

**Peace Region**

# **MANAGEMENT Plan**

**January 2009**



**for Toad River Hot Springs  
Provincial Park**



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

Ministry of Environment

Environmental Stewardship  
Division

# Toad River Hot Springs Park Approvals Page

## Forward

This management plan for Toad River Hot Springs Park provides management direction until such time as a more detailed management plan may be required.

## Approvals:

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Regional Manager, Peace Region  
Environmental Stewardship Division

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Assistant Deputy Minister  
Environmental Stewardship Division

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## Relationship with First Nations

The Province of British Columbia is committed to a new government to government relationship with First Nations based on respect, recognition and accommodation. New approaches to consultation and accommodation are currently being developed in recognition of this duty<sup>i</sup>. Negotiated collaborative management agreements with First Nations are an example of such processes. The Park and/or Protected Area (PPA) Management Plan and subsequent management actions within the plan area will respect First Nations traditional harvesting, cultural activities, and other aboriginal rights and interests. Approval of the PPA Management Plan is without prejudice and is consistent with section .35 (1) of the Constitution Act, 1982<sup>ii</sup>, which recognizes and affirms aboriginal rights.

Some First Nations did not participate in the Land and Resource Management Planning that led to this PPA. However, collaboration with First Nation Governments is essential for the effective implementation of the PPA Management Plan. Treaty 8 First Nations have provided the following First Nation's Vision Statement for this PPA.

Toad River Hot Springs Provincial Park falls within the traditional territory of the Slavey, Beaver, and Sekani cultures from the Fort Nelson, Prophet River, Blueberry River, Doig River, Halfway River, Saulteau, Moberly Lake and McLeod Lake First Nations.

BC Parks – Peace Regions vision is to build a locally driven, constructive and collaborative relationship which recognizes the early presence of aboriginal peoples, their knowledge and understanding of the land and its processes. We hope to share ideas, management concepts and concerns in order to provide mechanisms for continuing First Nation participation in planning, long and short-term management, and evaluation.

### Principles

- BC Parks will promote an understanding and respect of cross-cultural differences.
- Ecological integrity is critically linked to social integrity and First Nations are an important component of the wilderness of Northeastern British Columbia.
- First Nations are key in identifying and evaluating cultural resources.
- First Nations traditional resource harvesting activities will continue in all parks, including protection for current ways in which these activities are carried out.

BC Parks – Peace Region believes that the management and planning of protected areas can be improved by incorporating First Nations' traditional ecological knowledge and cultural knowledge. To achieve this all parties must work to develop and maintain open and effective communication, including other local communities and the general public. All parties must trust the traditional, as well as the non-traditional (Western scientific management) approaches to resource management. The goal will be to gather, collate and integrate local traditional knowledge with other scientific data to identify, design, establish, monitor and manage parks.

## **TREATY 8 FIRST NATIONS VISION STATEMENT**

WELCOME to our homeland. The Beaver (Dunne-za, Dane-zaa), Cree, Sauteau, Slavey (Dene), and TseK' hene indigenous groups have occupied these lands since time immemorial.

Treaty 8 was signed in the spirit of Peace and Friendship June 21, 1899. British Columbia Treaty 8 Territory is hundreds of thousands of square kilometers in size and includes 8 groups: Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, Prophet River First Nation, Sauteau First Nations and West Moberly First Nations. Our relationship to the land has and continues to be the spiritual basis for our mode of life. The land has always, and will continue to, provide shelter, food, clothing, and the economic resources for our livelihood. As a First Nation, we have an obligation to implement our inherent rights that are affirmed by the Constitution Act, 1982. This includes sustainability of our resources in order for us to hunt, trap, fish, and continue our mode of life. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans we were actively involved in the management of our territories: the lands understood us and we understood the land. Today, we continue to manage our Territory.

BC Treaty 8 First Nations were not involved in the initial development plans of this park in regards to its location and why the area was chosen. We would like neighbouring First Nations, outdoor enthusiasts and other visitors to our land who are enjoying the bounties of this park to acknowledge and respect that you are on Treaty 8 Territory. Please act as a steward of Treaty 8 Territory so that together we will maintain its natural beauty, and cultural resources. This maintenance will be respectful to our current use and for future generations. Please conduct yourself in a manner that respects cultural heritage resources and values. Treaty 8 Territory will always be the home of First Nations for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the water flows.

# **Introduction**

## **Purpose of the Management Plan**

The purpose of the Management Plan (MP) is to provide an interim management strategy for Toad River Hot Springs Park, established as a park in 1999. The MP provides background information on the park attributes, land use, tenure, interests, role in the protected area system, and existing commitments and issues. It then specifies priority objectives and actions for the management of the park.

The implementation of the conservation and development activities in this MP is subject to funding availability and agency priorities. Future detailed management plans may provide further direction. All proposed developments for this park are also subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment Policy. The area will be managed in accordance with the Park Act and the policies of BC Parks.

## **Setting and Context**

Toad River Hot Springs Park (Figure 1) is a 4.14 km<sup>2</sup> park located along the Toad River within the Muskwa – Kechika Management Area, about 160 km west of Fort Nelson and 25 km east of Muncho Lake Provincial Park. The hot springs are situated on the left bank of the Toad River about 1 km upstream of its confluence with the Racing River. Access is via a 2 km gravel road north from the Alaska Highway and 8 km of trail, or via river boat, or helicopter.

The park occurs within the Muskwa Foothills ecosection of the Toad River valley. The valley has a large active floodplain extensively disturbed by fire that resulted in a diverse vegetation mosaic and important wildlife habitat. A series of springs originate at a base of alluvial terraces on the Toad River, with three main hot springs in the middle of an extensive muddy area. The vegetation complex is diverse, containing various alpine species, alluvial forest species, and plants common to mineral licks. These hot springs provide an important mineral lick for moose and other ungulates.

A recreation reserve was established over the hot springs site many years ago. The hot springs were proposed as an ecological reserve in 1974. Site surveys were undertaken by B.C. Hydro in the early 1980s as part of the Liard River investigations. The Fort Nelson Land and Resource Management Plan (1997) recommended the area as a Goal 2 Protected Area as a regionally significant hot springs for wildlife, viewing, hiking and First Nations values.

## Protected Area Attributes

### Conservation

- A series of hot springs with diverse, thermal-influenced plant communities (although no tufa formation). Site reports indicate that the lower river bars around the springs are covered by shrubby vegetation with glaucous-leaved honeysuckle, common snowberry, western chokecherry, and silverberry. The higher terrace hosts alluvial poplar forests with luxurious herb layers that are mainly the result of nutrient enrichment caused by animals visiting the mineral lick.
- An important mineral lick used by moose and Stone's sheep, and likely high capability for grizzly and black bears.
- *Endangered, Threatened and Vulnerable Species*: at the confluence of Toad River and Racing River the following have been recorded:
  - Arctic Bladderpod (provincial blue list)
  - Jordals Locoweed (provincial blue list)

### Recreation and Tourism

Since there is no pool and the ground is soft, the hot springs themselves have little obvious bathing potential in their natural state. But the area has potential for camping, picnicking, nature interpretation and river-oriented activities, including fishing in the Toad River. Access to the area currently limits use; however there is some regular recreational use.

### Cultural Heritage

There is an old abandoned First Nations camp and cemetery on the site. The site has been traditionally used by First Nations.

Recorded archaeological sites: none, but the area is assessed as having high potential.

### Significance in the Protected Areas System

**Representation:** Hot spring features associated with the Toad River riparian ecosystem within the Muskwa Foothills ecosection.

The following tables list provincial biogeoclimatic zone and ecosection representation for the protected area.

PA Name	BGC Code	% of the total BGC Code area within the province that is protected	Number of protected areas in this BGC Code	Area of this BGC Code in this Provincial PA (ha)	% of the province-wide protected area in this BGC Code that is in this Provincial PA
Toad River Hot Springs Park	BWBSmw 2	2.18	25	341	0.2292
Toad River Hot Springs Park	SWB mk	22.44	21	49	0.0073
Toad River Hot Springs Park	WATER	12.72	451	25	0.0084

PA Name	Ecosection Name	% of the total Ecosection area within the province that is protected	Number of protected areas in this Ecosection	Area of this Ecosection in this Provincial PA (ha)	% of the province-wide protected area in this Ecosection that is in this Provincial PA
Toad River Hot Springs Park	Muskwa Foothills	30.56	8	414	0.1260

**Special Features:** The park protects a regionally significant hot springs ecosystem that is important for wildlife conservation and First Nations archaeological interests.

**Recreation, Use, Appreciation:** river-oriented recreation opportunities primarily of importance to regional residents, and research and interpretation of thermally influenced vegetation.

- The 1999 Annual Management Plan rates the area as follows:
  - Significance of Natural Values: 1 (very high)
  - Significance of Cultural Heritage Values: 2 (high)
  - Significance of Recreation, Use & Appreciation Values: 1 (very high)

## Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

### Access

Access is via a 2 km gravel road from the Alaska Highway which leads to an 8 km trail, or by river boat or helicopter.

### Existing Tenures

Registry Number	Description
RAN 70182 Blk A	Range tenure –Intensive Grazing
885-9-3-9003 Blk A	Stone Mountain Safaris
751T006	Trapline
	Guide Outfitter



## **Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities**

Local guide outfitters have used the area and horses have been pastured in a nearby meadow. Local river boaters also use the area.

## **Adjacent Patterns of Land Use**

The park is located within the Toad River Corridor RMZ that focuses on managing visual quality and wildlife conservation while maintaining opportunities for forest, mineral and oil and gas development.

- This zone is considered to have high potential for gravel and geothermal resources, medium to high potential for oil and gas and industrial minerals and medium potential for timber resources in the lower portion of the Toad River.
- This zone contains no roads and has high recreation and wildlife values.

## **First Nations Interests**

- Kaska Dena traditional use area, with an abandoned camp and cemetery; possible use by Fort Nelson Indian Band.

## **Other Agency Interests**

- BC Parks works cooperatively with the Ministry of Forests on range, fire and pest management plans for the park.
- Wildlife, Habitat and Enforcement Division (Ministry of Environment) works with BC Parks to inventory and manage wildlife.

## **Private and Public Stakeholder Interests**

Other interests include:

- Guide outfitter (see list of tenures)
- Trapper (see list of tenures)

## **Protected Area Role Statements**

The primary role of Toad Hot Springs Park is to protect a regionally significant hot springs ecosystem within the Toad River valley of Muskwa Foothills, and related wildlife values associated with the hot springs.

A secondary role of the park is to protect recreation values of regional importance, including wildlife associated with the hot springs habitats and river recreation opportunities, as well as First Nations cultural heritage conservation.

## Management Commitments and Issues

### Management Direction from Previous Planning

The Fort Nelson Land and Resource Management Plan (1997) adopted the objectives to encourage management of resource development that supports the acceptable uses of the protected area, including conservation and recreation, and to identify and provide protection for traditional use, archaeological, cultural and heritage sites.

### Management Issues

Issue	Theme
Development Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased resource development access threatens the ecological integrity of the park.</li> </ul>
Protected Ecological Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved access may increase hunting pressures to unsustainable levels.</li> <li>Recreation use has the potential to adversely affect wildlife habitat.</li> </ul>
Management Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased levels of boat and horse access may impact the ecosystem.</li> <li>Insufficient data exists concerning the parks natural, cultural and recreation resources.</li> <li>Fire management protocols need to be developed.</li> </ul>

### Management Direction

#### Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

Management Objectives	Priority Actions
Establish an understanding among tenure-holders, First Nations, and other major stakeholders of protected area boundaries and status, protection of park values, appropriate uses, and management expectations and responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a consultation process with major interests, especially First Nations, to assist communication, planning activities and ongoing management of the protected area.</li> <li>Honour the commitments of the Fort Nelson Land &amp; Resource Management Plan.</li> <li>Define the boundaries on the ground.</li> </ul>
Create a fire management plan that allows natural processes to occur when possible and minimizes the threat of human caused fires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow wildfires to burn as long as they do not threaten lives, facilities or property.</li> <li>Prescribed burning is only to be conducted by, or under the supervision of government staff.</li> </ul>

Management Objectives	Priority Actions
Limit or control access and development of the park to protect the wildlife and cultural values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and assess road and trail development options in the protected area.</li> <li>• Monitor impacts due to recreational activity, especially horse and boat access and hunting.</li> </ul>
Increase knowledge of park values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete inventory surveys and assessments of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- wildlife populations and habitat</li> <li>- archaeological and heritage resources</li> <li>- recreation opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Protect First Nations cultural values associated with traditional use of the hot springs site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory and assess traditional uses.</li> <li>• Determine cultural role and values and establish appropriate measures for protection.</li> <li>• Develop a Letter of Understanding with First Nations regarding measures to protect cultural values in the protected area.</li> </ul>
Ensure that adjacent resource developments, including forestry and oil and gas exploration, do not have a significant adverse impact on the protected area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future access to adjacent areas for resource development should be authorized in accordance with a coordinated access management plan.</li> <li>• Consult with Ministry of Forests regarding visual and other potential impacts of future adjacent timber harvesting and access road development.</li> <li>• Consult with Oil and Gas Commission and leaseholders regarding future adjacent exploration, development and access, and establish requirements to maintain protected area values.</li> </ul>

## Consultation and Planning

BC Parks will undertake further consultation and planning as follows:

- Consult with First Nations, guide outfitters, trappers and other major interests regarding inventory and assessments and recommended management measures.
- In the review of resource development plans or landscape level forest management plans in adjacent areas, input will be provided on necessary measures to maintain protected area values.
- Regular consultation will be maintained with First Nations regarding protected area inventory and management activities.

## **Zoning Plan**

The park is zoned Special Features (SF) (Ecological/Cultural) because of the hot springs and First Nations traditional uses, as shown on Figure 1.

The acceptable uses are identified in Appendix I.

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# Appendix I

## Acceptable Use Matrix

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses (SF)	Comments
Hunting	Y	
Fishing	Y	
Trapping	N <sub>2</sub>	Traditional activity continues. Existing tenures are normally renewable and transferable, but additional tenures will not be issued except for expressed management purposes.
Grazing	M	Park Use Permit required.
Horse use/Pack animals	Y	No exotic species permitted.
Guide Outfitting	Y	Permits from managing agency will be required.
Camping	M	
Backcountry Huts	N	
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N <sub>1</sub>	
Power line/Transmission lines and other rights-of-way	N	
Road Access	N	Wildlife concerns.
Off-road Access (snowmobiles)	N	Subject to discussions; may be allowed on designated trails.
Off-road Access (motorized)	N	
Water: Motorized Activities	N	
Aircraft Access	Y	For destination access purposes only (drop visitors off)
Communication Sites	M	Allowed for essential protected area management communication needs or if there are no practical alternatives.

Forest Insect / Disease Control	N <sub>1</sub>	Mitigative actions permitted where there is a need to prevent unacceptable damage to values on adjacent lands, prevent damage to significant recreation features or values etc.
Exotic Organism Control	Y	
Scientific Research	Y	Manipulative activities normally not allowed. Specimen collections only if results in information providing increased scientific knowledge or protection and/or understanding of protected area values. Permit required.
Removal of Wildlife for Transplants	Y <sub>1</sub>	
Ecosystem and Habitat Restoration	Y	
Directional Drilling – Oil & Gas	N	See LRMP.

Y = allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M = may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N<sub>1</sub> = allowed for expressed management purposes only

N = not allowed

N<sub>2</sub> = present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed

Province of British Columbia. *The New Relationship With First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples: Overview.*

Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. [http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/newrelationship/new\\_relationship\\_overview.html](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/newrelationship/new_relationship_overview.html) (April 15, 2008).

<sup>ii</sup> Province of British Columbia. 1996. *Constitution Act*. RSBC1996, c.66. Queen's Printer, Victoria, BC.

[http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/96066\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/96066_01.htm) (October 26, 2006).