

# FMCBC Response to South Chilcotin and Big Creek Provincial Parks Draft Plans

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May 2014

## Introduction

The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC was involved in the Lillooet LRMP and other planning processes that resulted in the designation of the area as South Chilcotin and Big Creek Provincial Parks. Our members have used the area for at least 50 years. We want to be partners with BC Parks in maintaining the incredible wilderness values.

## Vision

We approve of the vision in Section 3.1

## Good Objectives

- Maintain the existing natural diversity of plant and wildlife species and natural ecological processes. (Section 3.2.1)
- Provide for continuity of ecosystems to allow for altitudinal and latitudinal migration of ecosystem components and continuity of habitats in order to offset the effects of climate change.
- Maintain a backcountry and wilderness experience within the parks.
- Maintain the qualities of the environment that form the basis of the recreational attraction, including wilderness, solitude, viewsapes, wildlife and ecosystems.

## Strategies that we like

- Encourage a shift from day-use mountain biking (fly in – ride out) to a more leisurely, group oriented, multi-day approach to reduce the potential for wildlife disturbance and conflicts with other users.
- Do not allow tourism facilities to be placed in key recreation attraction areas (e.g., lakeshores, wildlife viewing areas, open meadows, open alpine areas) and require them to be hidden from view as much as possible.

## Objectives and Strategies that need more discussion

<b>Draft Plan</b>	<b>FMCBC draft response</b>
<p>Consider future additions to the parks if land with natural, cultural, and/or recreational values in adjoining areas becomes available. The Taylor Creek watershed, including the Eldorado Mountain area, is especially important for Grizzly Bear and Mountain Goat habitat. Adjust the park boundary to use Gun Creek as the boundary in the southeast of South Chilcotin Mountains Park. (Section 3.2.1)</p>	<p>Can you include a more detailed map showing the affected area? We support adding more crown land to the park if logical.</p>
<p>Recognize commercial floatplane access as a suitable means of access for many parks visitors, but within the constraint of avoiding an increase in disturbance over previous levels and mitigating existing disturbance where possible. Develop an access plan in consultation with commercial floatplane operators in order to meet the objectives of this management plan. Wheeled aircraft will not be permitted. (Section 3.2.4)</p>	<p>Historically, floatplane access has only been to Spruce and Lorna lakes. Only recently have commercial floatplanes started dropping mountain-bikers at Warner Lake. The zoning shouldn't have an area in the centre of the park in a "non-wilderness" zone. Mountain biking day trips should be moved away from this area. We recommend that Warner Lake be a plane free wilderness zone.</p> <p>Lorna Lake has been used as a location for the start of a few weeklong camps over the years. We can see limited floatplane use at Lorna Lake with the restrictions mentioned below.</p>
<p>Work with commercial floatplane operators who access the parks to implement flight strategies that recognize the remote setting and expected quiet experiences for visitors and wildlife. As examples, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have at least one, but preferably two, flight free days for each day of flights into each access lake.</li> <li>• Limit landings and take-off to after 9:00 am.</li> <li>• Avoid park over-flights or viewscape sightseeing by agreeing to regular flight</li> </ul>	<p>For Berg Lake in Mount Robson park, helicopters (no float planes) are allowed to land only two days per week (Fridays and Mondays) to minimize disturbance to people and wildlife. That system may be better than no flights for 2 or 3 days after a day with flights.</p> <p>See comments above about Warner and Lorna lakes.</p>

paths to destinations.	
Docks for floatplane access on Warner and Lorna lakes will be inconspicuous in keeping with a wilderness viewscape.	Warner and Lorna Lakes are both remote wilderness lakes that should not have docks or any structures.
Maximize user capacity on trails while keeping feeling of solitude.	We are not sure this is possible, but maybe a good objective. The objective of maintaining a backcountry and wilderness experience within the parks must be the prime objective.
Use the separation of activities (e.g., use-specific trails in high use areas, twinning trails, timing, location, trail direction, etc.) as a suitable management tool in specific instances, but should not be used as a widespread strategy in the parks.	This may be required if use increases in some areas, but some detailed on the ground discussions are required between different user groups before this is considered. Restrictions on bike and horse use in some areas during wet weather should be considered.
Consider designing some trails for one user type (long sections of such trails should not exclude other users). This will make some trails generally more attractive to one user group, decreasing pressure on more heavily used trails. For example, consider construction of a new Tyaughton Creek trail, primarily for mountain bikers to attract bikers away from more heavily used trails.	We support the use of the Tyaughton Creek trail on the north side of the creek to encourage some mountain biking in that area. Hikers will tend to use the high route closer the alpine in eastern Tyaughton Creek. However, we are not sure a “new” trail is needed, maybe just some repairs in a few areas. Is there currently a bridge across Tyaughton Creek close to Spruce Lake Creek? That may be required.
Consider reopening the trail from Windy Pass to the north end of Spruce Lake for bikes only.	This needs to be scouted on the ground. There are many areas for mountain bike trail construction outside the park. Is the Windy Pass trail a good route for mountain bikes? There are a number of Grizzly Bear in the area sometimes.
Consider development or designation of short trail sections that lead to the main resorts outside the parks for their exclusive use.	We don’t agree with having “private trails” within a provincial park. I think that Chilcotin Mountain Holidays already has a trail up to Eldorado Creek from their property. Perhaps other users could be discouraged from its use by having a small sign stating that the trail leads to private property and that the horse users would prefer that the trail not be used by mountain bikers. Or just a no mountain bikes sign on it. Hikers are generally happy going up Cinnabar Basin to access Eldorado Creek.

<b>Section 3.2.5 Draft Plans</b>	<b>FMCBC Comments</b>
<p>Campgrounds can be overcrowded at times. Official campsites have been suggested at Lorna Lake, Hummingbird Lake, Trigger Lake, Warner Lake, Deer Pass/Tyax Creek Junction and at the end of Relay Creek.</p>	<p>We should not use a “build it and they will come” philosophy in the parks. Let’s work together to figure out how we want to protect the wilderness and wildlife. Yes Lorna Lake is a fantastic wilderness location, but a campground should not be constructed close to the lake. Perhaps 500-1000m north along Big Creek there might be a location suitable. Let’s keep the wilderness feel at the lake.</p> <p>Warner Lake doesn’t have a lot of flat dry ground close-by. Any facilities should be in keeping with BC Park’s objectives: low profile, hidden from view when possible, and rustic in character, blending in with the natural environment.</p> <p>There is a small campground at Trigger Lake that was built by the Forest Service many years ago. Hummingbird Lake is quite small - we don’t recommend a campground close to it.</p> <p>There is an old camp close to the Deer Pass trail – Tyaughton Creek junction that can continue to be used with some modest improvements.</p>
<p>Cross-country mountain bike riding, rather than downhill, will be the principal form of mountain biking in the parks.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
<p>Development or construction of technical trail features will not be considered.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
<p>Mountain biking will be restricted to existing or future trails; off-trail use will not be permitted.</p>	<p>Agreed, but mountain biking should not be permitted on all trails. There should be some trails primarily for hikers and horses. For example, the Gun Creek Trail west of Spruce Lake and the Deer Pass trail are areas where the trail is wetter and will be hard to maintain with much mountain bike use. Our vision is not for hardened mountain bike trails in wilderness. The Gun Creek trail is part of the Trans-Canada trail.</p>
<p>Trails used by mountain bikes should have good sight lines on downhill sections (e.g., 3X3m width and height).</p>	<p>Trails in a wilderness park should not be cleared to meet this standard. If a trail does not meet this standard in more than one or two places, mountain biking should not be permitted.</p>

	<p>Any additional safety generated by good sight lines may be lost by the higher speeds they permit on downhill sections.</p>
<p>Provide camping opportunities that are compatible with a feeling of solitude and that have a minimal impact on the environment.</p>	<p>Agreed. In a few areas of the parks, the guide outfitters currently have “private” camps that don’t look the best. Could the outfitters share hardened and reserved campsites with public users? We understand that some campsites need to be reserved for guide outfitters that have historic tenures, but they shouldn’t have exclusive use of prime locations.</p>
<p>Consider closing the north campground on Spruce Lake to alleviate congestion in the area and improve the south campground.</p>	<p>This is the best location for camping at Spruce Lake. If this campsite is closed, the adjacent commercial “lodge” must also be closed otherwise the plan will be viewed as giving preference to the commercial operator. Ideally wilderness campsites should be located at least 100 m away from alpine lakes, however we are not sure that there are good flat locations close to water that are not also prime grizzly habitat.</p> <p>We don’t think the existing old cabin used by the guide outfitter should be repaired at the present location so close to the lake. It doesn’t fit in with your objective of having tourism facilities “hidden”. Perhaps the commercial operator should share the public campground with a reservation system. Perhaps a small cooking shelter further back from the lake would work here.</p>
<p>Provide only a basic infrastructure (fire rings and outhouses in regular backcountry sites; picnic tables in main access campgrounds) necessary for visitor appreciation of the parks.</p>	<p>We agree that only basic infrastructure should be provided at wilderness campgrounds. However, we don’t think that fire rings should be provided at most campgrounds. We understand that campfires have been widely used by campers, but in alpine areas they are not appropriate. Perhaps one group fire-ring is appropriate at each of the Spruce Lake camps further back from the lake. They should only be used when there is absolutely no fire hazard. Another problem with the fires is who will decide where dead wood will be collected from? Does BC Parks have the resources to supply wood at the campsites?</p>

	Another question is about adding tent platforms. BC Parks and Parks Canada provide tent platforms at some sub-alpine and alpine locations to reduce damage to meadows. Does BC Parks plan to do that at any of the busier campsites?
Continue to allow snowmobile use only on the Gun Creek trail to the Jewel Bridge and the area west of and including Wolverine Pass and Taylor Pass. Snowmobiles will not be allowed to descend into the Eldorado Creek or Pearson Creek watersheds from Harris Ridge or enter into Mountain Goat winter habitat within the park.	We generally agree with this recommendation. The park planning process talked about allowing snowmobile use in Slim Creek (outside park), but to keep the park area for wildlife and non-motorized activities in the winter. A map that shows that the majority of the park is not open to snowmobiles should be included in the final plan.
Require heli-ski flight paths to avoid backcountry skiing areas.	Agreed. We are working on a detailed heli-ski/backcountry skier avoidance policy that we will forward to BC Parks. We would like to see a map included that shows where and when heli-skiing is currently permitted within the park areas. We think most heli-skiing is outside the park, but are not sure. Any heli-ski tenures in the park should be short-term (5 year) permits to allow for changes if use patterns change.

### Management Services (Section 3.2.8)

Draft Plan	FMCBC Comments
Co-ordinate a management action oriented meeting amongst all stakeholders on a regular basis (at least annually) to contribute to meeting park objectives.	We support this and would like to participate. Could we have a meeting between a couple of our members and mountain-bikers before the planning process is completed? Who should we contact?
Consider allowing the placement of communication equipment (e.g., radio towers or antennas, repeaters) within the park to enable communication between tourism operators and BC Parks staff in order to coordinate travel plans, maximize trail use while maintaining a remote experience, and increase safety.	Newer text via satellite technologies may meet this need without requiring towers. We definitely don't like the idea of towers in a wilderness park.

### **Zoning (Section 3.3)**

We appreciate that the zoning plan shows the higher value ecosystems that are important for large mammal species. However, we think that more work needs to go into recreational zoning. As described above we have concerns about concentrating day trip flights into more remote areas of the parks.