan. Also assessed were the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including hydrological function, aquatic communities, forest vegetation, alpine habitat, whitebark pine, carnivores, and mountain goats.

The management plan will result in many positive impacts on the environment including collaborative initiatives to preserve habitat security and connectivity across the regional landscape, and strategies to lessen the impacts of visitors on park ecosystems.

Ongoing monitoring, active management and restoration programs within the park will be used to mitigate potential cumulative effects on aquatic communities, whitebark pine, hydrological function, and others. For example, the presence of a major transportation corridor through the park has had negative impacts on hydrological function and increases the risk of aquatic invasive species establishment. Future restoration activities planned to increase connectivity concurrent to highway upgrades and communication strategies to reduce the likelihood of aquatic invasive species establishment will be effective in restoring this connectivity, while reducing the impacts of future cumulative effects.

Forest vegetation, carnivores and mountain goats are particularly vulnerable to cumulative effects. Years of fire suppression have had detrimental impact on forest communities, the effects which may be further exacerbated by climate change. Through wildfire management and implementation of prescribed burns, Banff will restore fire as a key process for maintaining the ecological integrity of forests. Monitoring has shown large-mammal presence on the landscape is at desired levels, and grizzly bear habitat is generally secure in Banff. Cumulative effects of a major transportation corridor, two townsites, three ski hills, and increased visitation may impact carnivores over the next 10 years. The management plan identifies several targets under Key Strategies 1 (Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage), 2 (True-to-Place Experiences), 5 (Managing Development), 6 (Regional Connectivity and Landscapes) and 9 (Park Communities) to maintain and improve habitat security and connectivity. This includes working with partners to reduce mortalities, committing to maintaining or reducing the developed footprint in the park, and improving winter wildlife connectivity in key corridors and managing the intensity of human use in priority areas. There is uncertainty on the status of mountain goats in Banff, and both visitation and climate change have the potential to impact this species. Continued monitoring of both goats and of visitor-use patterns within the park and establishment of regional partnerships to support landscape-level conservation will increase our knowledge and the resiliency of goats to climate change stressors.

Banff National Park is part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. The world heritage values for which it was designated were evaluated to ensure the management plan adequately protects them.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public will be consulted on the draft management plan and summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. Feedback will be considered and incorporated as appropriate.

The SEA was conducted in accordance with The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010) and facilitated an evaluation of how the management plan contributed to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Individual projects undertaken to implement management plan objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Impact Assessment Act*, or successor legislation. The management plan supports a number of Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals:

- Greening Government;
- Sustainably Managed Lands and Forests;
- Healthy Wildlife Populations;
- Connecting Canadians with Nature; and
- Safe and Healthy Communities.

Many positive environmental effects are expected and there are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the Banff National Park Management Plan.