



HIGHLIGHTS

YOHO NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2010

Celebrating the Past, Embracing Tomorrow's Possibilities

BACKGROUND

Yoho National Park encompasses 1,313 km² of the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia. The park shares a border with Banff National Park to the east and Kootenay National Park to the south, and is part of the 23,069 km² Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. Throughout 2009 and early 2010, Parks Canada conducted the second five-year review of the Yoho National Park Management Plan. The review provided an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the past decade, and look forward to the opportunities and challenges ahead. In particular, this management plan review brought a renewed focus on connecting Canadians to their protected mountain heritage, while continuing the strong direction on ecological integrity from the previous plan.

The 2010 management plan replaces the 2000 version, and provides a road map for how Parks Canada will deliver its integrated mandate of protection, experience, and education in Yoho National Park for the next 10-15 years.

PLANNING IN PARTNERSHIP

The management plan review benefited from the involvement of many stakeholders, park visitors, park employees, and individuals who took the time to get involved and voice their thoughts and ideas related to Yoho National Park. The public participation program included planning workshops, community open houses, staff discussion sessions, in-park visitor surveys, and web surveys. An online discussion forum was also available where individuals could share their perspectives on particular topics during the preparation of the plan.

Some of the organizations and groups who were involved in the management plan review include: the Ktunaxa Nation, the Shuswap Indian Band, the Field Community Council, the Golden Town Council, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, the Association for Mountain Park Protection and Enjoyment, the Bow Valley Naturalists, and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.





PROTECTION

Current Situation:

- Yoho encompasses a diverse mountain landscape, from glaciers and icefields on the Continental Divide, to productive montane habitat in the valleys of the Kicking Horse River and its main tributaries. Decades of fire suppression and a recent outbreak of mountain pine beetle have affected forest health. Prescribed fires will continue to be used to restore forest health.
- The Trans Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific railway both bisect the park and introduce unnatural causes of wildlife mortality. These transportation corridors have also affected aquatic connectivity.
- The Burgess Shale fossil sites contain very rare and fragile specimens requiring careful management of access.

Key Achievements:

- The negative effects on water quality of wastewater systems have been dramatically reduced by state-of-the-art water treatment in the community of Field.
- A recent inventory of culverts along park roadways found that the majority were blocking or partially blocking fish movement. Recent funding has helped identify which culvert repairs would reap the greatest benefits for fish and other aquatic species in the park.
- A strong program is in place to protect and present Burgess Shale sites through restricted access, monitoring and surveillance.

Action Plan:

- Parks Canada will work with Canadian Pacific to reduce wildlife mortality along the railway.
- Fire will continue to be restored to the landscape, in order to improve long-term forest health and wildlife habitat. Prescribed fires will include opportunities for visitors to observe and learn about the role of fire on the landscape.
- New visitor experience opportunities will be created by engaging anglers and other Canadians in activities to eliminate or reduce populations of non-native fish species that pose a risk to native fish populations through displacement or hybridization.





VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Current Situation:

- Over the past decade visitation to Yoho has fluctuated between approximately 405,000 and 609,000 visitors annually, with a growth trend of around 4% per year. Popular visitor attractions include Emerald Lake, Takakkaw Falls and the Yoho Valley, the Lake O'Hara area, the Burgess Shale sites, the Spiral Tunnels, and the Community of Field.
- Although visitor satisfaction is generally very high, it is recognized that many of the park facilities are in poor condition. The sense of arrival and welcome is poor.

Key Achievements:

- In 2009 Parks Canada celebrated the centennial of the Burgess Shale with a special event in Field, a new interpretive exhibit and introduced a new interpretive hiking program to the two most important fossil sites, creating a new visitor experience opportunity.
- Visitors were connected with the unique stories of Yoho throughout the summer through engaging and award-winning campground interpretive programs.
- The range of available accommodations caters to diverse visitor audiences, from those seeking backcountry solitude, to those seeking a luxury getaway, all within easy access of some of the best alpine hiking and skiing in North America.

Action Plan:

- The park will create a stronger connection with visitors by facilitating a variety of visit types based on their needs and expectations. A wide variety of 'ideal park experiences' will be developed through market research and focusing on the complete trip cycle including wishing, visiting and remembering.
- Parks Canada will explore options to introduce inexperienced visitors to backcountry camping, changing their level of engagement and increasing their connection with Yoho.
- Yoho's grandeur, railway history and winter opportunities will be profiled as a way of differentiating Yoho from other national parks.
- Parks Canada, in collaboration with the Community of Field and other stakeholders, will promote the outstanding winter recreation opportunities in the park in order to better position Yoho as a winter destination.





EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Current situation:

- Parks Canada is an active partner in the Wild Voices for Kids program coordinated through the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network, which delivers educational programming to schools in the Columbia Valley and provides funding for school groups to come to the park. The park website contains educational information on some of the unique heritage features in the park, such as the Burgess Shale, wildlife, and the Spiral Tunnels in Kicking Horse Pass NHS. Focused effort is needed to reach out to target audiences, such as youth, urban Canadians and new Canadians.

Key Achievements:

- Forest health communications have helped to raise awareness of the ecological role of fire, and increased awareness and understanding of prescribed burns in restoring wildlife habitat, managing Mountain Pine Beetle, and increasing facility protection and human safety.
- Several Burgess Shale edu-kits circulate widely throughout British Columbia and Alberta schools each school year. Parks Canada's Teachers' Corner hosts curriculum-based lesson plans on the Burgess Shale.

Action Plan:

- Parks Canada in collaboration with the Royal Ontario Museum and the Department of Canadian Heritage will develop a new virtual museum on the Burgess Shale, allowing people who are unable to visit the sites in person an opportunity to experience the thrill of the famous fossils and a virtual visit.
- A diverse community of Canadians will be engaged to share information, imagine creative solutions, and collaborate to implement those solutions, creating new stories of conservation success.
- Targeted programming will link young Canadians, urban Canadians and recent immigrants to unique aspects of the park such as the Burgess Shale, aquatic ecosystems and the *Kicking Horse Pass to the Last Spike Cultural Landscape*.

Next Steps

Parks Canada reports annually to the public on progress in implementing the park management plan. Every five years, Parks Canada reports on the condition of resource protection, visitor experience and public appreciation and understanding through the State of the Park Report.

Information: Please contact Parks Canada, Lake Louise, Yoho & Kootenay Field Unit,
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