

**From:** Back, Scott ENV:EX  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 1, 2008 2:31 PM  
**To:** 'Brian Wood'  
**Subject:** RE: Mt Robson Park Plan-FMCBC Submission

Hello Brian,

Thank you for the Federation of Mountain Clubs' comments to the Mount Robson Provincial Park Management Plan. I am providing this information to clarify some points related to your comments and then would like to open the door to further discussions. Please let me know if you and a core group of people would like to have a conference call to see if there are ways we can accommodate some of your underlying concerns.

When applying zoning, there are many factors that need to be considered. According to The World Conservation Union, "Zoning schemes provide a spatial differentiation of a protected area based on the different objectives of management." These management objectives consider the overall resource management and recreation activities and conditions. BC Parks' zoning framework is based on many factors including, the existing pressures on the natural environment, the type of recreation experience desired, the associated facilities and use levels influencing the conditions that support a desired experience, the presence of special natural or cultural features, the the level and type of management actions to achieve resource management and recreation experience objectives. Zoning should be viewed as a communication tool to express the overall management direction of a landscape unit rather than a tool to restrict activities. There are certain activities that are not appropriate in certain zones but in most cases there is a lot of overlap. For example, whether Berg Lake/Mount Robson area is zoned nature recreation or wilderness recreation has little influence over designating helicopter landing sites. The Park Act says, "aircraft arrival or departure in Mount Robson Provincial Park (with the exception of floatplane access to Moose Lake) is prohibited except as authorized by a valid park use permit." It is not the zone that restricts the activity (helicopter access is deemed appropriate in both zones), it is legislation and the direction in the plan providing guidance for manager's to issue park use permits.

The main intent of changing the zoning in the Berg Lake corridor is to establish consistent zoning with the 2001 Ecosystem Management Plan and to be consistent with the BC Parks zoning framework descriptions. The Ecosystem Management Plan zones the entire valley as "suppression" (as it relates to fire) recognizing the relatively high level of backcountry use and facility value in the corridor. Also, applying wilderness zones to partial landscapes adjacent to higher use levels does not fit with the wilderness zoning descriptions of "a remote, undisturbed natural landscape ... dependent on a pristine environment," with "very low use to provide solitary experiences," and "management actions are minimal and not evident." We attempted to establish distinct management units that clearly separate the desired visitor experience and natural resource conditions throughout the park. There is specific direction in the plan regarding motorized use and facility development as it relates to the Berg Lake Corridor objective, "to provide a safe world-class backcountry experience in a scenic rocky mountain setting." For example the plan clearly states that:

- Other potential fixed roof accommodation locations (aside from Robson Pass) along the Berg Lake Trail are deemed inappropriate.
- Mountain biking is only permitted to Kinney Lake.

- Private Horse Use not permitted along Berg Lake Corridor except for a corral at Robson Pass.
- Commercial Horse Use is limited to a single park use permit (one permit exists).
- Helicopter access restrictions remain in effect. A strategy is suggested to formalize an aviation plan to establish stewardship guidelines for over flight routes (which BC Parks does not have jurisdiction over) and tie these stewardship guidelines to park use permits.
- The park remains closed to snowmobile and ATV use.

A "wilderness experience" means different things to different people and the plan clearly separates the type of experience a visitor can expect throughout the park. Nature recreation is only a name given to a particular zone and is still considered "wilderness" to many people.

To expand on the helicopter issue, this issue came to a head around the year 2000. At that time, BC Parks did a lot of work with the helicopter company to develop stewardship guidelines regarding flight paths, height restrictions, landing sites etc. and incorporated these guidelines into the park use permit. These guidelines helped but clearly there is more that can be done. Unfortunately, we do not have jurisdiction over sight seeing flights unless the aircraft lands in the park. It is our understanding that Transport Canada encourages aircraft operators and agencies like BC Parks to develop community friendly practices and are reluctant to establish airspace closures. For this reason, we are considering formulating the stewardship guidelines in an aviation management plan to mitigate the impacts to visitor experiences and wildlife as best we can. This aviation management plan will be attached to the park use permit. Also, we need to approach this issue delicately as the helicopter company typically conducts more sight seeing trips than hiker landings and we don't want to create a situation where we have no influence over the sight seeing operation.

There has been an effort to make the plan a "living document" with the incorporation of the Key Performance Indicators. These indicators and the associated process will hopefully improve the effectiveness of the management plan and will provide BC Parks with a mechanism to report out on the ongoing management activities in the park.

I hope this information helps in providing further details to the thinking behind the plan. I encourage and look forward to having a dialogue with FMCBC, if you so wish.

Thanks,

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