

**NATIONAL PARK/RESERVE
FEASIBILITY STUDY**
South Okanagan—Lower Similkameen

PARKS CANADA

Newsletter #4

WINTER 2007/SPRING 2008

UPDATE and *Frequently Asked Questions*

Over the past year, we have been working to develop a more detailed park proposal, giving careful consideration to the extensive input we have received from local residents and stakeholders. This update describes recent progress and provides answers to some frequent and recent questions.



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D. Clarke

What is this feasibility study?

The national park/reserve feasibility study includes research and consultations, and a process of park design, evaluation, and refinement. At the end of the study, a report will be produced to describe the park proposal, opportunities and constraints of park establishment, and what we learned from consultations. This report will inform decision-makers about the feasibility of proceeding to negotiate a park establishment agreement.

Why is Parks Canada interested in this area?

A national park in the Interior Dry Plateau would become part of the system of national parks representing distinct natural regions across Canada. While other possible areas have been considered, this area offers unique qualities, and many people here are interested in the enhanced conservation and visitor opportunities that a national park would bring.

What has happened so far?

Here is a timeline of study milestones to date:

- 2003 – Canada/BC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed to conduct feasibility study
- 2004 - Feasibility study initiated; study area identified; consultations, fall open houses
- 2005 - Boundary options assessed; social, economic and environmental baseline study, consultations.
- 2006 - Development of Draft Park Concept; preliminary assessment; consultations; spring open houses.
- 2007 - Research, consultations, community-led public meetings (Nov.)

What is happening now?

The project team is working hard to develop a detailed park proposal, and to assess its social, economic and environmental implications. We are learning about this complex landscape from traditional users and stewards of the land (including First Nations, ranchers, and provincial agencies). We are looking at other national parks and their relationship with local communities. We are commissioning technical studies to better understand the possible benefits and constraints of park establishment. Together with stakeholders, we are developing a vision of what a national park could look like here. We are working to answer your questions.



D. Clarke

The feasibility study is gathering information required by governments and stakeholders to determine the opportunities and challenges of park

establishment. The study area is populated and has many pre-existing land tenures and uses that could be affected by park establishment. Research and consultations are helping to identify practical and creative ways to mitigate adverse impacts and create benefits for local communities.

Parks Canada is working to collect detailed, accurate and complete information required to make an informed decision about park feasibility.



D. Clarke

How will the feasibility study evaluate costs and benefits?

Under the terms of the MOU between the province and the federal government, Parks Canada agreed to provide an assessment of social, economic and environmental implications of park establishment.

In the fall of 2007 an independent assessment of social and economic implications of park establishment was initiated. This assessment is using a consultative approach involving key stakeholders, and results will be available for review when complete. This assessment will provide important information for governments to consider when assessing park feasibility. It will also be key material for informed public input.

What comes after a feasibility study?

If the feasibility study is positive, and governments determine that there is potential for a national park/reserve, then there will be negotiations to define the terms and conditions of park establishment. If the feasibility study is not positive, Parks Canada will look for park establishment opportunities in another area of the Interior Dry Plateau.

How will local people have a say in the feasibility study?

Consultations have helped Parks Canada to learn about the unique opportunities and challenges to park establishment in this area. They have helped shape the feasibility study process and the park proposal, and will be an important consideration in assessing feasibility.

How are communities and stakeholders being consulted?

Parks Canada has regularly met with two committees that represent local interests – the L.R.M.P. (Land and Resource Management Plan) Monitoring Committee - National Park Sub-Committee, and the Regional District Park Committee. There have been extensive consultations with agency, industry, and many directly affected stakeholders, and these consultations will continue.

A website has been established and newsletters are regularly published to report on the study progress. The local project office has been available to respond to enquiries, and to provide presentations upon request.

Open houses have been held at two phases in the feasibility study, attracting close to 1000 people each time.



When are the next open houses?

During 2008, we expect to hold a third round of open houses to present a park proposal (including a vision of park establishment, management and operations). The results of the socio-economic assessment will be available so that communities will understand the costs and benefits of park establishment, and remaining issues and uncertainties.

Why is Parks Canada focused so much on local input?

A focus on local consultation ensures that those most affected by the proposed park have the greatest opportunities for input. It also helps us develop a comprehensive understanding of established local land uses and tenures, and the desired future.

Why is Parks Canada holding open houses outside of the local area (Kelowna, Penticton, Princeton)?

Some social and economic implications of park establishment would extend outside of the local area. For example, some of the people who use the area now, and/or who would use it as a national park, are from more distant communities. National parks are a legacy for all Canadians so we are interested in the views of Canadians regardless of where they live.

How will the feasibility study assess support for the park proposal?

Open houses and public forums provide one way to obtain input and gauge reaction from a broad community perspective. They are used, together with stakeholder discussions, correspondence from groups and individuals, other communications, and possibly surveys to improve understanding of support or opposition to the park proposal. The feasibility study will report on the results of consultations, and these will be an important factor in influencing feasibility assessment.



Public Consultations and Feasibility Studies – an example from Ontario –

In 2001, following three years of public consultation and review, the feasibility study for Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area developed 100 recommendations covering a broad spectrum of topics. These recommendations formed an essential component for park establishment negotiations. In 2007, establishment of this NMCA was announced.

What is proposed by the draft park concept?

The park concept represents a long term vision that could take many years to achieve. The proposed park builds on provincial Protected Areas by adding adjacent multiple-use crown lands and private lands (willing seller/willing buyer).

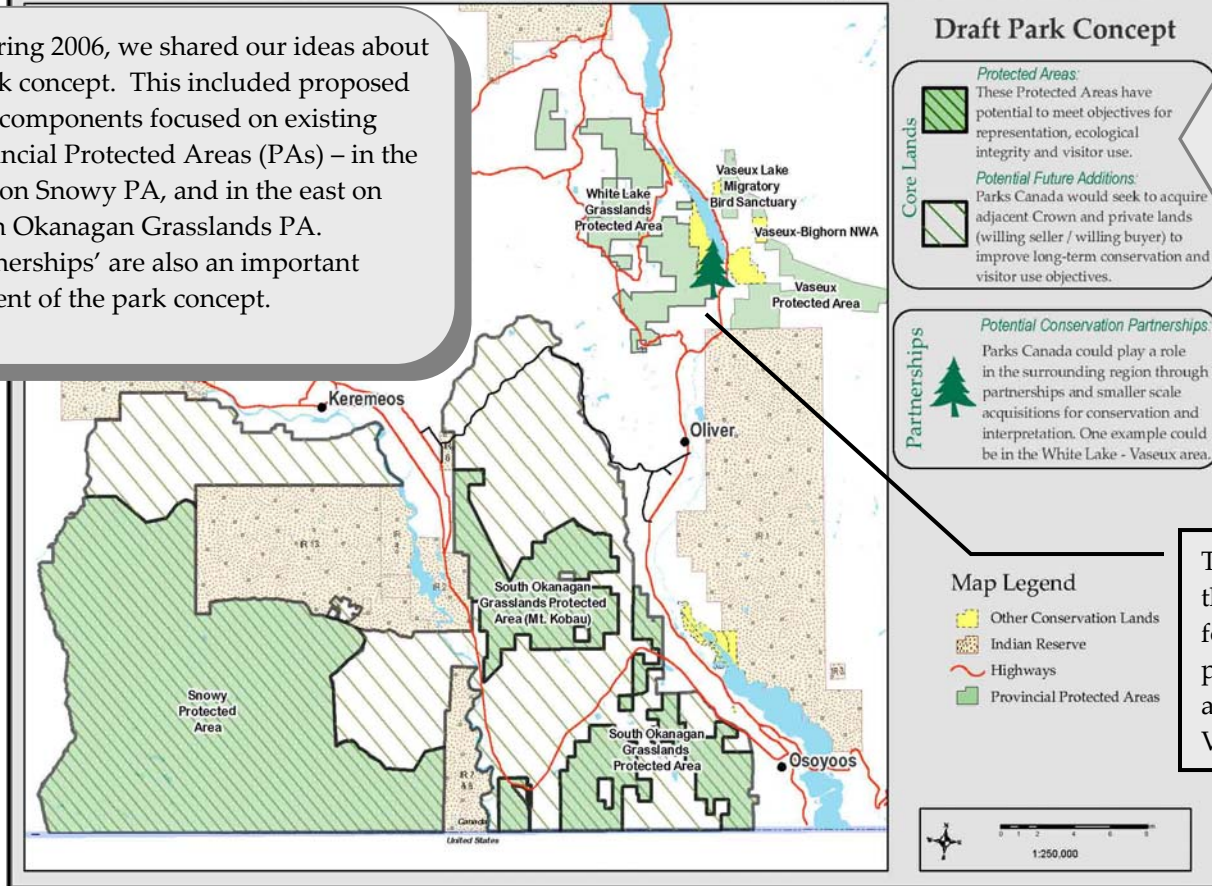


D. Clarke

South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area (Chopaka and Kilpoola) south of Highway 3

National Park Reserve Feasibility Study ~ South Okanagan - Lower Similkameen

In spring 2006, we shared our ideas about a park concept. This included proposed park components focused on existing provincial Protected Areas (PAs) – in the west on Snowy PA, and in the east on South Okanagan Grasslands PA. 'Partnerships' are also an important element of the park concept.



Draft Park Concept

Protected Areas: These Protected Areas have potential to meet objectives for representation, ecological integrity and visitor use.

Potential Future Additions: Parks Canada would seek to acquire adjacent Crown and private lands (willing seller / willing buyer) to improve long-term conservation and visitor use objectives.

Potential Conservation Partnerships: Parks Canada could play a role in the surrounding region through partnerships and smaller scale acquisitions for conservation and interpretation. One example could be in the White Lake - Vaseux area.

Map Legend

- Other Conservation Lands
- Indian Reserve
- Highways
- Provincial Protected Areas



Cross-hatching shows the desired future park area.

The northern part of the park concept is focused on a partnership approach in the Vaseux Lake area.



Canada



Joe Lake in Snowy Protected Area, an area known as Npecec K'ulawx by the Syilx Nation.

D. Clarke

Is this the final boundary? Would the park area get bigger over time?

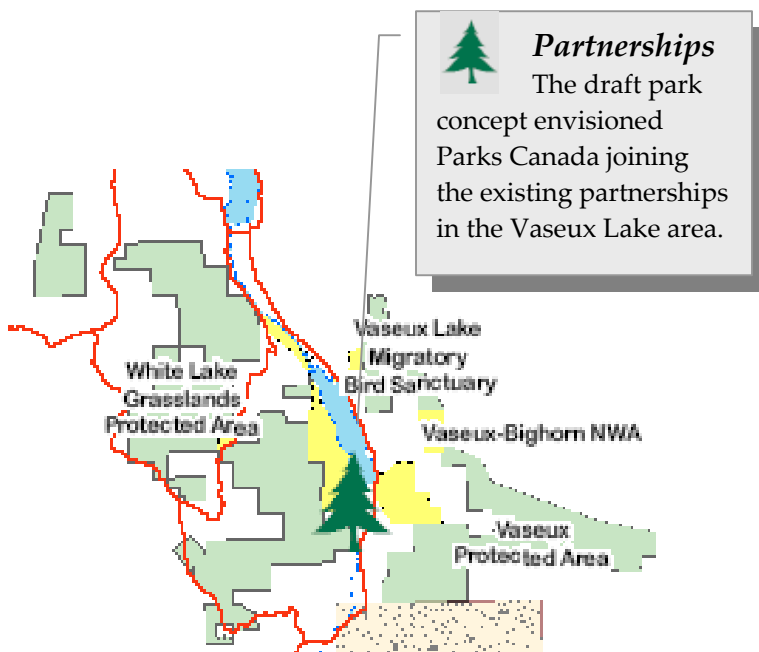
The feasibility study will continue to refine the boundaries proposed by the 2006 draft park concept, and provide clarity in the Vaseux Lake area. When complete, the feasibility study will guide discussions between governments, including potential negotiation of a park establishment agreement(s) for a defined area.

Within the proposed park boundary, the national park would initially be smaller, starting with existing Protected Areas. The park would gradually achieve the defined boundaries over time with the addition of Crown lands, and the purchase of private lands if and when private landowners are willing to sell to Parks Canada.

What is meant by “partnerships” in the park concept?

A national park could not function on its own, isolated from the people and land uses in the surrounding region. Parks Canada could seek partnerships both within and outside of park boundaries.

The value of existing and future partnerships was considered in design of the park concept, particularly in the Vaseux Lake area. The Vaseux and White Lake areas are well known for their natural and cultural heritage and currently showcase a partnership approach in managing ecosystems. Partners include various agencies and organizations, including the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and the Nature Trust.



If a national park/reserve were to be established in the South Okanagan – Lower Similkameen, it would be essential to build partnerships with existing land owners, stewardship advocates, and managers in areas adjacent to the park. Partnerships could include cooperative efforts towards common goals such as wildfire management, weed control, wildlife management, land use planning, tourist destination management, outreach and education. Partnerships within park boundaries would include cooperative management with the Syilx First Nation.

The Vaseux Lake area has excellent potential for park values (e.g. water and riparian habitats, visitor opportunities).

Partnerships play an important role in national parks and their neighboring communities across the country. Here are a few examples:

Grasslands National Park, Sask.

- Partnership between the national park, regional school division and community partners in Val Marie, Sask. to operate a Prairie Learning Centre for youth.
- Parks Canada partners with rural municipalities and others for fire suppression and communications.
- “Friends of Grasslands National Park” and local families have partnered to create an exhibit honouring local ranchers.

Waterton Lakes National Park, Alta.

- Participates in the cross border cooperation between Canadian and American agencies to coordinate management of the “Crown of the Continent” which also includes Glacier National Park, Wash.
- Parks Canada supports the role of partnerships outside of park boundaries, including the largest private conservation initiative in Canada that protects more than 100 sq km of key conservation and working ranch lands.

Kootenay National Park, B.C.

- Parks Canada collaborates with the local community to protect and restore bighorn sheep habitat and to showcase the nature of the area to visitors (e.g. “Wings Over the Rockies” nature festival, guided trips in the fall to observe the fall sheep rut).

Sirmilik National Park, Nunavut

- Parks Canada partners with Canadian Wildlife Service in joint management of Bylot Island as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary and a National Park.



D. Harvey

How and when would park establishment occur, if negotiations were successful?

Land currently managed by the Province (provincial Protected Areas and multiple use Crown lands) would be transferred to Parks Canada, at an appropriate time, as agreed upon during negotiations. The transition from “status quo” to national park/reserve would introduce a new management framework, consistent with Parks Canada legislation and policy, and changes to existing land use.

A long transition period would help allow individuals and industries to adjust to this change. Parks Canada would continue to work closely with First Nations, provincial agencies, regional and local governments, and affected stakeholders to encourage a smooth transition. The following scenario provides an idea of how park establishment could occur here.

During the **short to medium term**, commercial rights (e.g. forest harvesting, mineral exploration and mining) and other uses not consistent with national park management (e.g. recreational hunting) could be managed under provincial statutes but gradually phased out.

Private lands would remain private and excluded from the park indefinitely at the discretion of the landowner, or purchased based on a negotiated settlement between a willing seller and Parks Canada. With complex and overlapping tenures, negotiations with all affected parties would be required.

During this early stage of park establishment, Parks Canada would undertake research (incorporating local and traditional knowledge) and monitoring in order to make informed decisions regarding ecological restoration, stewardship, and park visitor opportunities. Parks Canada would begin hiring new employees, and opportunities for training and development would be provided.

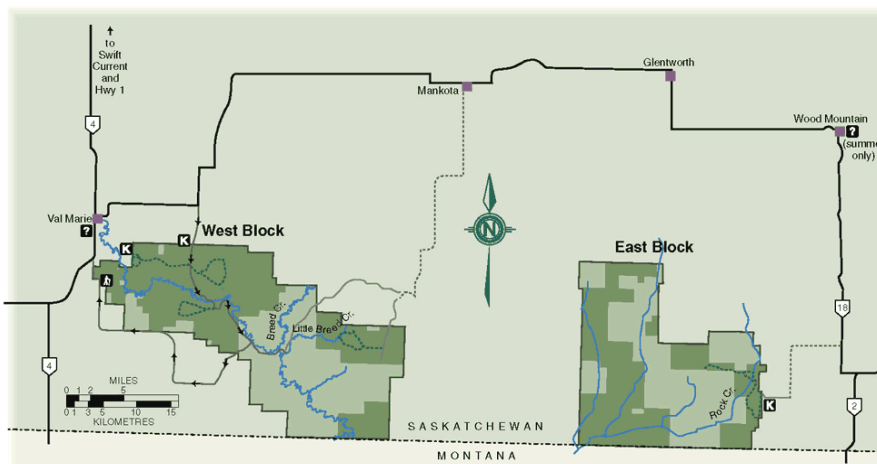
Interim park management guidelines would be developed, using stakeholder and public input, to provide guidance before a management plan is prepared.

A detailed vegetation management plan would be prepared to address issues such as fire management, forest insects and disease, weed control, species at risk, biodiversity, and management for desired future ecological conditions, including the possible use of grazing as a management tool. A wildlife plan would also be prepared in collaboration with the province, First Nations, and local residents to better understand opportunities to mitigate impacts of the phase-out of recreational hunting (e.g. enhancement of opportunities outside of the park) and to guide wildlife management over the long term.

Research would be conducted to learn more about the recreational and leisure interests of traditional users, and the desires and needs of future park visitors. This research would be used to plan for visitor facilities within the park, and opportunities for cooperative ventures outside of the park. Potential commercial visitor opportunities would also be considered.

Relationships with First Nations would grow, and collaborative management would combine traditional knowledge about the land with western science to protect cultural and ecological integrity.

In the **long term**, following a phase-out of incompatible uses, the purchase of private property, and the fulfillment of all terms and conditions, lands would be officially declared as a national park/reserve, at which time the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations would apply.



Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan is an example of gradual acquisition of park holdings (dark shade) with a view to eventual achievement of proposed park boundaries (dark + light shade). After 10 years, the park is slightly over half way to its goal of 900 sq km.

Would local residents have a say in how the park would be managed?

Yes. Consultation is required during park management planning. Many national parks have advisory committees made up of local stakeholders. These committees help to influence park planning and on-going management. Parks Canada would also engage other stakeholders and the broader public on a regular basis to provide updates and request input on management decisions.



T. Hurd

Grasslands National Park Advisory Committee (Sask.) works to support and guide park planning and management.

Would the federal government replace local land stewardship?

No. If a national park/reserve were established here, Parks Canada would seek to join others as an active partner in local land stewardship. National parks value the involvement of local groups and individuals in caring for the park, and often contribute towards initiatives outside of park boundaries. The strong local commitment to environmental stewardship is part of what attracted Parks Canada to the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen.

The Okanagan Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) was developed by consensus and approved by the provincial government. Why isn't this plan being upheld?

Land use plans are intended to provide guidance for a specified period of time, and require updating to respond to changing conditions (e.g. to address mountain pine beetle impacts). The Okanagan Shuswap area has experienced a number of changing conditions and new opportunities. This includes the opportunity to explore a different land designation that would build on the areas identified by the LRMP for protection.

Would land established as a national park be removed from the local tax base, making local taxes go up?

Parks Canada provides "Payment In Lieu of taxes (PILT)" to local governments so there is no loss of tax revenue. Generally speaking, the PILT increases each year, along with increases in property taxes.

Would Parks Canada have enough funding to create this park (e.g. purchase land, compensate for impacts to mining, ranching, etc)?

In populated working landscapes as found in southern parts of the country, Parks Canada knows that it is not easy or inexpensive to establish national parks. In the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys the cost of land is high and increasing. The cost of mitigating impacts or providing compensation could also be high. If the government(s) agree to proceed towards park establishment, Parks Canada will do so with an understanding of the costs and benefits to Canadians, and a commitment to pursue adequate funding.



D. Clarke

With rapid growth and high land values, it is not easy or inexpensive to protect land in populated areas like the Okanagan.

I hear that existing national parks are under-funded. Will this park have enough operational funding?

In recent years, the national park system has enjoyed enhanced funding for visitor experience, and programs such as species at risk and ecological integrity.

Parks Canada has a formula for estimating operational costs, and obtains additional funding for new parks.

What are benefits of a national park?

Most of this newsletter answers questions from local people who have concerns about potential park establishment. We are also often asked about benefits of a national park, and we frequently hear from local people about the values they envision. These are similar to the benefits that we hear about at our 42 established national parks/reserves across Canada.

National parks represent some of Canada's most cherished natural areas (such as the magnificent Rocky Mountains, the wild and wet west coast, and the 'big sky' prairie). These are treasured places, each with their own unique qualities which Canadians and international visitors support and want to see protected for their future generations.



D. Clarke

National parks encourage residents and visitors to connect with these special places in a sustainable way.

- To create their own experiences - from solitude and reflection, to exercise and exhilaration with friends and family.
- To learn more about the nature and culture of these special places
- To inspire passion for protecting the land.

Many local people already have that passion for the land. We have seen it in ranchers, Syilx Nation communities, hunters, and naturalists. A national park/reserve could help inspire that passion with others. From hands-on interpretation and school field trips, to science forums, to programs for new residents, community programs would help to nurture a culture of conservation.

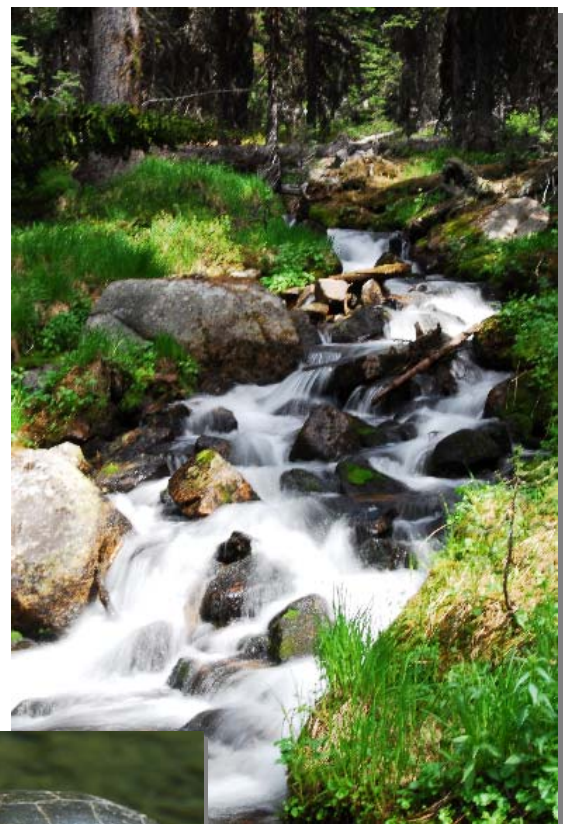


D. Clarke

How is a national park/reserve any better than the existing provincial Protected Area designation?

Improved protected area design, and greater resources for management and operation are the key advantages over the current provincial Protected Areas. A national park/reserve would complement the other great provincial parks and Protected Areas in the region

Starting with existing Protected Areas, a national park/reserve could fill in gaps between isolated parcels of protected areas, and gradually assemble a larger contiguous area. In addition to the significant improvements to ecosystem management, these enhanced boundaries could help protect the hillside vistas, the dark star-lit skies, and potential recreational corridors from the valley bottom to the skyline.



B. Clarke



D. Clarke

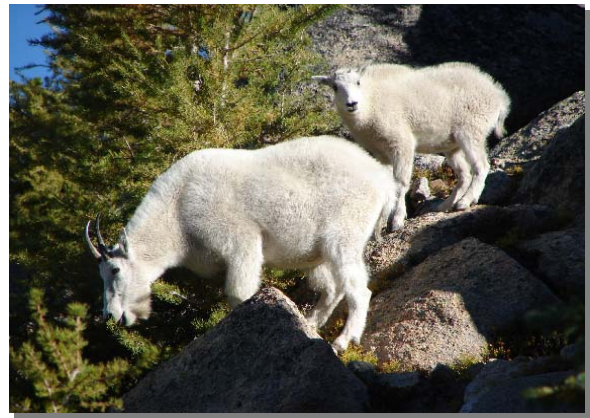
How would the proposed park affect First Nations?

Discussions with the Okanagan Nation Alliance and affected bands are helping Parks Canada and British Columbia to understand potential issues and benefits with respect to national park/reserve establishment in the South Okanagan and Lower Similkameen.

How are First Nations involved in the study?

Parks Canada and representatives of the Okanagan Nation and affected bands have been working together during the feasibility study. The Okanagan Nation Alliance has specified several conditions that would need to be addressed for appropriate engagement and support for the feasibility study. Liaison positions from the Lower Similkameen Indian Band and the Osoyoos Indian Band have been members of the feasibility study working group, and provide valuable input regarding the scope of First Nation concerns and interests.

Elders, family heads, working groups and committees within the affected bands have been engaged in discussions about the benefits and costs of potential park/reserve establishment. Parks Canada has provided funding assistance for traditional use studies, interaction with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) committees, socio-economic research, and communications. In addition, fact-finding trips have been useful for liaisons and local band members to meet with First Nations involved with established national parks, and to bring Haida representatives to share their experience with Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site.



What would be established – A National Park or a National Park Reserve?

The *Canada National Parks Act* provides for establishment of a national park reserve, depending on local conditions. However, in the South Okanagan and Lower Similkameen region the circumstances are highly complex and there are difficulties with both designations at this time.

Although Parks Canada cannot create a national park reserve at this time, Parks Canada has made a commitment to collaborate with First Nations as options are developed to address the issue.

How would the proposed park affect grazing tenures and ranchers?

Levels of livestock grazing would have to be reduced to meet objectives for ecological integrity, but limited grazing would be considered for park management purposes (including fuel management to protect adjacent property).

If a national park/reserve were to be established, existing Crown grazing tenures within the boundaries would be phased out using a range of approaches that are being discussed with ranchers and the ranching industry. For tenure holders who wish to sell to Parks Canada, options could include purchase of home ranches and/or compensation for associated Crown tenures. For tenure holders not interested in selling, options would be sought to relocate grazing tenures over the long term to vacant tenure areas outside of the future park boundary, or to remain in the same area under a management approach oriented to park management objectives.

First Nation grazing tenure holders are in a unique situation because home ranch lands are located on reserve land. Additional consultation will be required to determine suitable options.



Thompson Okanagan
Tourist Association (TOTA)

How would the park affect land use and tenures?

Future land use patterns are difficult to predict, and depend on many factors. This area has a long history of changing land uses and changes are continuing to occur (like increasing settlement, changing crop production), often due to factors beyond local control (like global markets) and at an increasing pace. National park/reserve establishment would create a gradual shift towards an enhanced conservation focus, with associated social, environmental, and economic costs and benefits. Parks Canada would communicate with provincial, local and regional governments on an on-going basis to enhance compatibility between park establishment and operations, and the goals of local communities.

Will limiting areas for future growth impact communities adjacent to the proposed park?

Proposed park boundaries have been designed to exclude areas identified for future urban expansion, and most areas that are heavily developed, or used for intensive agriculture. While park boundaries may limit long term growth in some areas, many residents see the value in balancing growth with conservation.



D. Clarke

If home ranches were purchased, what would be done with lands outside of park boundaries, and not required for the park?

Parks Canada would work with provincial, local and regional governments, and non-government organizations to better understand broad scale land use issues and needs. The high value of intact working ranches for conservation in the broad landscape, and the adverse impacts of subdivision of large parcels would be considered.

How would a park affect mining tenures?

Mining would not occur within the boundaries of a national park/reserve. A framework for assessment of current tenures, and appropriate compensation will be developed in consultation with the province and the mining industry. Details will be available in the future.

How would water licenses be handled?

Research is underway to understand the complex range of water tenures within the proposed park boundary, and identify options for water stewardship (including licensing) within a national park. Parks Canada would honour the terms and conditions of existing water licenses for as long as they are required. As part of the goal to eventually restore natural processes, water licenses could be retired where they are part of a property or tenure that was being acquired by Parks Canada within park boundaries.

Would the park allow helicopter pilot training to continue?

Yes. There is a history of permitted helicopter pilot training, including brief landings, within the area of the proposed park. Parks Canada is willing to accommodate this on-going use subject to an environmental assessment.

I receive my internet broadband and TV signal from communication towers within the proposed park area. I have heard that access to transmission towers would be restricted to helicopter access. Is this true?

No. Access to communications facilities like transmission towers (including for TV/broadband transmission) would be accommodated. This includes access by road. There are many examples throughout the national park system of vehicle access being permitted for routine maintenance along transmission and pipeline rights-of-way, communications towers, and railways.

How would a park affect me as a landowner within or next to the proposed park boundary?

Parks Canada values good relationships with its neighbours, and would seek to work with adjacent landowners towards common objectives such as weed control, fuel reduction, and wildlife monitoring.

I live next to the proposed park. For the last 40 years I have hiked from my land and gone into the proposed park area to bird watch, photograph, and look at wildflowers. I have let others ride their horses here also. Could I continue to travel from my land into the park for recreation?

Yes. Most forms of non-motorized recreation, including horseback riding, would be encouraged as a means for adjacent landowners to access, use, and enjoy the area if it became a national park/reserve. There could be sensitive areas that warrant more careful management of recreational uses. These would be addressed through a park management planning process with public and stakeholder involvement.



D. Clarke

Is Parks Canada able to restrict what I legally do on my land adjacent to the park?

No. Parks Canada has no authority to regulate or control activities on lands they do not own.

Could I develop or build on my property?

Parks Canada would have no authority regarding plans to build on or develop private property.

A variety of agencies and organizations are involved with review and input to development proposals, and Parks Canada would be among those groups for reviewing proposals adjacent to park boundaries.

I own land within the proposed park boundaries. Would I be pressured to sell to Parks Canada?

No. You and your family would continue to own the property for as long as you wish. If your property is of interest to Parks Canada, we would be interested in negotiating a purchase with you (willing seller/willing buyer at market value). You would also be free to sell your property to anyone else.

Would Parks Canada honour the ALR?
The Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) applies only to provincial lands. If a national park/reserve were established, ALR lands inside the park boundary would eventually become federal lands for park purposes.

If my property was acquired by Parks Canada, could I keep farming?

Proposed park boundaries will avoid developed farmland. If Parks Canada acquired developed farmland as part of a purchase of larger property (willing seller/willing buyer), term leases could be negotiated with the landowner or with a new farmer to continue living on, or farming some portion of land for the specified period. There are examples of this occurring at Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan.

Does Parks Canada fence out cattle on land adjacent to the Park, or must the landowner fence the cattle in?

If fencing were necessary as the result of park establishment, Parks Canada would be responsible for the fence. Currently, some Crown lands adjacent to ranches are not fenced as they are tenured by the rancher for livestock grazing. Changes to livestock grazing from park establishment would be implemented over several decades, providing time to better understand all issues and develop solutions (e.g. temporary electric fences, range riders, and fencing).

Is it possible that Parks Canada will become the only purchaser of land within the park boundary, thus affecting market value?

It is unlikely that Parks Canada would be the only purchaser of lands within the proposed national park/reserve boundary. Landowners are not required to sell to Parks Canada. They may choose to sell to any buyer or retain their property. Parks Canada will not pressure landowners to sell land.

How would Parks Canada manage vegetation, fire and wildlife?

Lightning and careless human behaviour has started fires in this area before. If this happens, what would Parks Canada policy be?

Public safety and protection of property is the first priority. Parks Canada aggressively fights wildfires to protect landowners and communities, and socio-economic values. Parks Canada emphasizes wildfire prevention, and uses prescribed fire to manage wildfire risk and natural ecosystems.

If a national park/reserve were established, Parks Canada would work with the province of British Columbia in fire suppression and fuel management. An existing agreement between Parks Canada and the province already provides for joint planning and sharing of personnel and equipment for fire fighting.

If livestock grazing is reduced or eliminated from the proposed national park, won't fire risk to nearby homes and interface areas increase?

In national parks, active management is used to reduce fuels where they create an enhanced wildfire risk and threaten adjacent private property. Prescribed burning and mechanical methods such as tree thinning and shrub removal are some of these management tools. Increased supervision, safety education and awareness by park staff would also help to reduce risks associated with human-caused fires.

In the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen, Parks Canada would examine fire risk, and consult locally to determine the best ways to manage vegetation in interface areas. Continued livestock grazing for fuel management would be considered.



Would Parks Canada light fires to manage vegetation? Won't this threaten local communities and the homes of those who live near the park?

Local ecosystems are fire-dependent, which means they persist and remain healthy with frequent low-intensity fires. We now know that fire suppression increases the

risk of wildfire in fire-dependent ecosystems. By introducing prescribed fire, along with other vegetation management methods, threats to local communities and homes will be reduced. Public safety and protection of

private property is always the first priority.

What will happen to populations of large mammals like black bear, mule deer, and white-tailed deer if a national



D. Clarke

park/reserve is established here?

The relationships between wildlife and changes to land use within and outside of a new park are difficult to accurately predict (including effects on population levels, or even which species would increase or decrease). The phased transition to park management that is proposed will allow time to detect, monitor and address issues as they arise. Parks Canada is focusing on research to better understand the possible outcomes of park establishment and to identify options to address changing wildlife populations.

What would Parks Canada do if wildlife populations like deer increase within the park and cause damage to adjacent orchards, vineyards and farms? If hunting is prohibited in national parks, how can problem wildlife be addressed?

Parks Canada has initiated a study to help better understand current trends in wildlife populations, to identify potential agriculture-wildlife conflicts, and to recommend potential solutions. If a wildlife population became hyper-abundant, Parks Canada would consider a range of options, including harvest management, based on sound science and in consultation with community members and stakeholders.

Weeds are currently a problem on some of the Crown land in this area. If a national park is established, how will Parks Canada approach this problem?

With vegetation experts and park field staff, Parks Canada would be an excellent resource in contributing to weed control. As a good neighbor, Parks Canada would work within and outside of park boundaries to control weeds, and support restoration of ecosystems invaded by weeds.

How would a park affect access and recreational use of the area?

Parks are for people, and opportunities for use and enjoyment help to make the connection between people and the land. From long time users to first time visitors, national parks aim to nourish that connection to place within the context of protecting ecological and cultural integrity as the highest priority.

Following park establishment, a management plan would be developed (with involvement of partners and stakeholders) to provide direction for resource protection, clarify potential visitor groups and define the type, character and location of visitor facilities, activities and services. Zoning would be used to identify management priorities and activities in different areas of the park.

What activities would occur here?

Parks Canada supports many forms of non-motorized recreation including hiking, bird-watching, photography, and nature and culture appreciation. Every national park across Canada encourages this type of interaction with these most cherished landscapes. Other activities could include horseback riding, backpacking, snowshoeing, ski touring, canoeing, fishing, camping, mountain biking, picnicking, swimming, boating, rock climbing, tobogganing, and many others.



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Scenic driving along roadways, including viewpoints, short trails, and interpretive programs or facilities are some ways that parks provide opportunities for visitors who are not interested or unable to explore more distant areas of the park. Areas for motorized access are generally limited in extent.

Outside of park boundaries, there would be opportunities to learn about the natural and cultural environment at interpretive centres, community events, research forums, on the park website, and in classrooms.

Would recreational horse riding be permitted in a national park here?

Yes. Horse riding is an established use in this area, and occurs in many national parks.



M. Mounsey

Would horseback use be extensive or highly regulated? How do rules and regulations within national parks compare with those in provincial parks and protected areas?

Management of horseback riding is very similar between national parks and provincial parks and protected areas. Depending on the area, horseback riding and hiking could be extensive, and not necessarily limited to specific trails. Horseback riding may be restricted from some sensitive areas, and group size may be limited to reduce impacts.

Horse camping use may be managed by specifying areas to keep horses overnight. In the front-country, special facilities may be provided to facilitate horse use such as loading ramps and corrals. Horse users will be invited to be involved with planning for horse trails and facilities, marking trails, patrol, and with providing information and education.

Will it cost me to ride from my backyard into the park for the day? User fees for day use riding are not anticipated. In the future, Parks Canada might consider a charge for overnight horse trips.

What facilities and programs would the national park have? Management planning would determine the type and location of park facilities and services. At this stage we are seeking to work with local people to learn more about the landscape, the stories, and the desired experiences. The feasibility study will also consider the types of visitors and the tourism market, the potential activities, and park services that may be needed. We also want to learn how Parks Canada could work with others to provide services outside of the park, and the potential and desired roles of gateway communities.



D. Clarke

How would a park affect access and recreational use of the area? - continued

How will existing road access within the proposed park be affected?

Highways and major access routes adjacent to the park would not be directly affected by park establishment. The requirement for other roads within the park would be reviewed as part of management planning, in consultation with partners and stakeholders. Existing roads may be required to access tenured uses within the park (e.g. grazing pastures, communications sites), or beyond park boundaries. Some existing roads, such as the Mt. Kobau summit access road, could be an important part of the park visitor experience and would be maintained. In some areas, access may have to be regulated.



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Would we need to buy a permit to travel on highways through the park?

No. There is no permit required for through-travel on the dozens of highways located in national parks across the country, nor would there be here.

Will paragliding be permitted?

Hang gliding and paragliding are not currently permitted in national parks, but currently occur on Mt. Kobau. As part of the feasibility study, Parks Canada will review its current policy, and potential to accommodate this activity.



B. Clarke

Will campgrounds be provided?

Additional research and consultations will help Parks Canada develop a plan for providing visitor services. This will include consideration of vehicle-based camping opportunities that are reported to be in short supply in the Okanagan.

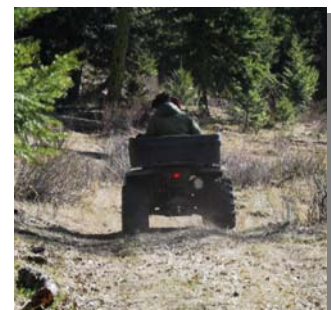
Wilderness camping is enjoyed in many national parks and is a valuable part of the current experience in Snowy Protected Area. The park management plan would address on-going opportunities for wilderness camping.



D. Clarke

Could an area or route be designated for off-road motorized recreation?

Off-road motorized recreation (e.g. motorcycles, ATVs, quads) is generally not permitted in national parks. There may be options to designate alternate areas outside national park boundaries.



D. Clarke

Why is sport fishing OK in a national park, but sport hunting is not?

The *Canada National Parks Act* permits fishing but does not permit hunting. At the time the Act was developed, Canadians supported the creation of parks where wildlife would not be hunted.

Hunting is a valued use within the park concept area, and work is underway to define strategies that could help mitigate lost opportunities if a national park/reserve is established. These strategies include enhancement of local off-site hunting opportunities and possibly “grandfathering” hunting for current users (those with a valid hunting license and a history of hunting locally).



Parks Canada

How many visitors are expected?

At this time it is not known exactly how park establishment would affect visitation to the park and the regional area. Much depends on how the park is developed and promoted, and this would require discussion with First Nations, local stakeholders and communities.

Some existing recreational users would find alternate locations for specific activities (e.g. ATVs, dirt bikes). For many local residents and visitors, management of the area as a national park/reserve would enhance their opportunities to discover, enjoy and appreciate the area.

The Okanagan is already a popular tourist destination. The park may encourage current visitors to stay longer in the region. A new national park/reserve may result in a change of destination image, and possibly a shift in the types of visitors. A recent workshop involving local tourism stakeholders suggested that the proposed park would enhance the South Okanagan and Similkameen Valley as a destination for nature-based tourism.

Further research and consultations will help to understand potential change in visitation, and the desires and capacity of local communities to accommodate more visitors.

How could increased visitation avoid impacting conservation of these fragile lands?

Visitor use in a national park/reserve would be carefully planned and managed. Areas close to existing road access would be expected to receive the greatest use, and in these front-country areas, visitor facilities may be developed or enhanced to formalize use and restrict impact. Any new development project would be subject to an environmental assessment.

Park communications (signs, brochures and interpretive programs) would aim to enhance awareness, understanding and respect for the special and sensitive environment. National park field staff would aim to improve understanding, compliance and support for management objectives and regulations. A future park management plan may consider sensitive areas of the park where public access would be discouraged, or where guided access would be required.

What about user fees?

As with provincial parks, user fees are charged to help pay for the cost of specific services and facilities and revenue from user fees is re-invested back into the park.

Local residents would be consulted prior to establishing any user fees. User fees would likely not be charged until after the first decade of park establishment, when facilities and services had been developed. There are a number of national parks in Canada that do not charge user fees at all.



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This update has tried to answer some of the questions that were asked on 2006 open house feedback forms, and questions that we frequently hear. If you are a local resident, we hope that this newsletter has clarified how a national park/reserve would affect your interests, or address your concerns. We know that there are additional issues, and more will arise in the future. We know that our time is limited for determining whether or not a national park/reserve is feasible for the South Okanagan and Lower Similkameen.

Active engagement in the feasibility study is the best way to ensure that your interests are understood and addressed, so please stay involved.

What's next in the feasibility study?

Winter/Spring 2008:

- Completion of Social and Economic Assessment, including stakeholder information sessions
- Focused stakeholder discussions regarding a potential role for Parks Canada in the Vaseux Lake area
- On-going stakeholder consultations
- Refinement of park concept to develop a park proposal
- Open houses or other public meetings
- Initiation of Feasibility Study Report



J. Failles

Egalement disponible en français



D. Clarke

Where can I get more information?

Further information is available on the feasibility study website:

www.pc.gc.ca/sols

Several newsletters and info sheets have been prepared to provide updates and address specific topics of interest. These are available on the website, and at local public libraries in Keremeos, Osoyoos, Oliver, Okanagan Falls, and Penticton and Princeton.

Newsletters:

- Newsletter #1 - Fall 2004 Feasibility Study Introduction
- February 2005 - Update
- Newsletter #2 - Winter 2005 "Community Voices"
- Update Spring 2006 "A Draft Park Concept"
- Newsletter #3 - Fall 2006 "Park Concept Feedback"

Info Sheets:

- Draft Planning Targets
- Joining a Working Landscape
- Feasibility Study
- User Fees
- Reporting Back
- Managing Fires and Fire Risk
- Park Management

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