



Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plan

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

November 24, 2009

Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada Management Plan
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1. A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

1.1 Introduction

The Canada National Parks Act requires that each of Canada's national parks have a management plan. These plans reflect the policies and legislation of the Government of Canada and are prepared in consultation with Canadians and are reviewed every five years. This management plan will guide the overall direction of Waterton Lakes National Park for the next 10 to 15 years and will serve as a framework for all planning and decisions within the park.

PARKS CANADA'S MANDATE

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

Parks Canada's Strategic Outcome (Corporate Plan 2009/10 – 2013/14) is:

Canadians have a strong sense of connection, through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

Parks Canada's corporate priorities that influence this management plan include:

- Parks Canada will continue to lead active management projects in national parks to improve key ecological integrity indicators.
- A greater percentage of Canadians will report awareness and understanding of the heritage places managed by Parks Canada. As well, more Canadians will be aware of the increasing number of opportunities created for their involvement.
- Targeted Parks Canada initiatives will attract a greater number of visitors to national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas as experiential travel destinations through a Parks Canada focused approach on the creation of visitor experience opportunities.

Parks Canada's approach to management planning has evolved over the years. In 2008, the Parks Canada Agency finalized new national Management Planning Guidelines intended, among other things, to ensure that management plans provide strategic direction, as opposed to specific prescriptive measures, and that their content more effectively integrates the three key elements of Parks Canada's mandate: protection of heritage resources, visitor experience, and learning opportunities.

This updated plan replaces the previous management plan, approved in 2000. This new Park Management Plan builds on the strengths of the previous plan. It emphasizes improving visitor

experience, ecological integrity, and our important role as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site. It outlines new direction to better connect our visitors to this special place and emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively with others to produce authentic nature-based experiences and meaningful opportunities to experience Waterton's distinctive prairie and mountain culture.

This review of the Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plan (2000) is being done concurrently with plan reviews for Banff, Jasper, Kootenay Yoho, Glacier, and Mount Revelstoke National Parks and provides an opportunity to substantially re-write and reorganize the Management Plan so that it is aligned with the new planning guidelines. This is not a new plan; it's a re-written plan that brings forward important policy direction for the ecological integrity of Waterton National Park and integrates it with new content intended to strengthen direction in a number of areas, from visitor experience to outreach programming and work with aboriginal communities, and reflect changes in government policy and decisions.

1.2 Management Plan Review Process

Beginning in March 2009, regional residents received a newsletter outlining key planning issues and were encouraged to send comments and sign up to receive further information. In spring of 2009, community and regional stakeholders participated in workshops. Consultation also included Internet-based participation and public consultation events in Waterton and Lethbridge. Market and surveys of visitors were also reviewed to identify planning priorities.

As mentioned above, management plans for all seven of Canada's mountain national parks are being reviewed concurrently, through a common process. Each management plan contains a common mountain park vision that reflects a co-ordinated approach to interpreting and implementing Parks Canada's mandate in the mountain park context. Each management plan begins with a vision for the individual park that highlights what is distinctive about the park, Canadians collective aspirations for the parks future. The vision will guide future planning and decision making. Key strategies provide overarching direction that applies to the whole park. Elements of each key strategy are shared with the other mountain parks, however each strategy responds to the unique context of Waterton Lakes National Park.

The key Strategies for Waterton are:

- Connecting – Reconnecting
- Celebrating the World's First International Peace Park and World Heritage Site Designation
- Providing Opportunities for Unique and Inspiring Experiences for Visitors
- Showcasing conservation Innovation and Setting Ecosystem Priorities
- Celebrating History and Culture Within Contemporary Experience
- Improving Infrastructure to Enhance the Park Experience

Each management plan also contains Area Concepts, in which detailed direction is provided for specific geographic areas. The Area concepts are presented in an integrated way to ensure that the three elements of the Parks Canada mandate – protection, education, and visitor experiences- are addressed in each part of the park. Area concepts have been prepared for the following areas of Waterton Lakes National Park:

- Waterton Valley
- Waterton Community
- Blakiston Valley
- Cameron Valley
- Belly River area

1.3 Regulatory and Policy Context

Management authorities and accountabilities for national parks are established under the *Parks Canada Agency Act* and the *Canada National Parks Act*. The Park Management Plan provides strategic direction for a national park and is mandated by Section 11 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. Other important pieces of legislation and regulations established under the *Canada National Parks Act*, are part of the legal framework that defines Parks Canada’s accountabilities. For example:

- *The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and Parks Canada’s Policy on Strategic environmental Assessment ensure thorough, science based consideration of potential environmental effects, and appropriate public review, in advance of any development, licensing and policy decisions.
- Parks Canada has specific obligations under the *Species at Risk Act*, and is working with the agency responsible federal agency, and with adjoining provincial agencies in the preparation of recovery plans.
- Specific limits to community development (community boundaries and maximum commercial space allocations) are registered under Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.
- Large areas in the mountain parks are legislatively protected by regulation as “Declared Wilderness” areas, in order to preserve their natural character and their unique opportunities associated with that character.

The Parks Canada Agency is accountable for ensuring that national parks remain unimpaired for the benefit, education and enjoyment of future generations. A primary tool in achieving this is the application of strategic direction in the Park Management Plan. Additionally, all operational and business planning decisions, are subject on an ongoing basis, to national policies and guidelines that frame Parks Canada’s approach to all national parks, historic sites, and marine conservation areas. Some examples include:

- Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies
- Cultural Resource Management Policy
- Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountains National Parks
- Management Bulletin 2.6.10. Recreational Activity and Special Event Assessments

Parks Canada will continue to publicly account for its performance by preparing annual reports and every 5 years, a State of the park report that provides a synopsis of the current conditions of the park based upon key indicators, and assess performance in advancing the Agency's mandate.

1.4 Collaborative Planning and Management

The effective management of Waterton Lakes National Park requires close collaboration with other jurisdictions and regional stakeholders. Waterton Lakes National Park is situated within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. A complex and unique ecosystem that covering approximately 44,000 square kilometres including south east British Columbia, Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in Montana. The various management agencies work together to raise public awareness and understanding of how environmental, social, and economic components of ecosystems interconnect and support each other in to maintain ecosystem integrity.

Waterton National Park shares a boundary, a history and an ecosystem with, most notably, Glacier National Park in the US, the Akamina-Kishinena Provincial Park in British Columbia, and the Castle Crown Wilderness Area in Alberta. The importance of this relationship received international recognition In 1995 when Waterton and Glacier National Parks were designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as *The Waterton Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site*. Parks Canada works closely with regional organisations in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem, such as Glacier National Park, the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association, and the Waterton Front and regional tourism providers in planning and implementing programs, and in celebrating and telling shared stories to visitors.

Waterton Lakes National Park includes the Waterton Community that serves as a visitor centre for those who visit the park each year. Parks Canada works with the business operators in the Waterton Community to continually improve and diversify the products and services available in the park. This plan will pursue meaningful involvement of the Aboriginal peoples and create opportunities for them to renew their special relationship with the park.

1.5 The Waterton Community

For most visitors, the community in Waterton is the gateway to broader national park experiences and in many ways is the heart of the park. It will be managed so it remains a significant part of the visitor experience. The Waterton Community is administered by the federal government and is subject to the

National Parks Act and regulations. The federal government retains ownership of all land in the Community and is the authority for planning, land use, development and environmental issues and is guided by *The Waterton Community Plan 2000*.

1.6 Canada's Mountain National Parks: A Common Vision

All seven mountain national parks share key management strategies in common. They also share a common vision that aligns with, and frames, each national park's specific vision:

Mountain National Parks Common Vision

Canada's mountain national parks are renowned living examples of all that is best in the conservation of mountain ecosystems and history, facilitation of authentic nature-based experience, shared initiative, meaningful learning, and mountain culture. Visitors to these places feel welcomed into experiences that exceed their expectations.

The silent peaks, forest mosaics, living waters, wildlife, people, clean air and endless capacity to inspire bring rejuvenation, hope and self-discovery to future generations, just as they have for the many generations that came before.

1.7 National Historic Sites

National historic sites are managed using plans that direct conservation and communication efforts and ensure the continued commemorative integrity of these sites. Direction in this Waterton Lakes National Park management plan will expand the relevance and reach of their programming and enhance their contribution to contemporary visitor experience. Parks Canada contains two national historic sites within Waterton Lakes National Park: the Prince of Wales Hotel and The First Oil Well in Western Canada.

The Prince of Wales Hotel stands isolated on a bluff overlooking a spectacular vista of mountains, lakes, town and prairie and its striking design and dramatic setting make it Waterton's most recognized cultural landmark. The hotel is one of Canada's historic grand railway hotels, a local and national landmark, and an icon of Canadian history and architecture. Constructed in the chalet architectural style, the Prince of Wales opened its doors in Waterton Lakes National Park on July 25, 1927. The largest wooden structure in Alberta, its striking design and dramatic setting make it Waterton's most recognized landmark. The Prince of Wales Hotel was designated a national historic site by the Canadian government in 1992 as one of 5 outstanding examples of the rustic design tradition that was so strongly associated with architecture of Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks throughout the first half of the 20th century.

First Oil Well in Western Canada National Historic Site commemorates the first commercially productive oil well in the west. This exploration well, located in the Cameron Valley, foreshadowed the growth of the oil industry that has underwritten much of Alberta's subsequent economic development.

2. IMPORTANCE OF WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK – *SMALL PARK BIG DIVERSITY*

Waterton Lakes National Park is Canada's 4th national park and was created in 1895, and Canadians continue to have a heartfelt connection to the park. Waterton is a meeting place that inspires friendship and respect between nations, among people and with all of nature. In 1932, the park was joined with the US's Glacier National Park to form the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park – the world's first. In 1979, Waterton Lakes became Canada's second biosphere reserve, and the first Canadian park in this UNESCO program aimed at achieving a better understanding of the relationship between people and the natural environment. In 1995, the International Peace Park became a World Heritage Site because of its significant ecological, scenic and cultural values.

Tucked away in a quiet corner of southwest Alberta, Waterton Lakes National Park is a meeting place for people, culture, nature and history, resulting in a storied history and a richly diverse landscape. The park's namesake chain of lakes was given by Lieutenant Blakiston (a member of the Palliser Expedition) in 1858, to honor British naturalist Squire Charles Waterton. Today Waterton Lakes National Park protects 505 sq. Km (195 sq. Miles) of mountain and prairie in the southern Rocky Mountains.

Upper Waterton Lake is the deepest lake in the Canadian Rockies – 148 m (487 ft) at its deepest! The abundance of plants and animals, as well as spectacular vistas, attracted many people to the area throughout early and modern history. With annual park visitation over 380,000 people, visitors are attracted to Waterton's tranquil atmosphere.

Aboriginal Peoples - There is a long history of Aboriginal hunting and gathering along Waterton's lakes and throughout its mountains. The earliest evidence dates back to 10,000 years ago, after alpine glaciers melted out of the main valley. Some present day hiking trails now follow historic routes over mountain passes. Over 300 archaeological sites have been discovered in Waterton, many of them Aboriginal sites including fire rings, stone tools, arrowheads, spear heads, bison drive lanes, butchering and fishing camps, and vision quest sites. Radiocarbon tests reveal a base camp in the Blakiston Valley dating back to over 8,000 years ago – the oldest camp discovered in the park to date. The K'tunaxa (Upper Kootenai) and Nitsitapii (Blackfoot) peoples hunted bison and other game, collected plants for food in the park's rich valleys. Today, there are two Nitsitapii groups living near Waterton – the Piikani near Pincher Creek and the Kainai near Cardston. These two tribes still hold Waterton as a sacred and powerful place.

Waterton is the only national park preserving the Foothills Parkland Ecoregion – a fescue grassland ecosystem stretching along the plains and foothills from southern Alberta into Montana. No protected area of similar size in the Rocky Mountains has as much ecological diversity as Waterton. Natural features, from old-growth forests to wind-swept prairies, flowing rivers, and deep lakes, meet and mingle to create an astounding variety of plants and animals.

Where the Mountains Meet the Prairie: In windswept Waterton Lakes National Park, rugged mountains rise abruptly out of gentle prairie grassland and surround a spectacular chain of lakes. Long ago,

powerful forces in the Earth shoved a large section of rock on top of another section of rock. This was known as the Lewis-Overthrust event. Gradually layers of rock were eroded away by glaciers, rivers, and wind, some of the oldest sedimentary rock in the Canadian Rocky Mountains (1,500 million years old) became exposed on Waterton's mountains. The meeting of mountain and prairie is a result of the Lewis-Overthrust fault coupled with action from alpine glaciers. This meeting has created habitats from mountain tops to the grassland far below where many types of plants and animals can find a home to meet their needs.

This is a dynamic landscape – wild and diverse. Ice, water and fire have been the dominant forces at play on this landscape. Glaciers have carved the rock, avalanches thunder down steep slopes, streams flood, and lightning ignites forest fires; all are examples of natural processes. These natural processes preserve Waterton's ecological integrity by creating and maintaining habitat for all types of plants and animals. By allowing natural processes to act on the landscape (when it is safe to do so) habitat for plants and animals is enhanced allowing Waterton's ecosystems to persist through time.

Climate plays an important role in Waterton's incredible diversity. Warm, moist Pacific coast weather systems penetrate over 700 km inland to Waterton where they clash and combine with dry, cold Continental air masses, creating a unique mix. Cameron Lake, located on the park's western boundary and dominated by the Pacific Maritime climate system, annually receives an average of 152 cm of precipitation, much of which falls as snow. The park gate, located near Waterton's eastern boundary, is dominated by the Arctic Continental climate system and receives an average of 76 cm of average precipitation annually. These two areas are separated by only 20 kms! These two extremes and the climate gradient in-between contribute to plant diversity, as well as the wildlife that depend on it.

Windy Waterton: Waterton's strong winds have been responsible for blowing plant seeds into the park from great distances, establishing many different plants here over time. The park's windiest months are November and January when wind speeds of 100 km/hr are common. In the winter, Waterton experiences unique winds known as "Chinooks". Chinooks are winds from the west carrying moist air, eventually losing that moisture as the air mass ascends the Rockies. As they descend on the east side of the Rocky Mountains the air becomes warm and dry and can rapidly raise air temperatures, often moving temperatures from below freezing to above freezing.

The meeting of prairie and mountain plant communities, the wind, and climate create the amazing variety of plants found here. Despite its small size, Waterton is graced with over 1000 species of vascular plants - almost 200 of these are rare or not found elsewhere in Alberta. Over half of Alberta's plant species are found in this habitat-rich place. One hundred and seventy nine plants found in Waterton are considered rare in Alberta, such as mountain lady slipper and mountain hollyhock, while 22 of those plants cannot be found anywhere else in Alberta, such as Bolander's Quilwort and Beargrass. The Waterton moonwort is only found here and is the rarest plant in the park.

With so many plants it is no wonder so many creatures call Waterton home. No other national park in Canada protects so much wildlife within such a small area. More than 265 kinds of birds, 62 species of

mammals, 20 fish species, 10 different reptiles and amphibians, and thousands of tiny insects and invertebrates live here.

The diverse suite of mammals in Waterton ranges from one of North America's largest mammals, the Plains Bison, to one of its smallest, the Vagrant Shrew. This is one of the few places in North America where all of the native carnivores (such as bears, cougars, lynx, bobcats, wolves, wolverines, fox and coyotes) survive, an indicator of a healthy landscape. Waterton's mammals range from the large Plains Bison and Grizzly Bear all the way to the tiny vagrant shrew and western jumping mouse. Birds found in Waterton can be as common as American Robins and Yellow Warblers, and as unique as Vaux's Swifts and Harlequin Ducks. Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout are present in Waterton although they are being out-competed by non-native fish species such as Rainbow and Eastern Brook Trout. Herptiles such as the Boreal Chorus Frog, Long-toed Salamander, and Plains Garter Snakes are found in Waterton. The Waterton-Glacier area is one of the last places in North America where grizzlies still commonly range out onto their former grassland habitat. Waterton alone does not provide enough habitat for these wide-ranging carnivores – bears also need the landscape surrounding the park.

A Meeting Place for History and Cooperation: Cooperation among regional stakeholders and land management agencies is a key feature of Waterton National Park. Waterton works collaboratively with Glacier National Park in Montana, First Nations, provincial agencies and municipal districts, Waterton Community residents and businesses, local ranchers and the Nature Conservancy of Canada sharing information and resources to manage fire, search & rescue, non-native species, wildlife, and restoration projects. Many local ranchers have protected their land from development, helping to preserve Waterton's natural Mountain meets the Prairie viewscape and maintaining habitat for wide-ranging animals like elk and grizzly bears when they are outside Waterton's park boundary. Waterton is home to two National Historic Sites the Prince of Wales Hotel which opened on July 25, 1927, was the sole Canadian link in a chain of resort hotels along the Great Northern Railway of the United States. The largest wooden structure in Alberta, its striking design and dramatic setting make it Waterton's most recognized landmark. The First Oil Well In Western Canada National Historic Site; Oil was first struck in 1902 at "Original Discovery No. 1" well site in the Cameron Valley, producing a flow of 300 barrels/day of high-grade oil - western Canada's first producing oil well. The oil discovery encouraged further exploration, which contributed to the creation of the Waterton Community.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Sources of Information

The Waterton Lakes National Park Visitor Survey, undertaken between May and October, 2005 is the most recent survey of park visitors.¹ Researchers interviewed 6,736 visitor parties and received 613 valid questionnaires. This comprehensive report informed many of the visitor experience initiatives of

¹ Waterton Lakes National Park 2005 Visitor Survey Final Report, Parks Canada, September 2007.

this plan. Public comments received during consultation workshops, web-based engagement and newsletters were consistent with conclusions drawn from the survey. A visitor experience assessment undertaken as part of the Blakiston Valley redevelopment project, similarly confirmed public opinions about park services and facilities.

Another primary source of information for the Waterton Lakes National Park plan is the *State of the Park Report, May 2008* (SOPR). The SOPR was undertaken as part of Parks Canada's reporting and monitoring responsibilities and will be updated every five years.

While a new focus on visitors' experience is highlighted in this plan, ecological integrity remains a priority for Parks Canada. The previous *Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plan* identified the ecological issues facing the park and much progress has been made to address them since then. Priorities include reintroducing fire into the ecosystem, managing non-native plants, addressing non-native fish species, and protecting species at risk.

3.2 Situation Analysis

The park is 505 km² in size and protects and preserves a portion of the Foothills Parkland eco-region- a fescue grassland ecosystem stretching along the plains and foothills from southern Alberta into Montana. Most visitors to Waterton are from Alberta and British Columbia with about 30% of visitors from the United States. Annual visitation to Waterton Lakes is concentrated in the summer months and peaked in the mid 1990s at around 400,000 and today averages 380,000. To achieve Parks Canada's corporate priorities of increasing Canadian's understanding and awareness of the heritage places, and to attract visitors to national parks, new opportunities for visitors will be created that are consistent with the mandate of achieving ecological integrity.

The Visitor Survey revealed that the Waterton Community is a focus for visitation as most visitors obtain services, accommodation and information there. Visitors to Waterton are destination oriented and few of them stop at other national parks or historic sites. American visitors tend to plan their visits using travel guidebooks and frequently enter Waterton Lakes National Park after touring Glacier National Park.

Canadian Tourism Commission that uses patterns of visitor behaviour, or "*explorer quotients*", to plan visitor opportunities. Most of Waterton Lakes National Park's visitors can be described as "*authentic explorers*" who enjoy both cultural and natural experiences, and are comfortable journeying independently to all parts of the park. Other "*explorer groups*" who visit the park can be described as "*Cultural*", "*Gentle*" and "*Reluctant*" explorers. These groups enjoy experiences rooted in cultural events and festivals and are less likely to travel into more remote areas of the park, but certainly enjoy all that the Waterton Community and the parkways have to offer.

The majority of visitors read at least one interpretive panel and park staff make personal contact with about 12% of all visitors. High repeat regional visitation rates pose a challenge to grow attendance to

park interpretation programs. Another issue of concern is the fact that surveyed visitors may not be retaining national park messages at Parks Canada's desired level. These are issues to be addressed under this management plan.

Visitors indicate that "value for money" and "good personal service" is central to the perception of park opportunities and experiences. Visitors tended to be extremely satisfied with the opportunities in the natural areas of the park, with the hiking trails and picnic areas for example, but less so regarding services in the Waterton community. Lower satisfaction scores resulted from a perceived shortage of uniformed parks staff, the availability of information prior to the visit, the condition of park washrooms, and availability of campsites. Phased capital upgrades are being undertaken in the Waterton Community Campground to improve services to visitors.

The Waterton community is the centre of visitor use and almost all visitors enter it at some time while in the park. The character and atmosphere of the community of Waterton is highly appreciated by visitors although aging infrastructure detracts somewhat from their satisfaction. The community has been the subject of capital reinvestment with phased upgrades to roads, curb and gutters, and sidewalks and continued reinvestment is required. The park sewage treatment plan has been upgraded and treated plant effluent is used to irrigate the golf course and this avoids water withdrawal from Blakiston Creek and subsequent discharges to park water bodies.

Visitors who undertook day trips to the park most valued wildlife and scenery viewing. Their satisfaction scores tended to be lower as compared to visitors that stayed longer and partook of more park opportunities and services.

Cultural resources in Waterton Lakes National Park are represented by cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, and historical objects and built heritage structures. Delivery of messages concerning cultural and natural resources is undertaken directly by staff and through partnerships with groups such as the Waterton Natural History Association, Aboriginals, regional museums, and the community of Waterton. The Park delivers programming to the regional public, school districts, local community, other stakeholders and visitors about the role of fire in the landscape, non-native plants, and species at risk. This plan addresses these issues through a number of integrated actions and strategies aimed at achieving visitor experience and outreach education objectives.

Less than 14% of the 1049 m² of commercial development expansion allowed under the *Canada National Parks Act* has occurred since the *Waterton Community Plan* was approved in 2001. In the Waterton Community and along park roads, improved signage would facilitate way finding, visitor access to facilities such as campgrounds, washrooms and parking. Habituation of wildlife and resulting conflicts with people is an ongoing concern.

A defining characteristic of Waterton Lakes National Park are the fescue grasslands typical of the eastern slopes of the front ranges. These rare grasslands are under threat from invasive species, incremental loss to development, and due to the absence of fire the encroachment of aspen poplar. Another of

Waterton's unique characteristics is the diverse number of plant species, many considered rare, that are located within such a small area. Invasive, non-native plant species compete with native species undermining their success and survivability. This plan builds upon past work and contains strategies for protecting and restoring the fescue grasslands and the diversity of native plant species.

Generally, the park's biodiversity is doing well. Ungulate and bird populations in the park are in good condition with stable or growing populations. Amphibian populations are generally stable and the northern leopard frog is being reintroduced after extirpation.

The park's large carnivores, such as grizzly bear, wolves, wolverines and lynx are part of a regional population that ranges into Montana, British Columbia and adjacent parts of Southern Alberta. Park populations of all these species are small; some are considered to be at risk.

Although the SOPR concluded that aquatics were generally in good condition, non-native fish species pose a significant risk to threatened native species such as bull trout and west slope cutthroat trout. In the future the monitoring program will report on a greater number of aquatic measures, the inclusion of which will likely move the aquatics indicator away from good to fair or poor condition.

The park is home to six species at risk²: half-moon hairstreak butterfly, Bolander's quillwort, northern leopard frog, western toad, Lewis' Woodpecker, and long-billed curlew. Two others have been assessed but are not yet listed: west slope cutthroat trout and olive-sided flycatcher. Research and monitoring programs continue.

From the 2002 SOPR, visitor surveys, monitoring programs, and emerging policy directions, the most pressing challenges and opportunities facing Waterton Lakes National Park include:

- Improving existing and applying new approaches and techniques to connect with new visitor market segments and to respond visitor expectation and needs.
- Increasing visitor participation in interpretive and communications programs and increasing retention of national park messages.
- Improving information to assist in visitor pre-trip planning.
- Working with other jurisdictions to ensure that carnivores and bears have secure habitat at the regional scale.
- Reinvesting in park infrastructure to improve the experience of visitors.
- Managing non-native fish species to reduce risk to threatened native species such as bull trout and west slopes cutthroat trout.

² *The Species at Risk Act* represents the Government of Canada's commitment to conserving biological diversity and conservation of wildlife. Responsibility for the *conservation of wildlife in Canada is shared among the governments in this country and they must work cooperatively to pursue the establishment of complementary legislation and programs for the protection and recovery of species at risk in Canada.*

- Reintroduction of natural processes by applying fire to manage fescue grassland through prescribed burns.
- Improving the integrity of cultural landscapes, buildings, and associated archaeological sites.
- Integrating communication and educational actions into protection programs.
- Taking management actions to address invasive plant species.
- Seeking increasing participation from the Aboriginal community in interpretive and communications programs.
- Continuing with programs to reduce wildlife habituation, particularly in the Waterton Community.
- Working with adjacent jurisdictions to reduce fragmentation of the surrounding area, especially on the eastern side, where subdivision and development pressures are greater and on the north through industry and recreational vehicle associated road development.
- Implementing conservation programs aimed at species at risk.

4. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

As part of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage site, the park is a living example of international cooperation in the protection and stewardship of ecological values. Waterton is an awe-inspiring legacy of mountains, lakes, prairies, forests, alpine meadow and wildlife that inspires a sense of wonder, self discovery, and a heartfelt connection to the landscape and its stories. Waterton's character is welcoming and friendly, encouraging people of all ages and cultures to appreciate enjoy and celebrate their heritage through a range of experiences, confident that this natural ecosystem and the processes that shape it will remain intact for future generations.

The Waterton Community, the heart of the park, retains the character, scale and unique atmosphere that visitors have enjoyed for generations. Waterton's programs, events and festivals are rooted in authenticity and are delivered with the active participation of local and regional residents, the Aboriginal community, tourism partners and other interested parties.

5. KEY STRATEGIES

Key strategies are the guiding concepts that define the specific approach Parks Canada takes in setting priorities, choosing tactics, and evaluating the success of park management. The following six key strategies summarize Parks Canada's overall approach to delivering Parks Canada's mandate in the unique context of Waterton Lakes National Park.

5.1 Connecting – Reconnecting

This strategy builds on the emergent story of Waterton Lakes National Park as a place of connecting—and reconnecting – people, landscapes, wildlife populations and waterways. The next fifteen years will be about fostering a culture of cooperation, learning and shared stewardship; connecting and reconnecting in ways that create new hope, meaning and possibilities for the future.

National Parks are about connecting and working with others in ways that create meaning and possibilities for the future and Parks Canada will become an externally focused organization involving Canadians in managing, protecting and operating the park. Waterton Lakes National Park requires the active collaboration and participation of regional land managers and owners, Aboriginal people, the academic community, national park lessees, and the interested public in providing services, undertaking research activities, delivering education programs and in protecting park resources. All Canadians benefit and are active participants in sustaining this heritage.

Aboriginal people have a relationship with the landscape that pre-dates the creation of the national park; consequently they have a unique and valuable perspective on the land, its processes, component parts and benefits. Waterton Lakes National Park will work to improve relationships with Aboriginal communities, to increase their participation in park programs, and to better understand and incorporate their knowledge and perspectives into the visitor experience and park management.

The Biosphere Reserve, the Crown of the Continent and the Waterton Front project are all examples of ongoing collaboration. Waterton's most enduring relationship is with Glacier National Park in the US as they share an ecosystem and a rich cultural history. By collaborating with regional tourism providers, visitor needs and motivations can be better understood, and knowledge and best practices may be shared. This will support achievement of the overall objectives of better understanding visitors and facilitating opportunities to meet their needs.

5.1.1 Direction

- Parks Canada will become an externally focused organization involving Canadians in managing, protecting and operating the park.
- Parks Canada will engage the public, Aboriginal people, stakeholders and partners in activities that contribute to the stewardship and protection of Waterton's ecological and cultural resources.
- The public will be engaged in programs about ecosystem management that will deliver messages about how they can reduce their environmental impact at home and in their own communities.
- Waterton ecological integrity programs and strategies will be communicated to Canadians and regional communities through curriculum-based school programs and the Internet. All strategies and actions developed to achieve ecological integrity will include a communication and public education component.

- Waterton ecological integrity programs will be communicated through outreach activities (e.g. curriculum-based school programs, public education, and website). A communication and public education component will be included in resource conservation strategies and programs
- Existing partnerships will be broadened and new partnerships created with groups that have not traditionally been associated the park such as immigrant societies and clubs in urban centres and youth groups. Youth, urban Canadians and new Canadians will be targeted with communications and programming that links them to the park setting, stories and experiences.
- Parks Canada will collaborate with heritage-based agencies, schools and festival organizers to bring outreach education programming into small communities and larger urban centres in western Canada on a regular basis.
- Our presence on the web will be enhanced; content will be continually refreshed and renewed to provide learning, sharing and experiential opportunities for Canadians and others so that they can experience the excitement of virtually being there.
- Parks Canada will collaborate with provincial education authorities to tie park themes, and messages into school curricula at all levels.
- Parks Canada educational programs will be delivered in the region in classrooms and on-site.
- We will work with local school boards and community youth group organizations to investigate opportunities to incorporate Waterton stories into external programs, and create on-site engagement opportunities for youth.
- We will investigate new methods of effective outreach to deliver key messages to different target audience groups-particularly repeat visitors
- Parks Canada will communicate Waterton ecological integrity programs to visitors through interpretation and other educational activities such as volunteer events.
- Products and programs will be developed that encourage and support children and families to make nature and outdoor experiences part of their lives.
- Parks Canada will actively consult the aboriginal community on how to facilitate their involvement and to honour and restore their cultural connection to the park. We will seek the involvement of regional Aboriginal partners on an advisory committee.
- Parks Canada will actively engage regional organisations in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem, such as Glacier National Park, the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association, the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium, the Waterton Front and regional tourism providers in planning and implementing programs, and in celebrating and telling shared stories to visitors.
- Parks Canada will work with adjacent land managers to maintain and, where possible, improve habitat connectivity through secure high quality corridors, to allow genetic exchange and population connectivity between adjacent wildlife populations, to manage invasive non-native species, and to create an integrated network of protected landscapes.
- Parks Canada will work with others to restore connectivity of streams, wetlands and lakes where they have impaired conditions.
- We will continually re-evaluate all program activities to identify and advance, in collaboration with interest groups and tourism providers, new opportunities for the development of

“volontourism “ products and volunteer opportunities for those who wish to participate actively in stewardship of Waterton Lakes National Park.

5.1.2 Indicators of Success

- Canadians feel connected to, participate in, and feel that they can influence programs at their national parks.
- Adjacent jurisdictions consider the park in making decision about land use and development.
- Better understanding of visitors and how they connect to the park is achieved.
- Regional ecosystem health improves.
- Visitor participation in park interpretation grows.
- Other jurisdictions embrace environmental management and stewardship programs.
- Regional residents understand and support park policies and actions.
- Park policies and actions are represented accurately in regional publications and media.
- Park ecosystems and regional wildlife corridors are healthy and function within the regional landscape.
- The park is sought by third parties to participate in regional programs and decision-making.

5.2 Celebrating the World’s First International Peace Park and the World Heritage Site Designation

This strategy focuses upon ensuring that visitors and Canadians understand, appreciate and take pride in the significant role Waterton Lakes National Park plays as an ongoing symbol of Canadian values, and in international conservation leadership.

In 1932, in response to a proposal initiated by regional Rotary clubs, the *Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park* was created - the world's first. In 1995, the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was designated a World Heritage Site due to its scenic values, abundant and diverse wildlife and wildflowers, and its distinctive climate and landforms.

The natural beauty of the International Peace Park is enhanced by the friendship and cooperative relations shared by Canada and the United States. Building from this foundation, Waterton Lakes National Park now regularly cooperates beyond its borders, including organisations such as the Waterton Biosphere Reserve, The Waterton Front Project, Aboriginal communities, urban and rural municipalities, and two provinces.

5.2.1 Direction

- Waterton will be positioned as being unique among Canadian national parks by integrating World Heritage Site and International Peace Park messages into communications to ensure that

visitors and people around the world are aware of, understand and appreciate its globally significant designations.

- We will seek to work with other world heritage sites in the region, such as the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump and Dinosaur Provincial Park world heritage sites, on joint initiatives.
- While Peace Park and world heritage site messages will be delivered throughout the park and in external communications, the community of Waterton will be the focal point.
- Parks Canada will seek to enhance our strong working relationship with Glacier National Park. We will discuss with Glacier National Park how we can best achieve this goal and advance our shared ecosystem conservation and world heritage site objectives.
- Parks Canada will also look for opportunities to celebrate and make people aware of this successful model of international ecosystem conservation.
- We will continue to work with organisations and agencies in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem such as the Crown Manager's Partnership, Rotary International, The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association to pursue shared ecological and sustainability objectives, to offer authentic visitor experiences, and to communicate the importance and benefits of cooperative resource management across boundaries.

5.2.2 Indicators of Success

- 50% of visitors understand, appreciate and support the value of World Heritage Site and Peace Park designation.
- Visitors are aware, understand and appreciate Waterton's designation as part of a World Heritage Site.
- Visitors are aware of other World Heritage Sites in the region such as Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump.

5.3 Providing Opportunities for Unique and Inspiring Experiences for Visitors

Creating opportunities for unique and inspiring park experiences is integral to the successful delivery of Parks Canada's mandate and is a key theme of this management plan. This strategy focuses on creating new and improving existing opportunities to appeal to priority visitor groups. Partnerships with others will be strengthened in order to develop and deliver exciting visitor opportunities and visitor experience opportunities with resource management activities..

Waterton Lakes offers a variety of high-quality year-round opportunities. Visitors can enjoy options ranging from remote wilderness adventure, to citizen science activities, to fine dining and cultural events in developing their own personal connections to Canada's protected mountain heritage.

The range of opportunities and the size of the park, combined with the need to integrate tourism and recreation with the protection of sensitive ecosystems, produces both challenges and opportunities. A renewed focus on experiential tourism will enable visitors easily to find the right opportunities for the kinds of experiences they seek. A priority is to ensure that the visitor arrives as smoothly as possible to where they need to be and that the experiences they find there meet or exceed their expectations.

Connecting Canadians to an inspiring and authentic range of park experiences is integral to the successful delivery of Parks Canada's mandate. Parks Canada will facilitate opportunities for the following types of experience:

- A **“virtual experience”** is for those who are interested in mountain and prairie ecology, culture and history, but who may never visit the park. An expanded Internet program offer will provide a strong sense of Waterton for those who visit electronically.
- A **“view from the edge”** experience appeals to perhaps the largest group of first-time park visitors, those who tend to stay close to the community and the Red Rock and Akamina parkways. Through entertaining programming and events with heritage based themes, programs will be created for visitors seeking hassle-free travel, rejuvenation, relaxation, or fun in the outdoors. These opportunities will be promoted in the Waterton, Blakiston and Cameron Valley and Waterton community planning areas.
- A **“step into the wild”** experience typically appeals to visitors who stop and stay in the park for more than a few hours or overnight, likely in the community of Waterton, but do not venture physically or perceptually too far from developed areas. This type of explorer has more time for personal reflection and in-depth learning, may take day hikes, has high hopes for encountering wildlife and may participate in a guided experience. Their park experience provides renewal and an authentic connection to nature and local culture. Waterton due to its size, centrally located townsite, and road accessibility provides an ideal opportunity for this type of “accessible wilderness” experience. Opportunities to enhance these experiences will be promoted in the Waterton, Cameron & Blakiston Valley and Waterton Community planning areas of the park.
- A **“mountain wilderness”** experience is for those with a strong affinity for the wilderness, and who are willing to fully immerse themselves physically in the park, engaging all their senses. Their personal experiences may include long unguided hikes and horseback trips in remote areas. Their experience will be enriched by information and opportunities which deepen their relationship with the park and encourage helping with its care. The backcountry sections of the Cameron, Blakiston, and Waterton Valley planning areas along with the Belly River and Foothills planning areas all link with extensive multi-day wilderness hiking or horse trip opportunities either in Glacier National Park or on adjacent provincial lands. Opportunities to extend and promote “mountain wilderness experiences” from Waterton into these areas will be explored with these adjacent land management agencies.

5.3.1 Direction

To facilitate authentic visitor experiences and learning at all four levels of engagement, Parks Canada will maintain, improve and promote outstanding visitor experiences by:

- Creating volunteer opportunities to engage visitors and the public in ecological and cultural resource monitoring, restoration, protection and stewardship activities. Interpretation programs will be developed around communicating protection activities and results.
- Applying a consistent visitor experience perspective through the trip cycle, from helping people imagine their trip to remembering their experiences'. Pre-trip information about opportunities and park programs will be disseminated by Parks Canada and partners.
- Continually collecting and analysing data to increase knowledge of *urban, new, and young Canadian* travel values and travel behaviours while visiting Waterton Lakes and the mountain parks, and use this understanding to adjust product offer and placement for these priority demographics. Priority market segments will be targeted with a particular focus on Alberta and BC markets.
- Responding to the changing demographics in southern Alberta by working with partners to expand our presence with new Canadians and urban audiences in order to inform them of appealing "view from the edge" visitor experiences in Waterton.
- Continuing to invite and serve all Canadians, but focussing product development and promotional activities using market segmentation targets,
- Developing opportunities for these priority market segments based on the motivations and benefits sought:
 - authentic experience and learning
 - no-hassle travel in safe, scenic settings
 - rejuvenation and renewal in nature
 - freedom and exciting outdoor activity
 - exploration of personal/family history
- Continually re-evaluating and renewing products and promotion associated with these different levels of engagement:
 - vehicle accessible front-country viewpoints and picnic areas for "view from the edge" opportunities,
 - hiking and horseback daytrip and overnight opportunities for "a step into the wild " and "mountain wilderness" experiences.
 - working with stakeholders and partners to provide and improve opportunities for visitors who look for wilderness and learning experiences, with a focus on products at the "view from the edge" and "step into the wild" level of engagement.
 - developing opportunities on the parkways at the "view from the edge" level as an introduction to the visitor to the park and an invitation to explore further.
- Visitor opportunities and resource management efforts will be mutually supportive. Each planning areas will focus on a specific suite of visitor opportunities, such as "*view from the edge*", "*step into the wild*" and "*Mt. Wilderness*" based upon an analysis of social and natural science information and objectives.
- Developing and promoting services (e.g.: interpretive hikes, trail head shuttles, gear rentals, etc.) and facilities that invite visitors to try new activities and broaden their national park experience.
- Using social science and marketing research to constantly improve products and services for visitors.
- Working cooperatively with commercial tourism providers to ensure a full understanding of the park's total visitor population profile by sharing market information and to increase knowledge of the demographics, motivations and satisfaction levels of visitors.

- Encouraging partners and stakeholders to help present Waterton's authentic natural and cultural heritage by developing innovative new programs and special events.
- Parks Canada will consider new proposals for recreational activities, events and commercial services where they clearly support all aspects of the national park mandate. New recreational activities and events will be subject to an assessment process at the national and local level. Assessments will be conducted in collaboration with stakeholders and the public. The following principles will be used to guide the discussion on new activities:
 - Respecting natural and cultural resource protection goals
 - Facilitating opportunities for enjoyable and meaningful visitor experiences
 - Promoting understanding and appreciation of natural ecosystems, Canada's culture and history
 - Valuing and involving local communities, and
 - Respecting the character of place.
- Engaging new and urban Canadians who may shy away from "mountain parks" because they believe only wilderness adventure activities are available. Parks Canada will work with stakeholders and partners to improve existing opportunities and explore new activities for this type of visitor.
- Review and update the park camping offer to increase the connection with the park, and to ensure appropriate services, programs and activities are available at park campgrounds (e.g shelters, connections to key attractions, short trails, playgrounds). The three vehicle accessible campgrounds will be managed to provide at different opportunities:
 - the Townsite Campground will offer a "view from the edge" experience with the highest level of service with showers, washrooms, and RV hook-ups;
 - Crandell Mountain Campground will feature a more traditional level of camping at the "step into the wild" level. A new tepee camping opportunity will provide a safe, convenient, entry level opportunity to draw less experienced visitors deeper into the national park; and
 - the Belly River Campground will provide a vehicle accessible primitive "mountain wilderness" camping experience.
- Marketing of new and existing authentic, park based, visitor experiences will be improved and special events particularly in the shoulder seasons (such as cycling the Red Rock Parkway and Chief Mountain Highway, bird counts, festivals, etc.) will be encouraged. Parks Canada will work with regional tourism agencies, the community of Waterton and business community on joint marketing efforts.

5.3.2 Indicators of Success

- Parks Canada will increase visitation to the park from the current 380,000 to 400,000 by 2012.
- At least 90% are satisfied with all elements of their experience (services, facilities, programs and value for money) and at least 50% are very satisfied
- Number of Virtual Experience products developed/ introduced online and associated market uptake
- Increased % of Canadians who understand the importance of their national parks and Waterton Lakes National Park in particular
- Increased % of Canadians who understand the importance of park stewardship, Parks Canada's role as park stewards and their own role as partners in stewardship
- Increased visitation in targeted market segments
- 50% of visitors at surveyed locations in Waterton take part in learning activities.

5.4 Showcasing Conservation Innovation and Setting Ecosystem Priorities

This strategy focuses on collaborative efforts to protect and restore natural heritage. We will approach conservation challenges as opportunities to engage a variety of interested stakeholders, collaborate to implement solutions, communicate rationales and needs to those affected, and use restrictions only as a last resort to protect sensitive resources.

This strategy focuses on sustaining the critical analysis, creative thinking and innovation that are needed to resolve conservation challenges through adaptive management. This includes ensuring that regional stakeholders, park visitors and broader communities of interest are fully engaged in the development of new conservation solutions and making conservation successes a part of the national park visitor experience and of the story we tell the world. Park visitors, scientists, regional land managers, and regional people will be engaged in initiatives aimed at understanding and restoring the ecological processes that sustain Foothills Parkland and Montane ecosystems.

Waterton protects and presents the Foothills Parkland ecoregion, which includes the rare fescue grasslands for which the park is notable. During the first 5 years of this new plan, Parks Canada will focus its efforts on protecting and restoring Foothills Parkland and Montane ecoregions. These areas receive about 95% of park visitors, have the most park infrastructure, and are the most affected by invasive plant species and exclusion of historic fire.

5.4.1 Direction

We will engage and involve interested stakeholders, park visitors, students, community members and regional residents in monitoring programs, data collection, and the application of science findings by:

- Communicating Waterton ecological integrity programs and strategies to Canadians and regional communities through strategies and actions developed to achieve ecological integrity including a communication and public education component.
- Sharing ongoing research and monitoring findings at high visitor-use locations in the park and to schools and homes around the world, to enable others to share in the continuing excitement of research and discovery.
- Making conservation successes a part of the national park visitor experience and of the story we tell the world, so that they influence thinking, personal decisions and lifestyles.
- Widely sharing the stories of park and citizen scientists in park publications and the Internet,
- Continuing to maintain a high level of cooperation with adjacent land managers such as the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, adjacent land owners, municipalities, the State of Montana, and Glacier National Park through partnerships such as the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association and Crown Managers Partnership.
- Continually seek to expand, improve and demonstrate the use of environmental technologies such as renewable energy, waste composting, recycling and water and energy conservation in campgrounds, day use areas and, through development review, in built facilities.

- Parks Canada will focus efforts on protecting riparian areas and alluvial fans from development and mitigating impacts from existing development. Actions will be taken to restore the natural function and health of aquatic ecosystems, including eliminating or reducing populations of non-native fish species that pose a risk to native fish populations and aquatic communities.
- In collaboration with stakeholders, Parks Canada will implement proactive measures that will help keep other species from being added to Canada's list of threatened and endangered species.
- Reintroducing fire, restoring disturbed areas of fescue grasslands, actively reducing invasive plants, communicating the importance of protecting native species and natural processes and engaging citizens in restoration activities.
- Waterton will manage the opportunity for visitors to observe grizzly and black bears by:
 - minimising inappropriate bear-human interactions that lead to bear habituation and the risk of human-caused mortality and human injury inflicted by bears;
 - demonstrating leadership, and working collaboratively with managers of adjacent lands for the ongoing protection of grizzly and black bears and a functional ecosystem;
 - providing educational programming and products to increase visitor understanding of, and respect for bear ecology, to avoid pushing bears from prime habitat, and of how to co-exist with bears (ex: *Bear Aware*).
- We will continue to participate in ongoing research and programs relating to large carnivores and ungulates, in cooperation with adjacent land management agencies, to ensure the continued viability of these wide ranging populations in the shared ecosystem.
- Protecting species at risk as a priority by working with Glacier National Park, academic researchers, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range and park volunteers. In particular, Parks Canada will take action to restore species at risk such as whitebark and limber pine.

5.4.2 Indicators of Success

- Ecological and cultural resource conditions are maintained or improved.
- There is an increase in the percentage of target audience that considers that they learned something about how they can contribute to the protection and presentation of Canada's natural and/or cultural heritage of Parks Canada administered places as a result of outreach activities.
- 50% of the long term average fire cycle is re-established through prescribed burns and fires.
- Grizzly, wolf and other predator populations are secure and stable within the regional landscape.
- Native fish species are stable and not under threat.
- Fescue grasslands and the ecosystems that depend on them are no longer in decline upon them are stable and restored. Non-native plants and exotic pathogens are controlled or reduced. No new pathogens are identified.
- Diversity of native plant and animal species is stable and not decreasing. White bark and Limber pine continue to exist on the landscape
- Strong working relationships exist with the academic community.
- There is an Increase in volunteer program participation.

5.5 History and Culture Within Contemporary Experience

The aim of this strategy is to increase the profile of the national historic sites and cultural resources in the park.

Waterton Lakes National Park, since prior to its origins, has been a setting where new activities and mountain traditions have merged to shape and enrich human culture. The stories that help to define this place are products of early and contemporary Aboriginal use, European exploration and fur trade, nation-building, the emergence and continuing evolution of recreation and tourism and the unique communities that have evolved. The rich cultural heritage of this national park allows visitors to experience a vivid sense of the past and to personally connect with- and contribute to - this continuing human legacy. Waterton Lakes National Park protects important cultural resources in large part by continually reinventing our relationship with them, while protecting their authenticity and historic character. There are two national historic sites in Waterton: Prince of Wales Hotel and First Oil Well in Western Canada National Historic Sites.

5.5.1 Direction

To honour connections with our past, we will focus on the following actions:

- To keep national historic sites alive and relevant, link their stories to the broader park landscape and to contemporary visitor experiences.
- Finish the commemorative integrity statement for Prince of Wales National Historic Site of Canada.
- Implement the Management Plan for First oil Well in Western Canada NHSC.
- Seek the involvement of Aboriginal people in documenting and presenting their cultures and relationships to park landscapes
- Animate places where visitors concentrate with live theatrical performances, interpretation, special events and new media that brings the history of Waterton Lakes National Park into the contemporary experience of the park's key attractions.
- Collaborate with the Waterton Natural History Association, tourism partners, local museums and other regional cultural attractions to develop heritage-themed festivals and events, products and learning opportunities to increase visitation to National Historic Sites.
- Protect and communicate about the park's irreplaceable cultural resources, including its built heritage, archaeological resources, historic objects and documentary records.

5.5.2 Indicators of Success

- 80% of visitors at surveyed locations take part in learning activities.
- Maintain or increase percentage of participants in learning activities at surveyed locations that consider that they learned something about the commemorative integrity of the location.
- 75% of the communication element of commemorative integrity rated as poor is improved within five years.

- Improved awareness and support for Waterton's cultural resources.
- Increase in number of, and participation in, partnering activities.
- Improve or maintain ecological and cultural resource conditions.
- Increase in participation by Aboriginal peoples, and delivery of, Aboriginal cultural education programs.

5.6 Improving Infrastructure to Enhance the Park Experience

The Park's infrastructure plays an important role in creating opportunities for positive visitor experiences.

This strategy is intended to maintain or improve park infrastructure to facilitate opportunities for visitor experience and to reduce environmental impact of operations.

5.6.1 Direction

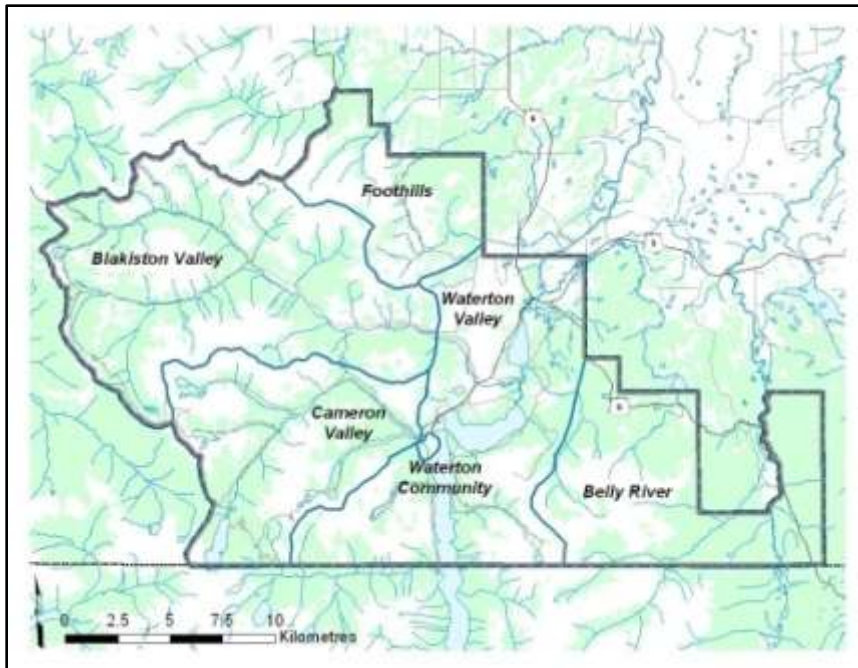
These facilities offer opportunities for Parks Canada and its partners to demonstrate sustainable operations by:

- Operating roadways, culverts, utilities and the sewage treatment plant to minimize their impact on the landscape and waterways,
- Changes to the existing system of utilities and communications services will be permitted when those changes will improve efficiency, yield environmental benefits, and avoid aesthetic effects that could diminish the visitor experience.
- Continuing to seek options to reduce the impacts of park and community operations,
- Improving visitor orientation and information infrastructure,
- Continuing to improve community assets rated in poor or fair condition and to prevent the further decline in the current condition of remaining assets,
- Improving roads, picnic sites and other visitor facilities, while maintaining their current character. The Red Rock Parkway will be redeveloped first, followed by the Akamina Parkway. We will maintain the Hay Barn and Marquis Hole roads at their current standard.

5.6.2 Indicators of Success

- The condition of 75% of contemporary assets is maintained by March 2013.
- The condition of 25% of assets rated as poor or fair is improved by March 2013.
- Zero days of closure due to asset condition.

6. AREA CONCEPTS



6.1 The Waterton Valley

6.1.1 At Its Future Best

The Waterton Valley highlights the park's main theme "where the mountains meet the prairie." The classic view of rolling grasslands and the sparkling Waterton Lakes embraced by colourful mountains will remain unchanged save for the natural processes of wind, water and fire. Fescue grassland is healthy and offers to the public opportunities to view wildlife in spectacular settings. Visitors partake of front country recreational opportunities such as golfing or hiking, fishing and picnicking at numerous road accessible facilities. Rich and varied opportunities are presented to learn and contribute to the park's protection activities.

6.1.2 Current Situation

- The Waterton Valley is the most heavily used area in the park and it is where the strongest, most focussed presentation is made to visitors of World Heritage Site-Peace Park themes. The Waterton Valley provides "*a view from the edge*" and "*a step into the wild*" level opportunities that appeal to visitors who are less likely to travel to more remote areas of the park. The World Heritage-Peace Park theme is reinforced by the Peace Park Pavilion in the community, park programs and interpretation, and views south to Glacier National Park.
- The visitor's sense of arrival, and orientation to the park could be improved through a redesign of the park gate, and better communications of programs and opportunities.

- The park's winter opportunities are not well known outside of the immediate region.
- Visitors enjoy hiking on the Bertha Lake, Wishbone, Crypt Lake, and the Lakeshore trails. (horse trails) The park's warmest swimming is found at Marquis Hole. Road biking is available along the roads and on designated trails.
- The Waterton Valley is the most heavily developed valley in the park with the entry road, Hay Barn and Marquis Hole roads, the community, the golf course, church camps, stables, popular trails and utility corridors located there. Many of the park's efforts at managing invasive species, human use, and impacts from development are centred here.
- The valley has been described as the ecological core of the. The park's largest expanse of native fescue grasslands, fringed by Aspen Parkland, carpets the northern sections including a tongue of prairie that extends into the Blakiston Valley. Encroaching Aspen trees and invasive plants are reducing and altering the fescue grasslands and prescribed fire assists in restoration.
- The range in elevations, habitats and the presence of water makes this valley very productive and diverse ecologically. In many ways, the Waterton Valley with its expanse of critical habitat is the ecological core of the park and provides to visitors valuable *"a view from the edge"* and *"a step into the wild"* wildlife viewing opportunities-particularly of bears and ungulates.
- Most of the park species identified as being at risk can be found here such as the Half-moon Hairstreak Butterfly, the leopard frog, and salamander. Bull trout are present in the major water systems and Maskinonge Lake is an important staging area for migrant bird populations.

6.1.3 Objectives

- The entry gate becomes a place of arrival, welcome, orientation, and information.
- There are improvements to the packaging and promotion of the winter recreation experience.
- The range of recreational opportunities in the Waterton Valley, particularly winter, is better communicated to visitors.
- The abundant wildlife viewing, particularly in the fall, plays a role in growing shoulder season visitation.

6.1.4 Key Actions

The key elements of the Waterton Valley Area Concept will be to:

- Improve the entrance gate area so it creates a positive sense of welcome and arrival.
- Provide a new visitor opportunity and improve cycling safety by developing a multi-purpose trail between the park gate and the community linking existing features such as picnic areas, interpretive displays and accessible beaches. The trail will be located within previously a disturbed area while providing scenic *"view from the edge"* vistas of the middle & lower lakes for visitors.
- Communicated to visitors the daily event and interpretation opportunities provided by the park and partners.
- Work with business owners, tourism providers and the Waterton community to refine and improve visitor opportunities, with an emphasis on presenting the story of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site.

- Review and improve packaging and communicate to visitors the full range of recreational opportunities, including wildlife viewing and winter recreation.
- Manage the Prince of Wales Hotel according to the *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountains National Parks*.
- Ensure the natural processes of fire, erosion and deposition continue to shape the valley.
- Ensure that encroachment of invasive plants is controlled.
- Retain the Bison Paddock and improve the existing overlook and interpretive displays to deliver additional messages about bison and their ecological role.
- Review the current alignment of the Wishbone trail to identify possible improvements that would improve visitor experience and reduce potential conflicts between visitors and bears.
- Where required, move trails from high quality grizzly habitat into settings that offer improved views and recreational experiences.
- Amend the Park Zoning Plan to increase Zone II wilderness/declared wilderness areas within the Waterton Valley to provide an additional level of protection to rare and sensitive habitat on the Blakiston alluvial fan while leaving existing road corridors and Alpine Stables and the Camp Columbus youth camp unaffected.
- Maintain the Hay Barn and Marquis Hole roads to a standard consistent with an active alluvial fan.

6.1.5 Indicators of Success

- The percentage of visitors that express satisfaction.
- Ecological conditions are maintained or improved.

6.2 The Waterton Community

6.2.1 At its Future Best

At its future best, Waterton's community is that of a leisurely paced village. It is low density, small scale and respects its historic character. Redevelopment is encouraged and respects existing and historic patterns of development. The community is festive and active in the summer months, quiet and more relaxed in the shoulder seasons, and nestled down for rest and renewal in the winter months. The community is emblematic of Canadian culture, international peace efforts, Southern Alberta history, demonstrates Canada's ongoing efforts achieving sustainable development and is the gateway to broader national park opportunities.

The community is the focal point for interpretation and communications activities, particularly those relating to the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site. Programs are available that for multi cultural and multi generational audiences that describe the park's nature, history and culture. The community is the main staging area for visitors going into the park for hiking, camping and other park experiences.

6.2.1 Current Situation

- For most visitors, the community in Waterton is the gateway to broader national park opportunities and in many ways represents the heart of the park.
- All market segments visit the Waterton community but it provides the most important role for those visitors who seek a softer national park experiences.
- The majority of visitors enter the Waterton Community at some point during their visit. Returning visitors, often with family connections or history in the park, often demonstrate strong feelings of ownership about the Waterton community.
- Functionally, the community provides services and accommodation to visitors; it is a major centre for information and interpretation, celebrates international peace and cooperation, and demonstrates Canada's ongoing efforts towards achieving sustainable development. The commercial services in the community are largely limited to the peak summer season. During the shoulder seasons and winter reduced services are available. Winter visitors have expressed a desire for additional off-season services and conveniences.
- The tourism assets located in the community include interpretive exhibits, the Peace Park Pavilion, beaches, Cameron Falls, the Falls Interpretive theatre, commercial accommodation and the campground, retail and restaurants, the Waterton Heritage Centre, the marina and boat tours, bike rentals, trail heads to Bertha Falls, Bertha lake, and the Lakeshore Trail to the United States.
- Significant improvements to community infrastructure have been made through reinvestment in the main commercial streets but additional work is required. Visitor surveys have reported that poorly maintained facilities, both public and private, detract from the experience.
- Located on the alluvial fan of Cameron Creek, the community has been flooded at times from both the creek and from Upper Waterton Lake itself. The Waterton Community's location at the north end of Upper Waterton Lake means that at times, winds of impressive speed sweep the Cameron Creek fan.
- A wildlife corridor passes through the community and deer and sheep use the area for grazing and to avoid predators. Wildlife viewing is a highlight for visitors but habituation can result in wildlife management problems.
- The business community has organized some very successful shoulder season special events based upon wildlife viewing and wildflowers. These programs are based in the community but disperse daily into the park
- Cost of park entry, accommodation and meals are reported by some visitors as being prohibitive.
- The Waterton community could play key role in improving winter service offer to visitors.

6.2.2 Objectives

- The Waterton Community continues in its current role as the centre for park services, program delivery and interpretation and the gateway to broader park opportunities.

- Visitors will understand the significance of The International Peace Park World Heritage Site.
- Development does not exceed the limits as established within Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. The community of Waterton is operated according to principles of environmental stewardship and sustainable development and no net negative environmental impact.
- The community plan is reviewed, updated and improvements to the visitor experience are achieved.

6.2.3 Key Actions

- The Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site Designation will be a common unifying theme in creating new visitor opportunities.
- The community will play a critical role for new visitors at the “view from the edge” level of experience who desire a perceptually safer, more comfortable national park experience. The community will be a staging area for visitors, particularly for independent travellers, going further into the park for hiking, camping and other national park experiences.
- The community will be used as the focal point for interpretive and communications activities. Programs for multi-cultural and multi generational audiences that focus on the park’s nature, history and culture will be created.
- Visitor information in the community will be improved by appropriate means.
- The park will continue to work with the business community and others to support the organization of special events, particularly those events that bring people into the park during the slower seasons.
- The Waterton Community’s existing limits to development will be maintained. National park community boundaries will not expand. Commercial development will be permitted only within the commercially-zoned area. Commercial floor area will not exceed established limits. Within this plan, 899 square metres (State of the Community Report 2007) of expansion to commercial buildings is permissible. Until updated, the *Waterton Community Plan 2000* guides community management.
- Parks Canada will work with commercial operators in the park to identify and develop opportunities for additional staff housing in the community.
- Parks Canada will continue to work with commercial operators, cottagers, Improvement District #4, the Community Association, the Waterton Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Association, the Leaseholders Association and the Community Green Team to work towards the community being a model of sustainability.
- *The Waterton Community Plan 2000* will be updated. This plan will consider both aesthetic improvements and services to visitors in all seasons by:
 - creating better signs to inform visitors of points of interest and services,
 - improving visitor information relating to services in the community,
 - improving facility appearance and landscaping standards,
 - improving outdoor gathering places and washrooms,
 - encouraging common seasons and hours of operation for park businesses.

- New development and re-development proposals must fit within these limits and clearly support and advance all three elements of Parks Canada's mandate – protection, experience and learning – within a mountain heritage context. Development guidelines and their intent will be effectively communicated to stakeholders in a timely manner.
- The Townsite Campground will be operated at the highest level of service in the park at the view from the edge" level of experience. The campground area will not be expanded but redevelopment within the boundary aimed at improving the camping experience is possible.
- Cameron Falls will have improved visitor washrooms, parking and interpretive media.
- The community sewer, water, roads and sidewalks will be the subject of phased upgrades.

6.2.4 Indicators of Success

- The community is a model of sustainable operations and delivers valued visitor opportunities that foster deeper connections to the park.
- The growth management framework as established in the *Canada national Parks Act* is maintained.

6.3. The Blakiston Valley

6.3.1 At its Future best

The Blakiston Valley provides a wide range of opportunities to visitors in a signature prairie and mountain landscape - from viewing wildlife and colourful wildflower displays, to cultural sites, to activities such as mountain biking, scrambles and hikes that range in length from easy to challenging. The valley best encapsulates the diversity that Waterton has to offer, from fescue grasslands, to snow forests, to alpine meadows and all the species that depend upon those habitats.

The Red Rock Parkway presents a unique driving experience characterized by a winding, serpentine, route that follows the landscape rather than imposing itself upon it. Wildlife uses the area extensively as they move unimpeded from the major valleys. As the major destination in the valley, Red Rock Canyon is a key gathering place for sightseeing, photography and short walks. It also serves as a major staging point for extended hikes, mountain biking and horseback trips.

Development in the Blakiston Valley is at the minimum required to create safe, comfortable experiences for visitors that allow them to immerse themselves in this unparalleled southern Alberta landscape.

6.3.2 Current Situation

- The Red Rock Parkway provides access to the Blakiston Valley, the picnic areas, interpretive nodes, and the day use area at the road terminus and is the most popular drive in the park.

- It provides easy access to incredible scenery, pre and post contact Aboriginal cultural sites, hiking, biking and wildlife viewing opportunities. Blakiston Mountain is the tallest in park and is a popular scramble for visitors.
- Ungulates inhabit the foothills parkland and they draw in turn predators such as bears and wolves into the valley. The streams hold healthy populations of cutthroat trout and the park's second population bull trout's spawning redds can be found below Blakiston Falls.
- Wildlife uses the Blakiston Valley as a major movement corridor between valleys within and outside of the park although park roads and development can influence wildlife movement and behaviour.
- Fescue grasslands, sagebrush, and rare plants such as moonwort, Whitebark and Limber pine typify the valley.
- Archaeological sites can be found through the valley reflecting use by pre and post contact cultures. Ancient bison jumps and drive lanes can tepee rings can be located in the Blakiston Valley.

6.3.3 Objectives

- The Red Rock Parkway is redeveloped according to its current road characteristics and interpretation and messaging is renewed. The redeveloped parkway will present opportunities at the level of "a view from the edge."
- "A step into the wild" will be possible for those willing to partake of the numerous hiking opportunities.
- The Blakiston Valley provides an improved visitor experience.
- The ecological integrity of the Blakiston Valley is maintained or improves.

6.3.4 Key Actions

The following actions will be undertaken:

- Create arrival and interpretation nodes at start of the Red Rock Parkway and at Red Rock Canyon that provide visitors with orientation and information to ensure they have a safe, enjoyable and memorable experience.
- Improve the Red Rock Parkway road surface, while retaining its current undulating, winding character to present a "view from the edge" opportunity.
 - Improve pull outs at scenic points and interpretive opportunities.
 - Consider actions to improve cycling opportunities, particularly regarding safety.
- The Crandell Mountain Campground will offer to campers a semi primitive experience at the "step into the wild" level of experience. A new tepee based camping opportunity will be developed as a soft entry to camping for less experienced visitors.
- Redevelop the Day Use Area at Red Rock Canyon.
 - Improve washroom facilities.

- Improve parking and vehicle circulation.
 - Renew signs and interpretive media.
- Promote the Blakiston Valley as an area for wilderness and overnight hiking. Improve information to back country users.
- Maintain the winter restriction on motorized access but promote shoulder season cycling and walking, and winter season skiing and snowshoeing.
- Use fire to maintain fescue and sagebrush habitat and reduce impact and distribution of non-native plant species.
- Improve distribution of Whitebark and Limber pine by reintroducing fire into the landscape.
- Communicate the nature of the road to discourage oversize vehicles.
- Encourage shuttle services
- Improve hiking connections to the Castle Crown Wilderness Area

6.3.5 Indicators of Success

- 90% of Visitors express satisfaction with their experience.
- 85% of visitors surveyed feel a sense of personal connection.
- 50% of the long term average fire cycle is re-established through prescribed burns.
- The ecological integrity of the Cameron Valley is maintained or improves.

6.4 The Cameron Valley

6.4.1 At Its Future Best

The Cameron Valley, with its mix of higher altitude subalpine and alpine recreational opportunities appeals to all visitor groups. It is one of the most popular valleys in Waterton offering opportunities at numerous levels of experience. Visitors enjoy hiking, boating, fishing, skiing, snowshoeing and ice climbing, as well as wildlife and wildflower viewing in spectacular mountain scenery. In summer, visitors enjoy picnics and cultural sites, hike high quality trails such as the Carthew-Alderson, paddle Cameron Lake, and see bears, river otters and moose in their natural habitat. In winter, skiers and snowshoers travel through a true snow forest to the continental divide and beyond. Vehicle-based opportunities appeal to visitors who seek the Cameron Valley's rich mountain, lake and waterfall scenery, but more experienced visitors will also find abundant opportunities to experience wilderness.

Wildlife corridors between the main and side valley are effective and actively used. Rare plants such as Bollander's Quillwort have stable populations and grizzly bears, lynx, and wolverine and other and other large mammals move freely through the valley.

6.4.2 Current Situation

- The Akamina Parkway in Waterton National Park is a 15.2 km scenic parkway through the Cameron Valley and is the second major road route in Waterton Lakes National Park and leads to a major day use area at Cameron Lake. The Akamina Parkway is narrow and steep in places creating difficult winter driving conditions as the road may be icy and snow storms are frequent,

even when the rest of the park is experiencing little or no snowfall. The road is closed at Little Prairie picnic area after late fall or early winter.

- With vehicle access, “view from the edge,” “step into the wild” and “mountain wilderness” levels of experience are available. In many Rocky Mountain locations, sub-alpine lakes and the snow forest are challenging to access. Here, they are accessible at the end of a short and very scenic drive.
- From the parkway, the visitor can access numerous trailheads, picnic areas and the Discovery Well National Historic Site that commemorates western Canada's first oil well that came into production in 1902.
- Cameron Lake is a sub-alpine jewel with lush avalanche slopes sweeping steeply to the surrounding peaks. These slopes are essential grizzly bear habitat.
- Cameron Lake is spectacularly scenic and presents boating and fishing opportunities in an environment less subject to winds as compared to the park’s main valley.
- The higher elevation supports plants that are unique to the park and region, some at the edge of their range such as Bear Grass and Bolander’s quillwort.
- The elevation of the upper end of the Cameron Valley on the continental divide experiences the highest snowfall in the park and the winter access to Little Prairie picnic area creates year round opportunities.
- In winter, the Cameron Valley offers perhaps the best, consistent winter recreational opportunities.

6.4.3 Objectives

- Engaging, compelling recreational opportunities are maintained and improved within the context of ecological integrity.

6.4.4 Key Actions

- Parks Canada will work with partners to communicate the area’s recreational opportunities, safe practices and its natural and cultural features through use of a variety of media.
- The road surface will be improved and signs along the parkway, all trailheads will be assessed and enhanced where required, and Parks Canada will address safety and ecological concerns associated with parking congestion at the Akamina trailhead.
- Parks Canada will work with British Columbia Parks to improve visitor experiences and coordination of ecological projects between Akamina-Kishinena Provincial Park and Waterton Lakes National Park.
- The Cameron Valley, with its mix of higher altitude subalpine and alpine recreational opportunities, will be managed to provide opportunities at a number of different levels to appeal to all visitor groups.
- White Bark and Limber Pine will be restored at Summit Lake and elsewhere.
- Bolander’s Quillwort will be monitored to assess its status.
- Carthew Lake will be assessed as a site for aquatic restoration.
- Visitor opportunities will be managed with grizzly bear habitat security as a criteria.
- Effectiveness of wildlife movement corridors will be monitored.

- The winter recreational opportunity will be communicated as well as safe practices on the internet, signs and brochures.
- Parks Canada will encourage private sector hiker shuttles and guided hikes.
- Mountain biking opportunities into Akamina- Kishinena, Provincial Park will be maintained.
- Cross country skiing track setting and install signs will be improved to reduce conflicts between snowshoers and skiers. The winter ski loop to Wall and Rowe Lakes will be promoted to visitors.
- Crandell lake Campground will be assessed as a node to support winter use through warming huts and washrooms.
- Winter guiding activities will be assessed to improve management.
- Winter events such as loppets and snowshoe races will be considered as a means to grow winter visitation.
- Communications, trails and picnic opportunities at Oil Well and Oil City will be assessed and improved.
- Crandell Lake Campground will be communicated to visitors as a soft, accessible, “mountain wilderness experience.”

6.4.2 Performance Measures

- 90% of Visitors express satisfaction with their experience.
- 85% of visitors surveyed feel a sense of personal connection.
- The ecological integrity of the Cameron Valley is maintained or improved.

6.5 The Belly River

6.5.1 At Its Future Best

The Belly River area is imbued with an atmosphere that makes one feel as though one is a long way from civilization. Visitors experience wetlands, montane and sub alpine environments that possess abundant, stable wildlife populations. Visitors travelling the highway from Glacier National Park feel welcomed as they take in a scenic drive rich in natural and Aboriginal history. The development footprint of the campground and other services is small and reflects the wilderness character of the area. Habitat security and connectivity to Glacier National Park is excellent. Fire is present in the landscape and visitors can learn about its role through engaging programs. Aboriginal groups use the landscape for their cultural and spiritual needs and share their story with others.

6.5.2 Current Situation

- The Belly River area possesses an atmosphere that feels as though one is in a landscape unchanged from the past.
- The habitat in the area is excellent for bears and wolves and other carnivores. Goats and sheep regularly traverse the mountain slopes in the sub alpine and alpine and elk frequent the side valleys. The area is a major travel corridor for wildlife travelling to between Glacier and the

Waterton Valley. Compared to other areas of the park, the human presence here is sparse and sporadic thus supporting the quality of the habitat.

- Bull trout habitat is healthy and supports major spawning beds. The Sofa wetlands have a diverse number of avian and aquatic species. Rare flowers can be found on the flanks of Sofa Mountain.
- Invasive plants, particularly knapweed, are a management challenge. The weather here generally is subject to less wind and is wetter than the prairie to the east.
- The Sofa Mountain fire presents an important interpretation opportunity.
- On three sides, the Belly River area envelopes the Blood Timber Limit. The regional Aboriginal community uses the area as they traditionally have and past vision quest sites have been identified on Sofa Mountain.
- The route for visitors from Glacier NP, The Chief Mountain Highway, transects the area. Highway signs from the south do not identify that one is entering or leaving the park. The national park presence at the border crossing is not well defined.
- The smallest and least developed campground in the park is located in the Belly River area. The campground has the only group camp opportunity in the park making this area popular with families. The group camp generates a steady demand for the campground.
- Many of these visitors are drawn from the region, have an internal focus and are knowledgeable about the park. Trails in the area are less travelled and offer a wilderness experience.
- The regional community ski and snowshoe in the Belly River area in the winter. The Chief Mountain Highway closes seasonally limiting access.

6.5.3 Objectives

- Ecological integrity in the Belly River area is maintained or improved.
- The Belly River area is managed to present to visitors a tranquil, rustic experience reflecting wilderness character.

6.5.4 Key Actions

- The focus will be on providing “*view from the edge*” and “*step into the wild*” experiences. In that sense, the Belly River area will appeal to many visitor types. Hiking opportunities such as Vimy Ridge, will appeal to the more adventurous.
- The pullouts, picnic areas and viewpoints on the Chief Mountain Highway will be reviewed for the visitor communications, safety and interpretive opportunities. Improved signs will be installed on the Chief Mountain Highway announcing when the visitor is arriving and leaving the park.
- The park presence at the border will be reviewed and packaged to make visitors aware of Waterton’s opportunities and services.

- Parks Canada will continue to work with the Aboriginal community on issues of mutual interest associated with the Blood Timber Limit and will discuss opportunities to develop aboriginal cultural programs in the Belly River area.
- A plan for fire in the valley will be developed to restore fescue, park land and limit invasive plants.
- Habitat security targets will be maintained or improved and wolf use of the area will be monitored and studied.
- Trail use will be monitored to support effective management decisions. No new trails will be developed. The Wishbone trail will be closed to mountain bikes beyond the group camp
- The visitor opportunities, camping, hiking, wildlife watching, and fishing in the Belly River area will be clearly communicated to visitors.
- Parks Canada will investigate skiing and cycling opportunities when motorized access restrictions on the highway are in effect during the shoulder seasons and winter.
- The Belly River Campground will be promoted as an opportunity for a vehicle accessible introduction to a primitive camping experience in a “mountain wilderness setting.” The campground will be available to regional school and youth groups as a setting for learning, tours, special programs, events and authentic park based activities.
- An interpretation plan will be developed for the Belly River area.

6.5.5 Indicators of Success

- Visitors connect and understand the cultural and natural values of the area.
- Ecological values persist unimpaired.
- Habitat security targets are achieved

6.6 The Foothills

6.6.1 At Its Future Best

The Foothills planning area represents a unique, tranquil opportunity for visitors to experience solitude in a rarely visited area. As the land transitions from prairie to mountain slopes, hikers and equestrians see intact, native fescue prairie, Limber pine, and the abundant wildlife that dwells there. Opportunities to learn about past and current Aboriginal people and how they use the land are available to the visitor. Significant wildlife populations including bears and ungulates frequent the area. Limber pine is found in the area in stable, healthy populations. Park trails and services in the area are few and this reinforces the opportunity for a primitive wilderness experience based in seclusion and immersion in a special place.

6.6.2 Current State

- Significant wildlife populations will continue to frequent the area, including bears, deer and elk.
- With its remoteness and lack of roads, the Foothills area appeals to visitors who embrace self-propelled recreation.
- The area is used mostly by regional equestrians.

6.6.3 Key Actions

- The qualities of the area and its recreational opportunities will be communicated to the public as a "mountain wilderness experience."
- Opportunities for equestrians will be promoted here. The remote wilderness experience will be protected, trails maintained at their current state, and no new facilities will be developed.
- Waterton will work with adjacent jurisdictions to resolve issues of mutual concern such as invasive plants, access, adjacent industrial activities, and stock grazing.
- Prescribed fire will be used to promote fescue restoration.
- Aboriginal people will continue to use the area for their needs and they will be encouraged to communicate these to visitors.
- Old cabin sites associated with oil exploration will be removed and rehabilitated.
- The qualities of the area will be communicated through external relations programs to encourage appropriate use.
- The area will be highlighted to independent visitors as an early season hiking and equestrian opportunity.
- The remote wilderness experience will be protected, trails maintained at their current state, and no new facilities will be developed.
- The area will be promoted in the horse use guidelines
- Regular boundary patrols will build a Parks Canada presence during critical times such as the fall sheep hunt. The patrol cabin will be maintained to support these efforts.
- Fences that delineate the park boundary will be maintained as a means of controlling stock access.

6.6.4 Indicators of Success

- The ecological integrity of the area remains intact.
- Percentage of the area in fescue.
- Number of Limber pine.

7. ZONING AND WILDERNESS AREA DECLARATION

7.1 National Park Zoning System

The zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park. Areas are classified according to the need to protect the ecosystem and the park's cultural resources. The capability and suitability of these areas in providing opportunities for visitors is also a

consideration in making decisions about zoning. The zoning system has five categories, which are described in Parks Canada: *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* (Parks Canada, 1994).

7.2 Zones in Waterton Lakes National Park

The zones in Waterton Lakes National Park remain the same as approved in the 1997 Management Plan.

7.2.1 Zone I - Special Preservation (2% of the park)

Zone I lands deserve special preservation 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 and circulation is not permitted. Resource sensitivity is the key consideration in designating Zone I areas.

The Maskinonge Wetlands

The Maskinonge Wetlands contain one of the few last remaining wetlands in south-western Alberta. This area is an important waterfowl staging and nesting area. Several rare, endangered or threatened bird species, such as trumpeter swans, bald eagles and red necked grebes frequent the area. Two significant archaeological sites on the shores of Maskinonge Lake have been included in the Zone I designation.

Lineham Discovery Well

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommended the Lineham Discovery Well, the first oil well in Western Canada, as a national historic site in 1965. The site is marked with a plaque which commemorates the "First Oil Well in Canada."

Archaeological Sites

There are approximately 250 known archaeological sites in Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada, dating back almost 11,000 years. Zone I designation is applied to the most significant of these sites.

7.2.2 Zone II - Wilderness (83% of the park)

Zone II contains extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and that are conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Zone II areas offer opportunities for visitors to experience, first hand, the park's ecosystems and require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. In much of Zone II, visitors have the opportunity to experience remoteness and solitude. Motorized access is not permitted. Most of the park will be managed as Zone II. Much of this land consists of fescue, steep mountain slopes, and lakes. Zone II areas cannot support high levels of visitor use and facility development. Facilities are restricted to trails, backcountry campgrounds, warden patrol cabins. Sections of the park will continue to have no facilities.

A portion of the Blakiston Fan will be rezoned to Zone II to protect habitat. Existing roads and facilities such as the stables will be unaffected.

7.2.3 Zone III - Natural Environment (6% of the park)

In Zone III areas, visitors experience the park's natural and cultural heritage through outdoor recreational activities that require minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. Zone III applies to areas where visitor use requires facilities that exceed the acceptable standards for Zone II. Motorized access is limited and controlled. Rigorous protection is required because of the area's ecological and aesthetic importance.

Zone III areas include Cameron Lake, the bison paddock and portions of the Blakiston Fan.

7.2.4 Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation (8% of the Park)

Zone IV covers accommodates a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage. Direct access by motorized vehicles is permitted. In Waterton Lakes, Zone IV includes a 200 m right-of-way along park roads, picnic areas, viewpoints, major trailheads parking areas, and the golf course. Zone IV also includes the Upper and Middle Waterton Lakes to accommodate motorized access.

7.2.5 Zone V - Park Services (less than 1% of the park)

The Waterton Community is the sole Zone V area in the park. The Waterton Community Plan provides direction for land use and development in the park.

7.2.6 Environmentally Sensitive Sites

The Environmentally Sensitive Sites (ESS) designation applies to areas with significant and sensitive features that require special protection. Unlike Zone I areas, ESS can accommodate higher levels of controlled visitor activity. The ability to adequately protect resources through other designation (e.g. Zone II) was another important criterion in identifying ESSs.

The major ESS in Waterton Lakes National park is the Fescue/Danthonia grassland. Commonly known as bunchgrass prairie, the Foothills Parkland Ecoregion is a narrow band of prairie that stretches along the plains and foothills from Southern Alberta into Montana. It is typified by the Fescue scabrella/Danthonia parryi grass association. Waterton Lakes National Park contains the only example of this particular bunch grass association protection by the Canadian national parks system. The grasslands also contribute significantly to the parks' theme- "where the mountain meets the prairie." It is a habitat for several prairie species such as sharp tailed grouse, badgers, and Richardson's ground squirrels. Fescue grasslands provide critical winter range for elk and important spring range for mule deer and sheep.

7.2.7 Wilderness Area Declaration

Large tracts of protected wilderness are becoming a scarce and valuable resource. The intent of the wilderness designation is to maintain the integrity of areas that are large enough to preserve their wilderness values. Only development required for essential services and the protection of park resources is allowed in designated wilderness areas. Most of Zone II is registered as Declared Wilderness, in which natural conditions prevail.

An amendment to the Declared Wilderness boundary will be introduced to provide for additional habitat protection on the Blakiston Fan.

8. MONITORING AND REPORTING

8.1 Condition Monitoring

Condition monitoring measures the general state of park ecosystems, cultural resources, visitor experience and education programming. A number of key measures are tracked and rolled up into broad indicators and trends, which are reported in State of the Park Reports.

The following indicators are proposed for the next State of the Park Report, scheduled for completion in 2014.

Ecological Integrity:

- Native Biodiversity
- Climate and Atmosphere
- Terrestrial Ecosystems
- Aquatic Ecosystems
- Regional Landscapes

Cultural Resources:

- Resource Condition
- Selected Management Practices

Visitor Experience:

Note: Some of these national level indicators are still under development.

- Connection to Waterton Lakes National Park
- Attendance
- Visitor Satisfaction
- Learning
- Activities and Services
- Visitor Safety

Public Education:

Note: These national level measures are still under development.

- Appreciation
- Understanding
- Outreach Education
- External Communications

8.2 Management Effectiveness Monitoring

Effectiveness monitoring measures the success of management actions by determining if planned actions achieve the intended results. The specific measures to be tracked during the initial 5 years of this management plan include:

To be completed

9. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

To be completed when draft plan finalized.

10. SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

To be completed when the management plan is finalized.

First 5 Years Actions

Related Key Strategy /

Area Concept

Key Strategy

Connecting – Reconnecting

Celebrating the World's First International Peace Park and the World Heritage Site Designation

Providing Opportunities for Unique and Inspiring Experiences for Visitors

Showcasing Conservation Innovation and Setting Ecosystem Priorities

History and culture inside the Contemporary Experience

Improving Infrastructure to Enhance the Park Environment