

Canada – B.C. Steering Committee Conference Call

South Okanagan – Lower Similkameen National Park Proposal Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area Feasibility Study December 21, 2010

B.C. – Canada Steering Committee:

Bill Fisher, Director General, Western & Northern Canada

Cairine MacDonald, Deputy Minister,
Ministry of Environment,
British Columbia

Kevin McNamee for Ron Hallman, Director General,
National Parks, Parks Canada Agency

Invited for B.C.:

Tessa Graham, A/Executive Director,
Parks and Protected Areas Division,
Ministry of Environment

Brett Hudson, Planning and Land
Administration, Ministry of
Environment

Invited for Canada:

Richard Carson, Director, Western
Establishment Initiatives
Debby Funk, Communications Manager
Per Nilsen, Chief, New Park Proposals
(South)

Debbie Clarke, Project Manager, South
Okanagan Lower Similkameen

Megumi Johns, Consultation Officer,
Western Canada Service Center

Comment [b1]: Deb, correct if
necessary

Documents Distributed

- Draft Minutes from Nov. 23, 2010
- South Okanagan/Lower Similkameen Feasibility Assessment – Overview of Findings and Outcomes (November, 2010)
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding (for the purpose of Federal-Provincial Deliberations)
- Moving Forward with the Future Southern Strait of Georgia NMCA Reserve

Administration

November 23rd, 2010 minutes were approved.

South Okanagan/ Lower Similkameen

Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) update

Richard Carson and Debbie Clarke reported that a working group of officials from the ONA and Parks Canada has been struck, in which the Chiefs of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band and the Osoyoos Indian Band will take the lead for the ONA. A meeting of

some member bands of the ONA was held the week of Dec 15th, 2010. The meeting resulted in a commitment to sign the Canada-ONA workplan on concluding the feasibility study, with the intention of having the feasibility work concluded within months. The possibility of joint announcements with Canada and B.C. when that milestone is reached was discussed.

Comment [b2]: Deb C: any further
deets to add here?

Other First Nations

There are nine other First Nations or Tribal Councils who assert territory in the project area. No consultations with those groups have occurred at this time. Parks Canada advised that consultations with these First Nations will proceed in the new year, assuming a favourable response from the Government of British Columbia on the feasibility study.

Helicopter Flight Training

B.C. requested a status update on discussions with Canadian Helicopters. Parks Canada advised that there has been no update since the last communications with the company. The number of landing sites affected by the park proposal has been minimized given the reduced size of the park proposal area.

Communications with Elected Officials

B.C. requested an update on Parks Canada's efforts to obtain formal responses on the park proposal from local government officials. Parks Canada advised that no further information had been forthcoming since the last meeting.

Feasibility Assessment Report

B.C. supported advancing the feasibility report to the respective governments for a decision, with some minor changes, including a revised map, changes to the executive summary and updated information on engagement with the ONA.

Draft Memorandum of Understanding

The draft MOU was reviewed and the Steering Committee directed that legal counsel for B.C. and Canada should review the document as soon as possible.

ACTIONS:

- Parks Canada will incorporate the requested changes in the draft feasibility report and circulate them to B.C. by January 5th.
- Richard Carson will provide B.C. with the contact information for Parks Canada's legal counsel working on the draft MOU.

Bowen Island

Parks Canada provided an update on the Bowen Island feasibility study. A draft park concept is now available for public review. The Bowen Island Municipality intends to

hold a binding referendum in April. Two meetings have been held with the Squamish First Nation, but no consultation process has been agreed upon. This may delay project completion. Another significant issue is possible a request by Metro Vancouver for compensation in respect of Crippen Regional Park.

Southern Strait of Georgia

The Steering Committee discussed priorities for moving forward with the feasibility study. Priorities identified are consultation with First Nations, and messages for a possible announcement on re-engagement in the feasibility study.

ACTIONS:

- B.C. will initiate an exchange of correspondence between the B.C. Minister of Environment and the Minister responsible for Parks Canada outlining commitments on park establishment projects, including the NMCA, and seeking interest in participating in future announcements.
- Parks Canada and B.C. will work together on possible dates and communications materials for a potential joint announcement on re-engagement in the NMCA feasibility study.
- B.C. will investigate whether there may be provincial staff who would be well positioned to lead First Nations consultation, with a view to entering into an interchange agreement with Parks Canada.

Next Meeting:

It was suggested that the week of January 17 be targeted for the next meeting. Debby Funk will canvass Steering Committee members for dates.

Canada – B.C. Steering Committee Conference Call

South Okanagan – Lower Similkameen National Park Proposal Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area Feasibility Study November 23, 2010

B.C. – Canada Steering Committee:

Bill Fisher, Director General, Western & Northern Canada

Cairine MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, British Columbia

Ron Hallman, Director General, National Parks, Parks Canada Agency

Invited for B.C.:

Scott Benton, Executive Director, Parks and Protected Areas Division, Ministry of Environment

Brett Hudson, Planning and Land Administration, Ministry of Environment

Invited for Canada:

Richard Carson, Director, Western Establishment Initiatives
Debby Funk, Communications Manager
Per Nilsen, Chief, New Park Proposals (South)

Debbie Clarke, Project Manager, South Okanagan Lower Similkameen Assessment

Documents Distributed

- Draft Minutes from October 5, 2010 & October 28, 2010
- South Okanagan/Lower Similkameen Feasibility Assessment – Overview of Findings and Outcomes (November, 2010)
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding (for the purpose of Federal-Provincial Deliberations)

Administration

October 5th and October 28th minutes were approved.

The purpose of the call was to follow up on action items identified from the previous Steering Committee conference call (October 28th) regarding the South Okanagan Lower Similkameen Feasibility Assessment.

South Okanagan/ Lower Similkameen

Okanagan Nation Alliance update

Richard Carson reported that the discussions and meetings with the Okanagan Nation Alliance have been going very well. The Alliance has expressed a willingness to work

together on drafting a framework agreement that defines how First Nations and Parks Canada will work together.

On December 16th, there is an Okanagan Nations Chief Executives Council meeting where the national park proposal will be discussed. It is anticipated that support will be expressed, and that discussions surrounding a celebration may ensue.

Communications with Elected Officials

Debbie Clarke provided a brief update regarding recent discussions with the RDOS Parks Committee members, as requested at the October 28th Steering Committee conference call. There were no further questions.

Feasibility Assessment Report

Ron Hallman introduced the report, saying that the shorter version summarizes completed commitments identified by the Steering Committee and from the federal-provincial Memorandum of Understanding. It was asked if there had been further dialogue with Canadian Helicopters to find out if they had provided Parks Canada with more clarity on the needs of the company, in relation to the national park proposal. No further information has been provided by the company.

The Steering Committee agreed that there are no further issues to address to complete the feasibility assessment. There is a continued desire to keep communications low key.

ACTIONS:

Actions regarding the report are as follows:

- Add a text box to the Executive Summary and include the last paragraph from the Recommendations. Include this same text box on page 3 (Introduction).
- Move page 19 forward (Why establish a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen?) to just behind the Executive Summary.
- Change title of report to read: "Submitted by: The B.C. Federal-Provincial Steering Committee for Ministerial Consideration"
- Add more pictures to front cover, and in report
- Add tourism information to Executive Summary.
- Streamline map on page 6.
 - Remove 2006 inset and put in Appendix.
 - Reformat map for less detail.
- Add a signature page.

Draft Memorandum of Understanding

Ron Hallman led the discussion regarding the draft MOU. There was acknowledgement that Parks Canada and BC both wish to build understandings with the Okanagan Nation. There was also discussion regarding the process for completing the MOU, in the context of recent re-alignment within the Ministry of Environment.

ACTIONS:

Parks Canada will incorporate the following changes and re-circulate for the next Steering Committee conference call.

- BC will send comments to Parks Canada.
- Shorten second bullet to conclude that a national park reserve is feasible (Parks Canada will supply wording).
- Add a clause to provide flexibility regarding the timing of establishment.

Southern Strait of Georgia

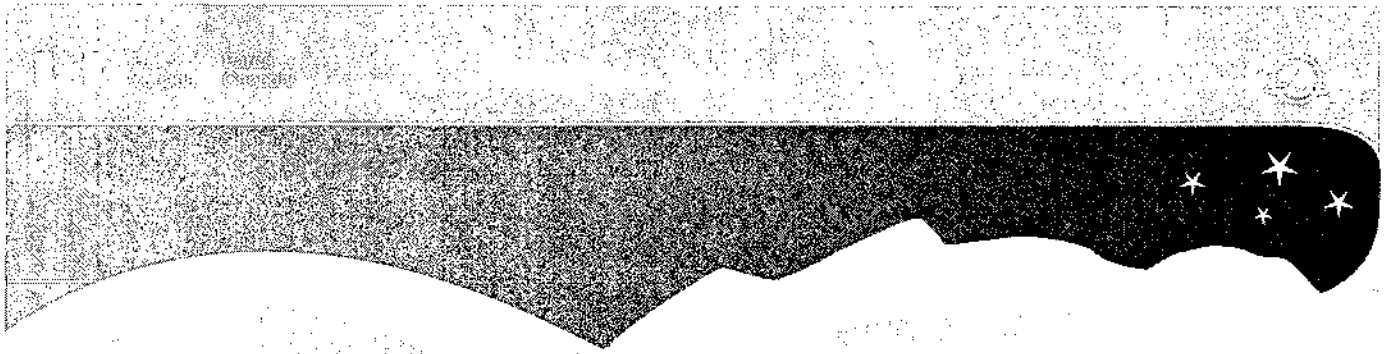
The Southern Strait of Georgia Feasibility Assessment was discussed. The new B.C. Minister of Environment is familiar with the file, and Parks Canada offered to assist BC in any briefings that may occur.

ACTIONS:

- BC will check with the provincial Minister's office for potential timing of a ministerial briefing.

Next Meeting:

It was suggested that December 20th in the early afternoon may work for the Steering Committee to hear the results of the Council of Chiefs and Council meeting on December 16th to consider the final draft of the feasibility report and MOU.



Proposed National Park Reserve for the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen

Feasibility Assessment



The Canada-BC Steering Committee was established in 2003 as a result of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate on assessing the feasibility of establishing a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen, and other projects in British Columbia.

The Steering Committee is pleased to inform Minister Murray Coell, Minister of the Environment for British Columbia and the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency, that the feasibility assessment initiated in 2004 is complete. This assessment included a comprehensive process of First Nations, stakeholder and community consultations, and design, evaluation and refinement of a park concept.

By way of this report, the Steering Committee is seeking approval to proceed with formal negotiations towards the advancement and finalization of an establishment agreement between the parties as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Canada-BC Steering Committee recommends that:

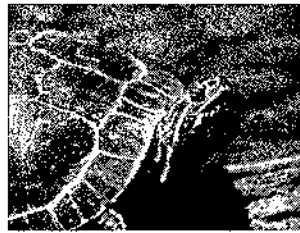
1. A national park reserve is feasible, pending successful discussions with the Okanagan Nation Alliance, which has now stated a willingness to work with Parks Canada to design an agreement for engagement in the park establishment process.
2. A proposed park boundary for the 2010 Park Concept which is in two components and includes approximately 284 square kilometres be endorsed. The area on the map (page 9) is conceptual and is not considered to be exact or final, but shows what can be accomplished.
3. Parks Canada continues to work with the Okanagan Nation Alliance to design an agreement for engagement in the park establishment process.
4. Parks Canada, on behalf of Canada, works with the Province of British Columbia to complete a Memorandum of Understanding respecting the establishment of a national park reserve in the South-Okanagan Lower Similkameen.

Recommended by:

Cairine MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Province of British Columbia

Bill Fisher, Director General Western and Northern Canada, Parks Canada

Ron Hallman, Director General National Parks, Parks Canada



Executive Summary

The South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen region is located at the southern most extent of the Interior Dry Plateau and is characterized by a relatively dry climate. The area is one of Canada's richest areas of **natural biodiversity** and has a large number of species and habitats at risk. The proposed national park reserve presents a unique opportunity to work with First Nations and local residents to achieve conservation objectives, to restore threatened habitats and species at risk including the burrowing owl, and to collaborate with the broader ranching community to achieve stewardship of this valued landscape. This report summarizes the results of a feasibility assessment undertaken between 2004 and 2010.

In 2002, representatives of the **Okanagan Nation Alliance** and community members were the **first proponents** for protecting the area around the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area as a national park reserve. In 2003, the governments of Canada and British Columbia signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** to cooperate on assessing the feasibility of establishing a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen region.

Based on feasibility assessment findings, the Canada-BC Steering Committee recommends that a **national park reserve** is feasible, pending successful discussions with the Okanagan Nation Alliance. The Steering Committee is seeking approval to proceed with negotiations of a park establishment agreement as outlined in section 4 of the 2003 Canada-BC Memorandum of Understanding. Further, the Steering Committee recognizes the importance of a **timely decision** due to rapid land use change in this area, and growing impatience for 'certainty' by key stakeholders, in particular the ranching community.

The **2010 Park Concept** is revised from an earlier 2006 proposal and includes two distinct areas, the Northern Component and the South Okanagan Grasslands Component. The **proposed boundary** of the park reserve now includes approximately **284 sq km** of Provincial Parks and protected areas, multi-use Crown Lands and private lands. Private lands would be secured on a willing seller and willing buyer basis. Changes to **reduce the size** of the park concept were made in response to First Nations, key stakeholders, and some members of the public who expressed concerns that the original plan (2006 park concept) was "too much, too fast."

The two components of the **2010 Park Concept** make a significant contribution towards Parks Canada's objectives to represent the Interior Dry Plateau in the national park system. The **grasslands** and associated ecosystems are unique to this region of Canada. They are a **biodiversity hotspot** and are home to numerous species and habitats at risk. The diverse landscapes also provide **unique educational and visitor opportunities**. A national park reserve would complement and enhance the already well developed tourism economy in the South Okanagan and help local residents, and all Canadians experience this area's natural beauty and retain it unimpaired for future generations.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

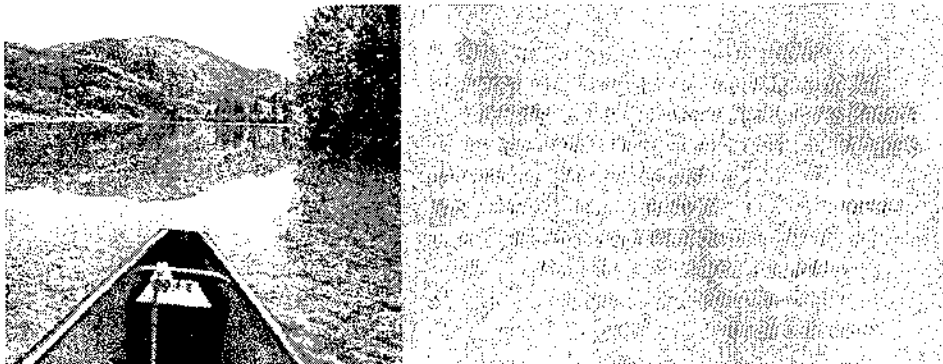
In recent months, as a result of ongoing dialogue, the **Okanagan Nation Alliance** has now **stated a willingness** to work with Parks Canada to design an agreement for engagement in the park establishment process. This includes a commitment from Parks Canada that legislative measures will not compromise future settlements of Aboriginal Title and Rights, and that traditional activities and the use of traditional knowledge will be included in park planning and management. Collaborative work with the Okanagan Nation Alliance and the Lower Similkameen Indian Band is ongoing; the goal is to develop a **consensus-based approach** to guide a park establishment process, as well as future planning and management of a national park reserve.

Due to the cultural importance of **ranching** in this area, and community feedback about impacts to the ranching community, Parks Canada has committed to an **adaptive management framework** that supports continued livestock grazing in the park concept area in a manner consistent with ecological objectives and park values. Further development and refinement of the adaptive management framework will enable flexibility and innovation in **proactively working with the ranching sector** over the long term. Recent input from ranchers and the ranching community suggests increased support for this approach.

A socio-economic assessment completed in 2008 concluded that **there would be a significant positive economic impact** associated with the establishment of a national park reserve, if Parks Canada staff and facilities were located in smaller communities. The assessment also predicted no significant negative socio-economic impact from changes to regional land use. This assessment assumed a **multi-decade transition** to a full national park reserve and assumed that recommended mitigation measures would be applied.

A summary of **consultations** and outreach with communities, local residents and key stakeholders over a six year period is presented. Input from consultations was instrumental in providing advice and local knowledge to the feasibility assessment and planning process. Thousands of local residents and diverse stakeholders were directly engaged in the feasibility assessment, guiding and informing the development of park concepts and other documents. In addition to consultations, surveys and polls were conducted by a variety of groups and organizations and have consistently shown **positive support for a national park reserve**.

A long term transition will be necessary and will require a strong commitment between Parks Canada, the Province of British Columbia and the Okanagan Nation Alliance. In summary, the proposed national park reserve presents an important **provincial and federal opportunity** to work together to protect one of Canada's treasured places and leave a living legacy that connects people to nature, culture and history.

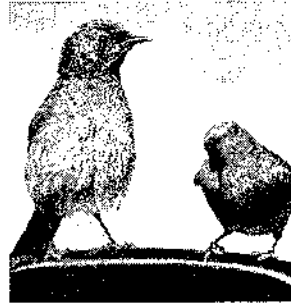


Why establish a national park reserve

in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen?

- *Enhance protection of British Columbia's temperate grassland ecosystems – landscapes that are critically endangered globally.*
- *Consolidate and connect the existing network of provincial and national protected areas – through the purchase of private lands and through partnerships with surrounding landowners and users.*
- *Build strong and meaningful relationships with the Okanagan Nation.*
- *Establish partnerships with the Okanagan Nation and local communities to collaborate on conservation, management and education – building upon traditional local ecological knowledge.*
- *Facilitate collaboration between scientific researchers, ranchers, range professionals and the Okanagan Nation to achieve ecological management objectives and protect key “at risk” habitats within the national park and to improve current range conditions in surrounding grasslands and to manage wildlands in rural-urban transition areas.*
- *Make it easy for people from the Southern Interior and other Canadians to visit the park for an hour, a day or longer – by offering a wide range of first class opportunities to experience and connect with this nationally significant natural and cultural heritage area.*
- *Raise the profile of the South Okanagan and Lower Similkameen as a tourism destination by adding new visitor experience opportunities to the existing marketing mix, encouraging investment in the local tourism infrastructure and creating strategic benefits for the tourism industry.*





Left: Typical South Okanagan landscape. Middle: Two birds in the South Okanagan. Right: Typical South Okanagan landscape.

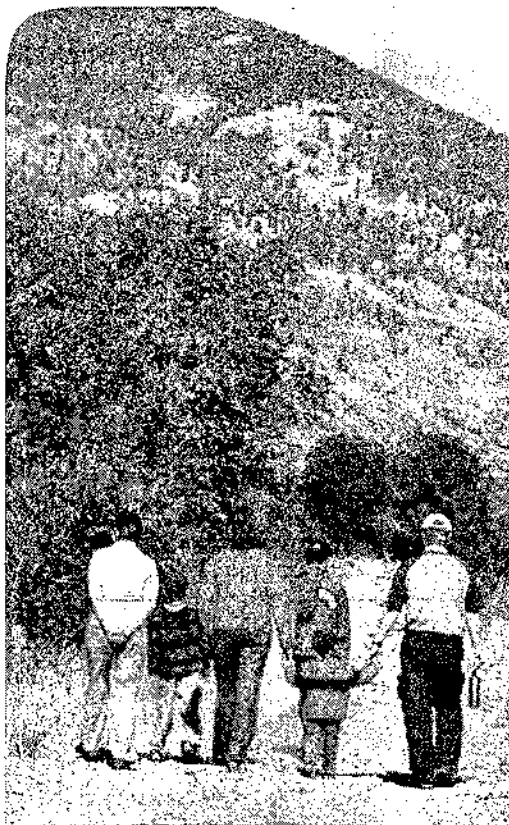
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Introduction

The South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen is part of the Interior Dry Plateau natural region of Canada, and one of 39 regions identified by Parks Canada as a distinctive component of the national landscape. This region is not yet represented in Canada's system of national parks. Located in the extreme south of the Interior Dry Plateau where the northern edge of the Great Basin reaches into BC, the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen is one of Canada's richest areas of biodiversity. From both national and provincial perspectives, this is an area of high conservation value and an excellent candidate area for Parks Canada to represent the Interior Dry Plateau natural region.

In 2002, representatives of the Okanagan Nation Alliance and community members were the first proponents for protecting the area around the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area as a national park reserve.



In 2003, Canada and British Columbia signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate on assessing the feasibility of establishing a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen, together with other projects in BC, under the guidance of a federal/provincial Steering Committee. A local Working Group was established to build and assess the proposal. The feasibility assessment was initiated in 2004, incorporating an iterative process of consultations, design, evaluation, and refinement of a park concept.

This report is a summary of the feasibility assessment results to date. In 2011, BC Parks will celebrate its 100th anniversary of the creation of the first Provincial Park in British Columbia. Also in 2011, Parks Canada will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Canada's national park service, the first in the world. This could be an opportunity for both governments to recognize BC's significant biodiversity hot spot, profile the rich history of the area, and jointly share a commitment to protecting the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen for all Canadians.

The Working Group was established by the Canada-British Columbia Steering Committee to facilitate implementation, coordination and communication of the feasibility assessment process. The group is comprised of representatives from the Province of BC (Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Lands), Parks Canada and First Nations.

Elements of Feasibility Assessment

As part of the Canada-BC Memorandum of Understanding, several key elements were required in the feasibility assessment.

The table below outlines the elements and how they were addressed.

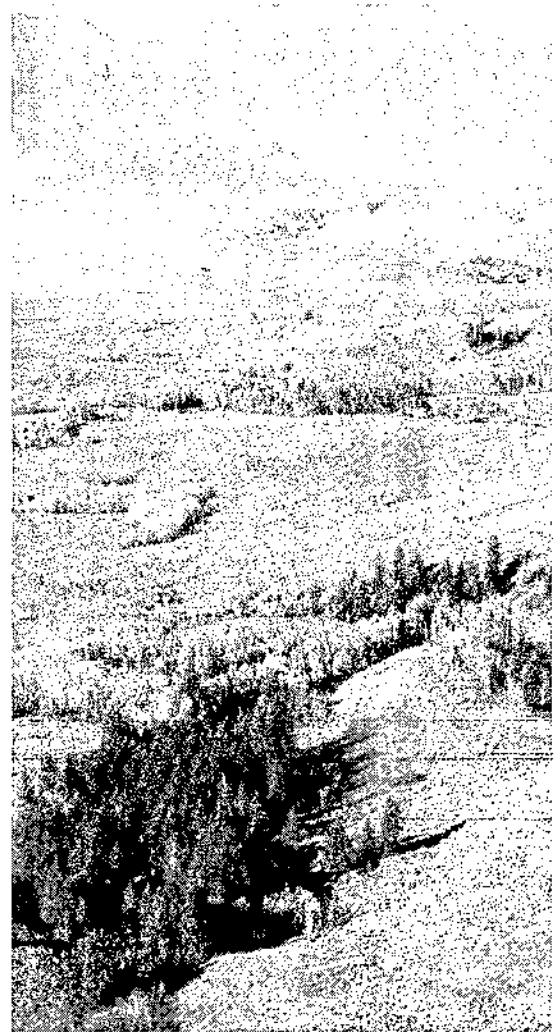
– Boundary Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial Boundaries (Ecosystem Conservation Target Report) • 2006 Draft Park Concept (650 sq km) • 2010 Revised Park Concept (284 sq km)
– Analysis of natural and cultural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achievement of conservation targets • Cultural history overview
– Analysis of social and economic impacts – Assessment of mineral and other natural resource potential – Assessment of impact on access to land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social, Economic and Environmental Baseline Study, 2005 • Social and Economic Assessment (based on 2006 proposal) • Extensive Consultations
– Analysis of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecosystem Conservation Target Report
– Mitigation for adverse economic impacts and management options to accommodate existing land uses – Identification of all land uses that must be discontinued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended approach to transition described in Social and Economic Assessment • New approach to grazing (2010)
– Report on consultations undertaken with federal and provincial agencies, affected First Nations, Local Governments and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase I Report on Consultations (Draft) • Phase II Report on Consultations (Draft) • 2010 Consultation Overview

The studies listed above, combined with consultations, assisted Parks Canada and the Canada-BC Steering Committee with identifying opportunities, issues, and concerns. They guided the development of the park concept during the assessment process.

The Park Concept Overview

Throughout the feasibility assessment, Parks Canada has sought feedback from First Nations, local communities and stakeholders in order to develop a park concept which fits within the regional context. In 2006, a draft Park Concept was introduced to the community, and feedback was gathered from open houses, forums, workshops and meetings. Further discussions assisted Parks Canada and the Working Group in better understanding where common interests from First Nations, communities, the public, and stakeholders could be combined to build a common vision.

The revised 2010 Park Concept presents a more collective vision and approach, including a smaller revised boundary and an adaptive management approach to grazing. Past discussions and renewed dialogue with the Okanagan Nation and local Bands have been instrumental in revisions to the 2006 Park Concept (*see Relationship and Collaboration with First Nations section*).



THE PROPOSED PARK RESERVE BOUNDARY

The new 2010 Park Concept includes two distinct areas, the Northern Component and the South Okanagan Grasslands Component. The proposed boundary of the park reserve now includes approximately 284 sq km of Provincial Parks and protected areas, multi-use Crown Lands and private lands (private lands would be secured on a willing seller and willing buyer basis.) Derived from the 2006 draft Park Concept which was 650 sq km, changes to reduce the size of the park concept were made in response to First Nations, key stakeholders, and some members of the public who expressed concerns that the original plan was "too much, too fast." See Appendix 1 for the 2006 draft Park Concept map.

Expanding on the concept of partnerships in the Northern Component, the 2010 Park Concept added existing federal lands to the proposed park reserve in order to balance the interests of environmental advocates to increase the park footprint, with the interests of stakeholders to retain existing patterns of hunting, grazing and other land uses affected by a national park.

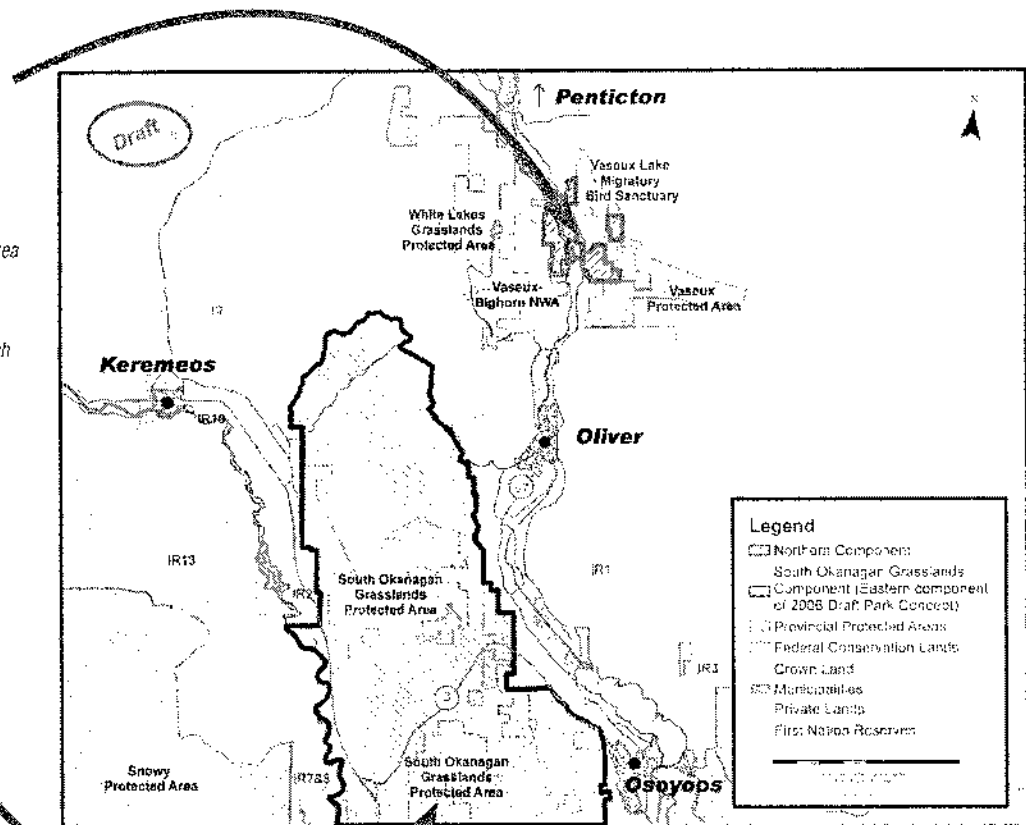
2010 PARK CONCEPT

Northern Component 10 sq km Snakes and Lakes

- Co-operative management with Canadian Wildlife Service at Vaseux Lake Migratory Bird Sanctuary and National Wildlife area
- Partnerships in adjacent areas including White Lake and Vaseux protected areas, National Research Council lands, and other conservation lands.
- Accessible nature education and interpretation values with excellent day use opportunities

South Okanagan Grasslands Component 274 sq km From the Desert to the Stars

- Approximately 93 sq km provincial protected area in 5 parcels; 83 sq km of multi-use Crown land; 98 sq km of private land
- Consolidate fragmented protected areas; provide opportunities for road-accessible day use, trails, viewpoints, star gazing, interpretation
- Experience elevation gradient spanning five ecosystems
- Receive, orient and interpret the region by utilizing one or more existing or new visitor centres (outside the park).
- Integrate an extensive trail system within the proposed park with existing community roads and trails.





These two components make a significant contribution towards Parks Canada's national goals in this natural region. The grasslands and other associated ecosystems are a biodiversity hotspot, and are home to many species. The diverse landscapes provide unique educational and visitor opportunities to experience one of the driest, hottest and most threatened ecosystems in Canada.

APPROACH TO GRAZING MANAGEMENT

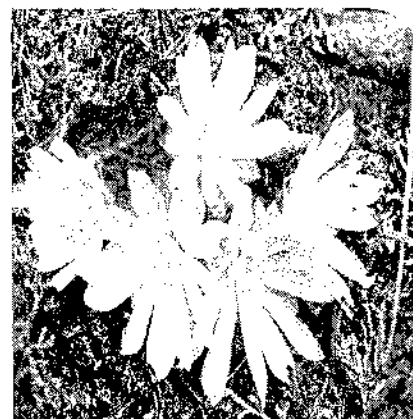
Ranching is an important and long established part of land use shaping the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen. Feedback from the public, stakeholders and communities has indicated significant concern about impacts from park establishment on the ranching community and local economy. Although grazing is not normally permitted in national parks, Parks Canada will work proactively with the ranching community to address grazing concerns. Through collaboration, innovation and an adaptive management framework, grazing within the park concept area will be permitted and managed in a manner consistent with ecological objectives and other park values (*see Livestock Grazing in the Socio-Economic Assessment Section*).



Relationship and Collaboration with First Nations

Representatives of the Okanagan Nation Alliance were among the first proponents for a national park reserve in the South Okanagan and Lower Similkameen. Following some challenges part way through the feasibility assessment process, and delays in substantive discussions, the Okanagan Nation Alliance stated in November 2010 their willingness to work with Parks Canada to design an agreement for their engagement with the park establishment process.

Foundational issues for the Okanagan Nation Alliance relate to protection of claims to title and rights. Key interests include protecting the land from further alienation; restoring healthy ecosystems; collaborative management; traditional and contemporary activities; training and employment; economic opportunities; assistance with Spotted Lake and on-reserve conservation lands; and community relationships. The Okanagan Nation Alliance requires that the park establishment process, and all that this process entails, does not erode their claims to title and rights.



Parks Canada has consistently communicated that a park establishment process cannot resolve claims to title and rights. In a letter sent to the Chiefs of the Okanagan Nation Alliance on October 6, 2010, Parks Canada stated several commitments, including a commitment that legislative measures will not compromise future settlements of title and rights claims, that traditional activities will continue, and that traditional knowledge will be used in park planning and management. Collaborative work with the Okanagan Nation Alliance will further develop the relationship and a consensus-based approach that will guide the establishment, planning and management of the national park reserve.

The Lower Similkameen Indian Band is supported by the Okanagan Nation Alliance as the lead for engagement of First Nations in the park establishment process. The Okanagan Nation Alliance, the Lower Similkameen Indian Band and Parks Canada are working to renew their relationship and are currently focused on building shared understanding and a communication protocol. There is mutual interest with the Okanagan Nation Alliance and the Lower Similkameen Indian Band to work collaboratively on a path forward toward the establishment of a national park reserve.

Of significance, the Lower Similkameen Indian Band has stated from the beginning that it cannot support having Snowy Protected Area included in the park proposal at this time. They have also recently expressed concern about how best to protect this and other areas in the future.

"Skwrakan, St'tek, Skikwelt, Npececk'ulawx, Tkrmius and Nasnulaxw are the area names that the Sylix use, to refer to the area, west of Similkameen River and south of Keremeas to the U.S. border. This area is viewed by the Lower Similkameen people as their backyard or n'tatixwmn, and all access to this area is through reserve lands. There is an extended history of use and occupancy, including hunting, gathering, cattle grazing, logging, wood cutting, spiritual, cultural, and sites referred to in stories and oral history."

Conservation Target Analysis

The South Okanagan–Lower Similkameen is located at the southernmost extent of the Interior Dry Plateau and is characterized by a relatively dry, warm climate. The vegetation is predominantly grassland and shrub-steppe at lower elevations with coniferous park-land at higher elevations. This area is also recognized for its nationally significant wetlands and riparian areas that provide essential habitat to birds (Important Bird Areas), amphibians and reptiles. The South Okanagan–Lower Similkameen is one of Canada's richest areas of natural biodiversity and has a large number of species and habitats at risk.

The Dry Interior Plateau of British Columbia is one of Canada's most diverse natural regions. Within its boundaries, and sometimes in a distance of only a few miles, one can travel from arid, sandy, cactus-covered bench lands up to treeless arctic-alpine mountaintops. – Richard Cannings

In 2008, Parks Canada completed an Ecosystem Conservation Target Analysis. This tool was designed to assist planning, support decision-making, and build a framework to consider options for park boundary design. It addressed three planning objectives:

- Representing the Interior Dry Plateau natural region (natural region 3),
- Representing the special and unique features of the South Okanagan-Similkameen, and
- Configuring a park reserve boundary to facilitate long term retention or restoration of ecological integrity, one of Parks Canada's key guiding principles.

Results from the conservation target analysis suggest that the 2010 Park Concept adequately represents key biogeoclimatic zones, as well as priority habitats and special features. It represents the unique elements of biodiversity found in this region and nowhere else in Canada. In addition, there are fifty-six federally-listed species at risk known to occur in the South Okanagan–Lower Similkameen and most are found within the Park Concept area.

Reduction of the 2010 Park Concept to less than half the size of the 2006 draft Park Concept diminished the effectiveness of the proposed park in maintaining and restoring ecological integrity over the long term. The revised boundaries also do not include lands within the highest elevation zone and are less effective in meeting size and watershed integrity targets. However, the 2010 Park Concept expands protection of the lower elevation grasslands where species diversity is highest and most at risk. Several existing provincial parks and protected areas, including the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area and Snowy Protected Area, capture larger landscapes that help represent a broader diversity of ecosystems in the region.

While the park concept area is smaller, it is still larger than 13 of Parks Canada's existing 43 parks, including the recently established Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. The 2010 Park Concept presents a unique opportunity to work with First Nations to achieve conservation objectives, to restore threatened habitats and species at risk including the burrowing owl, and to collaborate with the broader ranching community to achieve stewardship of a valued landscape.



Communications with Local Government Officials



Early in the feasibility assessment process, an eight member Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Committee was formed to provide input to the assessment process. The committee is comprised of local elected officials from communities and rural areas adjoining the park proposal, including the Mayors of Penticton, Osoyoos, Keremeos, Oliver, and Regional Directors from rural Cawston, Oliver, Osoyoos and Okanagan Falls.

Formal and informal briefings with the committee and individual members occurred throughout the feasibility assessment. More recently, the committee was provided a written update regarding the 2010 Park Concept.

Due to upcoming municipal elections, the Park Committee members were unable to state a public opinion regarding their support of the national park proposal, without further community engagement. Most felt that it is important to update the Park Committee in the near future.

Socio-Economic Assessment

The Socio-Economic Assessment (SEA) was an independent study by resource economists to assess social and economic implications of park establishment to economy and land use, communities and lifestyle. This 2008 study identified impacts that would remain if the 2006 Park Concept was implemented and mitigation strategies were applied. Impacts were categorized as significant or not significant, evaluating the extent of the residual economic effect after mitigation.

The Socio-Economic Assessment determined that overall there would be a significant positive economic effect associated with the establishment of a national park reserve, if Parks Canada staff and facilities were located in smaller communities. It also predicted no significant negative socio-economic impacts from changes to regional land-use. While the Socio-Economic Assessment was based on the larger 2006 Park Concept area, the changes to the concept area appear to have reduced the number of affected tenures and the likelihood of negative residual impacts.



LAND USE IMPLICATIONS

The degree of impact was estimated by person-years of employment and income. In general terms, the Socio-Economic Assessment found that the magnitude of the loss is not expected to be large (referring to permanent loss) relative to the local industry, local economy, and local labour markets. Furthermore, the residual long-term impacts were determined to be “not significant” for all economy and land use values and activities.

“Not significant” does not mean “insignificant”. None of the values discussed and examined in the SEA are considered insignificant; their importance is highlighted by inclusion in the analysis. In the SEA, “not significant” refers only to the residual effect (after mitigation) of the project.

SUMMARY TABLE OF LAND USE AND IMPLICATIONS

After seven years of study, Parks Canada has a detailed understanding of the history and commitments associated with existing land use. Parks Canada, working with the Province of BC, local communities, First Nations, stakeholders and other partners has identified options for mitigating changes to land use and has developed approaches to accommodated, modified or terminated existing land uses. Table 1 summarizes the land use impacts, issues, stakeholder feedback, proposed mitigation and outstanding considerations.

Table 1. Summary of Land Uses and Implications for National Park Reserve Establishment (note: this does not include input from the Okanagan Nation)

Land Use	Issue	Scope and stakeholder feedback	Proposed Mitigation/SEA impacts	Outstanding considerations
Ranching/ Grazing	Livestock grazing not normally permitted in National Parks; existing crown range tenures are required to sustain existing ranches.	South Okanagan Grasslands component only: 5 grazing leases & 11 licenses; 12 tenure holders (2 First Nations; ranchlands on reserve); 5/12 are more likely to experience adverse impact; initial loss of existing use estimated at 25-50% (i.e. 2500-5000 animal unit months); Agricultural Land Reserve concentrated in south 1/3 of area; impacts to grazing/agriculture of great concern to locals/ stakeholders who prefer new grazing approach to 2006 phase-out.	Purchase one or more large ranches and retire associated crown range tenures; reconfigure grazing use on remaining area and develop adaptive management strategy to retain livestock grazing over the long term consistent with management for ecological values; provide long time frames for stakeholders to adjust; Socio-Economic Assessment (SEA) found the residual effect was negative but not significant.	Develop details on approach to vegetation management; collaborate with stakeholders on approach to address their interests; work with Agriculture Land Commission to determine strategy.
Mining	Mining is not permitted in National Parks.	South Okanagan Grasslands component only: mining reserve 1002/2003 over component; 10 tenure holders; 22 mineral claims (2 in provincial protected area); approx. 1020 ha affected by pre-reserve tenures; 14 tenure holders; 33 mineral claims; approx. 2850 ha have post-reserve status; 1 known gravel pit (land act tenure); unknown number of crown grants with subsurface rights; Moderate-high mineral capability; concerns about land access to mineral deposits & approach to compensation; some desire for boundary modification to exclude certain claims.	Boundary modification/phased approach to park establishment reduces area of claims affected and # of tenures; acquire crown grants through willing-seller willing-buyer; work with province to develop approach to terminating other tenures; SEA found the residual effect was negative but not significant.	Confirm approach to 33 claims established since mining reserve was enacted; renew detailed discussions with Province about mineral potential in South Okanagan Grasslands Component.
Helicopters	Helicopter training is a novel use; no established tenures and history in national parks so business owners are uncertain of treatment they could expect; Parks Canada has agreed to permit use, subject to environmental impact assessment.	South Okanagan Grasslands component only: 2 local operators; at least 60 landing sites; 2 park use permits; operators are concerned about park visitor reputation and added restrictions/costs; local politicians and residents concerned about loss of Penticton airport services.	Permit continued use by both companies, subject to environmental assessment. The 2008 SEA predicted residual negative effect although not significant; residual effect may be reduced based on new mitigation strategy; 2008 mitigation recommended continued use for Canadian Helicopters only.	
Forestry/ Water	Forest harvesting is not permitted in a national park; water tenures are permitted but licenses have 5 year terms and lack provisions for priority of use.	South Okanagan Grasslands component: 252 ha affected in Osoyoos Indian Band Weyholf 1500; 3502 ha T-H-B; 5525 m3/yr Annual Allowable Cut; 0.2% of annual timber supply; 68 water licenses; some entrenched water wells. Northern component: No forestry; 23 water licenses; no forestry; also some entrenched water wells.	Phase out forest harvest tenures with compensation where applicable; continue with fire & forest health management; Phase out water licenses not required; retain retaining water license tenures and wells required. Predicted SEA impact to forestry was negative but not significant; impact to water was indeterminate and not significant.	Work with Province to update water license info including wells & select approach to water license transfer; e.g. Parks Canada tenure or province retain responsibility for water licensing as in Grasslands National Park.
Hunting/ Fishing/ Guide Outfitting	Recreational hunting and guided hunting are not allowed in National Parks; traditional hunting by First Nations is permitted; Recreational fishing is permitted; but normally stocking lakes only occurs where required to restore indigenous fish populations.	South Okanagan Grasslands Component: 1 guide territory and yearly permit; 34% overlap (27 600 ha); Approx yearly average use by sport hunters: 350 licenses; 2000 winter days; 90 animals mainly deer (mule, white tailed deer) but also black bear & cougar; small game harvest valued but magnitude unknown; 4 fishing lakes; Northern Component: sport hunting limited to one lot; mainly ducks; 1 fishing lake (Vaseux).	Phase out hunting over a time period to be defined in discussions with the Province and local First Nations. Determine strategy for retirement and/or negotiate compensation for guide territory/ permit; retain recreational fishing where consistent with management for ecological integrity; seek opportunities for augmenting fish/wildlife population & fishing/hunting opportunities outside. Residual effect was negative or indeterminate but not significant.	Need to understand scope/issues for First Nations re. hunting and management of problem wildlife; participation in management of problem wildlife; if issues develop BC Wildlife Federation remains opposed.
Other Recreation/ Tourism	There are a variety of established recreation uses / tourism activities that occur within or are affected by the proposed park concept; some are permitted in a national park (many non-motorized activities); others are not (e.g. motorized off-road uses like ATV/motorcycle).	Multiple tourism and rec opportunities; locals and tourists are concerned about user fees, new limits to use and termination of existing uses; tourism operators interested in enhancing visitor numbers; opportunities for tenures and shared marketing; recognition that land uses shift with some gaining and others losing opportunity.	Parks Canada wishes to develop opportunities for visitor experience, recreation, learning and enjoyment, where consistent with protecting ecological integrity. The residual effect on tourism was found to be positive but not significant; negative but not significant impacts were noted for some recreation uses such as motorized recreation.	Need for enhanced understanding of recreation use to be permitted; this will occur as part of future park management planning and through negotiations with the Province related to park establishment.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Twelve ranchers hold grazing tenures in the park concept area. Of these, five are most impacted by the proposal. Livestock grazing is not normally permitted in national parks, but will be permitted in the park concept area, under an adaptive management framework.

To achieve reductions in intensity of grazing use, Parks Canada would purchase one or more large ranches and work with the province to reconfigure grazing use over the park concept area. This would include retiring some Crown range tenures associated with the private land acquisitions. Grazing would be excluded from some areas, where necessary to achieve park ecological and other objectives, and to provide benchmarks for scientific comparison. In other areas where grazing would continue, it would continue in a manner consistent with ecological objectives and values. Furthermore, partnerships and stewardship activities on lands outside the park concept area will contribute significantly to the park objectives and should therefore be an important component to park development and management over the longer term.



Feedback from several affected ranching families suggests an increased level of comfort with the park concept based on boundary changes (smaller area), and the new adaptive management approach, which includes grazing, and proposed mitigation. Parks Canada recognizes that further work is required to refine the adaptive management framework in a collaborative manner with ranchers, First Nations, range professionals and scientists. Parks Canada will work towards a park management model that addresses ecological integrity, sustainable grazing, and is guided by science, active monitoring and partnerships.

HELICOPTER USE

Commercial helicopter training activities in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen are currently permitted for two companies (Canadian Helicopters and Eclipse Helicopters). They use multi-use crown land, protected areas and private lands, with permission from the land owner. Although helicopter use is a permitted activity in many national parks across Canada, commercial helicopter training would be a new use.

Local people and community representatives have expressed concerns that restricted use within a national park could cause adverse impacts to the helicopter business and revenue to the Penticton Airport Authority. The 2010 Park Concept has reduced the impact to helicopter landing sites by reducing the size of the park and the number of sites included within it. Therefore, the impact to helicopter training is significantly reduced. Discussions are continuing with the affected companies, and operational changes to helicopter use in the park concept area are not anticipated. This decision will be subject to an environmental assessment confirming that impact to the environment is limited or absent.

TRAPPING, RECREATIONAL HUNTING & GUIDE OUTFITTING

Activities such as trapping, recreational hunting and guide-outfitting are currently allowed in both protected areas and on multi-use crown land. These activities are not allowed within a national park reserve. Hunting use in particular, has strong support by local advocates who form the core of those that oppose establishment of a national park reserve in the region.

The 2010 Park Concept has helped reduce impacts to these activities. There are fewer guide outfitters and trappers affected, and the highly valued local sheep hunting and wilderness hunting opportunities in Snowy Protected Area are no longer part of the proposal. Mitigation strategies focus on long transition times for phasing out hunting; however, stakeholders do not support any reductions in available opportunities. To date, the BC Wildlife Federation and local sportsmen groups have not agreed to participate in developing mitigation strategies. A decision about the feasibility of this park will likely encourage further dialogue with hunters and associations about impacts and mitigation. In addition, First Nations have recently expressed concerns about current deer management and have suggested a more rapid phase out of recreational hunting. First Nations interests and engagement is instrumental to developing solutions and mitigation strategies.

Economy and Land Use: The Socio-Economic Assessment determined that residual impacts (after mitigation) are “not significant” for all values - forestry, minerals and mining, helicopter training, trapping, agriculture, ranching, tourism, and guide outfitting.

COMMUNITY

The potential socio-economic effects of a national park reserve on communities (namely Oliver, Osoyoos, Keremeos and the surrounding rural areas) include the economic impacts directly associated with park operation jobs, and related broader economic development impacts, primarily in the tourism sector.

Community: Significant positive economic impact of establishing a national park reserve (jobs/dollars spent), if Parks Canada concentrates its facilities in small communities. Income and employment effects are not large but they are long term and continuous.



While the income and employment effects are not large, they are long term and continuous. If Parks Canada concentrates its facilities in small local communities, they are more likely to have a significant positive impact on the economy. While the national park reserve impacts are expected to be positive for communities, the long term residual impacts are expected to be low for community growth and development combined with impacts on private land and other tenures. They are deemed by the assessment as “not significant” over the long term.

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle was measured by four values: community well-being; rural lifestyle; park-related lifestyle and recreation. The long term residual impacts on community well-being were considered indeterminate (or neutral) and not significant. The impacts on rural lifestyle, most notably ranching, were considered negative; those for park-related lifestyle were predicted to be positive. Neither impact was considered significant.

Lifestyle: The Socio-Economic Assessment said that although both positive and negative residual impacts were noted for lifestyle, the long term residual impacts were rated not significant. For example, the assessment identified some negative effects for rural lifestyle and motorized recreation while positive effects were identified for park-related lifestyle (e.g. education, learning, environmental/aesthetic values) and non-motorized recreation.)

The impacts on public recreation are clearer. Most non-motorized user groups will gain opportunities and better recreation experiences, while Off Road Vehicle recreation users will lose opportunities due to the long term effects that these activities can have on wildlife, species at risk and sensitive habitats. Overall the net effect on public recreation is predicted to be neutral and not significant over the long term. Mitigation steps will be important to ensure all user groups are aware of allowed uses, park policies, management guidelines and transition strategies.

Public Consultation and Outreach

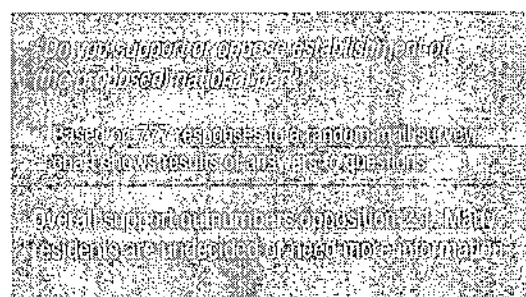
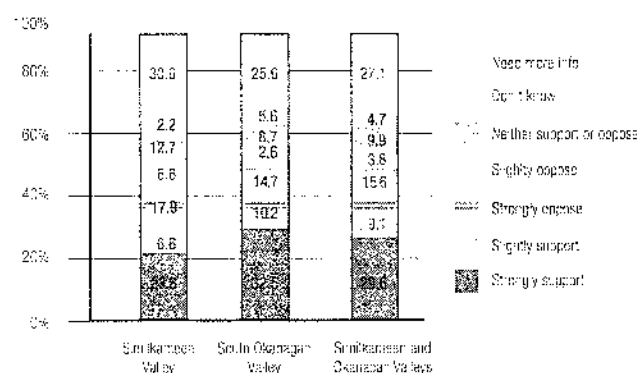
This section of the report reviews communication and consultation over a six year period. Conducting consultations with communities and key stakeholders was instrumental in providing advice and local knowledge to the feasibility assessment and planning process. Although much of the detailed outreach, public meetings, and stakeholder meetings occurred between 2004-2008, targeted consultation has occurred since April 2010 to gather feedback from key stakeholder groups on the revised park concept (*see Appendix 2 for list of groups/stakeholders consulted*).

As the feasibility assessment concludes, there is a growing need to reconnect formally with the public and stakeholders, report on the findings of the feasibility assessment, indicate where changes and modifications have been made to the park concept, and respond to concerns and opportunities identified.

CONSULTATION AND OUTREACH – 2003-2008

There have been two phases of broad public consultation, both involving open houses. The first phase defined the scope of issues and opportunities (2004), and the second examined a park concept including mapped boundaries (2006). Over 1800 people attended the open houses, and hundreds more filled in comment forms and/or emailed the project manager. The following is a summary of concerns and opportunities, which were incorporated into the shaping of the first draft park concept, and later, the modified 2010 Park Concept.

In 2007, Parks Canada commissioned a survey of local residents in order to better understand how residents would use a national park reserve, how a national park reserve might affect desire to live in the area, and to obtain an indication of public support for national park reserve establishment. Results of this survey indicated that overall, supporters outnumber opposition by approximately 2:1.



Indication of Support from Similkameen Valley Planning Society Amenity Migration Survey, 2007

CONSULTATION AND OUTREACH – 2008-2010

Two other local surveys were completed by non government organizations in 2008 and 2010. Key results for the surveys found that:

- a) There was 'continuing support for additional conservation efforts', and
- b) '63% of respondents favoured protecting a portion of the South Okanagan Similkameen in a national park, and 26% opposed protection in a national park'.

Details from these surveys are found in Appendix 3.

Priority discussions have included First Nations as well as specific individuals, groups, organizations, community leaders and business interests. Parks Canada has renewed relationships with as many of the key stakeholders as possible. Recent stakeholder meetings have focused on listening to concerns and providing updates about recent changes to the proposed park concept, the new approach to grazing and the desire for renewed discussions with First Nations.

Targeted consultations included: ranching stakeholders (10/12 affected tenure holders; all except First Nations tenure holders); local and regional government representatives, members of the Ad Hoc Science team; Canadian Helicopters; non-government organizations (Nature Conservancy Canada, Grasslands Conservation Council of BC, Desert Centre Society), and representatives of key provincial government agencies (Ministry of Forest and Range; Agriculture Land Commission, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands). Anecdotally, revisions to the park concept have been well received and those involved in consultation generally express improved comfort with revised mitigation strategies and the reduced scope of impacts.

CONCERNS	OPPORTUNITIES
Loss of recreation use opportunities (e.g. hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, horseback riding, hang gliding etc.)	Ecosystem conservation and protection of unique flora and fauna
Loss of a rural lifestyle	Sustainable tourism and recreation
Loss of commercial land use opportunities, economic opportunities (grazing and agriculture), and forestry (opportunities and fire wood cutting)	Natural history and cultural interpretation, education, visitor centres
Increased government involvement	Enhanced conservation in surrounding areas
Costs to local residents (fees)	Enhanced enforcement, infrastructure and services
Holistic natural resource management (fire, wildlife)	Economic benefits and job opportunities
Desire to maintain current approach to land ownership, management, stewardship and use	Recreation and visitor opportunities
Need to mitigate impacts, adequate transition period, fair compensation	Research opportunities
Suggestions to reduce the draft Park Concept area (remove South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area, or Snowy Protected Area)	Protection from development
	Partnerships for local participation in planning and management
	Suggestions to expand the Park Concept area (add White Lake-Vaseux, Cathedral Provincial Park, Okanagan Mountain Park)

Long Term Transition to a National Park Reserve

A long term transition plan, likely over several decades, will be necessary to achieve desired land assembly and full protection under the *Canada National Parks Act*. This framework would likely include a combination of federal and provincial legislation and policies. This approach will require a strong commitment between Parks Canada, the Province of British Columbia, and the Okanagan Nation Alliance to ensure success over the longer term. The components of transition include:

FIRST NATIONS RELATIONSHIP

- Develop a collaborative working relationship with the Okanagan Nation in establishment, planning and management of the future protected area.

AGREEMENTS

- Develop a memorandum of understanding with the provincial government to confirm completion of the feasibility assessment, and subsequently, a federal-provincial land transfer agreement. This agreement defines how land transfers, tenures and other matters of provincial interest will be addressed to assist in the establishment of a national park reserve.
- Craft and implement a legislative framework for interim management of lands within the park boundary; this framework would likely include a combination of federal and provincial legislation and policies.



PLANNING/IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop and implement a land assembly strategy that includes strategic acquisition of private lands within the boundary (willing seller, willing buyer). At least some acquisitions will need to occur early in the transition process before opportunities are lost and to facilitate changes to grazing management.
- Establish an interim local advisory committee to support park management, planning and implementation.
- Develop and implement interim park management guidelines with the participation of affected stakeholders, governments, land management experts and staff that takes the park through the land assembly process and toward achievement of long term objectives.
- Collaborate with ranchers, range professionals, and scientists to develop an adaptive management framework and a vegetation management plan that includes a combination of ungrazed benchmarks and areas with continued livestock grazing.
- Build a team of provincial, federal and First Nations staff to implement an effective national park reserve establishment process in collaboration with stakeholders and local communities.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

- Inform and engage the general public about the revised 2010 Park Concept.
- Demonstrate a commitment to communities to address issues and concerns.
- Engage communities to jointly celebrate Parks Canada's 100th anniversary and British Columbia's 100th anniversary for the Provincial Park system, while celebrating the shared commitment to a new National Park Reserve in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen.

Recommendations

The 2010 Park Concept represents a significant departure from the earlier, larger draft concept. The changes to the size of the area, the adoption of an adaptive management framework, and positive steps towards re-engagement with the Okanagan Nation Alliance and local Bands are an outcome of dialogue, consultation, and implementation of the feasibility assessment.

Based on the findings of this report and pending successful discussions and engagement with the Okanagan Nation Alliance, the Canada-BC Steering Committee **recommends that a national park reserve is feasible**. The Canada-BC Steering Committee also recommends a proposed park boundary for the 2010 Park Concept comprised of two components totalling approximately 284 square kilometres be endorsed. The area on the map (*see page 9*) is conceptual and is not considered to be exact or final, but shows what can be accomplished. The Steering Committee is **seeking approval** to proceed with negotiations on an establishment agreement as outlined in section 4 of the 2003 Canada-BC Memorandum of Understanding.

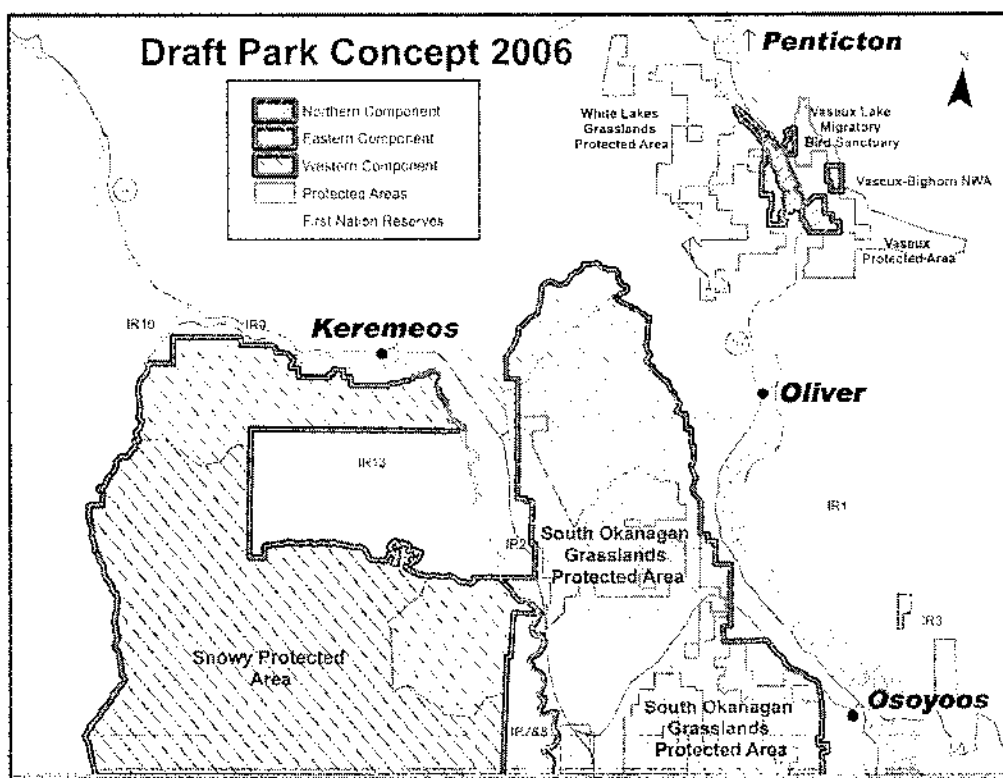
In 2011, BC Parks will celebrate its 100th anniversary of the creation of the first Provincial Park in British Columbia. Also in 2011, Parks Canada will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Canada's national park service, the first in the world. This could be an opportunity for both governments to recognize BC's significant biodiversity hot spot, profile the rich history of the area, and jointly share a commitment to protecting the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen for all Canadians.

*The South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen...
Working Together to Protect one of Canada's
treasured places - a living legacy connecting
people to nature, culture and history.*



Appendix 1: 2006 Draft Park Concept

The 2006 draft Park Concept was 650 square kilometres and was comprised of three components (North, West, and East). The 2006 Park Concept was reduced in size to create what is now the 2010 Park Concept (*see page 9*) in response to First Nations, key stakeholders, and some members of the public who expressed concerns that the concept was "too much, too fast."



Appendix 2: Groups/Stakeholders Consulted in Feasibility Assessment

Advisory Committees:

Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS)
Land and Resource Management Plan

Provincial Ministries:

Environment
Agriculture and Lands
Forests
Tourism, Culture and Arts
Energy, Mines, Petroleum Resources
Transportation & Highways
Thompson Okanagan Management Committee
Agricultural Land Commission

Federal Agencies:

Canadian Wildlife Service
National Research Council/Dominion Radio
Astrophysical Observatory
US Dept of Fish & Wildlife

Regional/Local Government:

RDOS board
RDOS staff (planners, GIS)
IAC Regional Growth Strategy
Social, Economic, Environmental
Advisory Committees for Regional Growth Strategy
Central Okanagan Regional District
City of Penticton
Town of Princeton
Town of Osoyoos
Town of Oliver
UBCM display
Interior Health

Park Interest Groups:

Grassland Park Review Coalition
South Okanagan National Park Network

Community Economic Development:

EDO's (Oliver, Osoyoos, Penticton,
Keremeos, Princeton)
Community Futures
Similkameen Valley Planning Society
Penticton, Oliver Chamber of Commerce
Destination Osoyoos
Oliver Economic Development Society
Okanagan Partnership

NGOs – Conservation:

Ad Hoc Science Group
South Okanagan Similkameen
Conservation Program
Nature Trust of BC
White Lake Ecosystem Group
Grasslands Conservation Council of BC

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
SOS Stewardship
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Desert Centre
Earthcare
EMAN National Science Organization
Nature Canada
Okanagan Similkameen Park Society
Federation of BC Naturalists
Naturalists Clubs: North Okanagan,
Oliver/Osoyoos, South Okanagan,
Central Okanagan
Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance
Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society
The Land Conservancy
Save our Parkland Association
Allan Brooks Nature Centre Society
Northwest Conservation Alliance (US)
Western Canada Wilderness Committee
BC Conservation Corps
Naramata Conservation Initiative

Education Institutions:

University of BC-Okanagan
University of BC
Thompson River University
Okanagan University-Salmon Arm

NGOs – Tourism:

Similkameen Country
Destination Osoyoos
Osoyoos Hotel/Motel Association
Okanagan Partnership
South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen
tourism representatives (21)

NGOs – Wildlife:

South Okanagan Sportsmans Association
Guideoutfitters
Guideoutfitters Association of BC
Trappers
BC Wildlife Federation
Penticton Fly Fishers
Okanagan Outfitters
Keremeos-Cawston Sportsman Association

Heritage Societies:

Fairview Townsite Society
Osoyoos Museum
Oliver & District Heritage Society
Oliver Museum
Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre

Stakeholders – Agriculture:

BC Grapegrower's Association

Stakeholders – Ranching:

Most ranchers within Park Concept area
Southern Interior Cattlemen's Association
BC Cattlemen's Association
White Lake Stock Association
Southern Plus Feedlot

Stakeholders – Aviation:

Canadian Helicopters
Eclipse Helicopters
Penticton Airport (Manager)

Stakeholders – Forestry:

Lower Similkameen Community
Forest Association
Weyerhaeuser
Gorman Bros. Lumber

Stakeholders –

Mineral Exploration/ Development:

Association for
Mineral Exploration of BC
Okanagan Shuswap
Mineral Exploration Group
Mineral Tenure Holders

Recreation Users:

South Okanagan Soaring Club
South Okanagan Horsewoman's
Association
Mt. Kobau Astronomical Society
Okanagan Astronomical Society
Back Country Horseman's Association
Oliver District Riding Club
Southern Pines Riding Stable
South Okanagan Snowmobile Club
Similkameen Snowmobile Club
BC Snowmobile Federation
South Okanagan ATV Club
ATV/BC Quad Riders Association of BC
BC Off-road Motorcycle Association
South Okanagan Dirt Bike Club

Stakeholders – Utility:

Terasen Gas
Fortis BC
TV Society (CGIV/CHBC)

Appendix 3: Petitions and Surveys

PETITIONS

In early 2005, prior to development of the draft Park Concept, a petition organized by the Grassland Park Review Coalition gathered about 6000 signatures and was presented to MLA Barisoff. This petition opposed the formation of a national park reserve, but favoured implementation and support of the Okanagan Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan and other ongoing management initiatives. Later the same group organized a "no national park" sign campaign encouraging local landowners and residents opposed to the park to erect signs stating their opposition.

Park Supporters (Canada Wilderness Committee, local naturalist clubs, and the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Network) formed a group to support a local national park. The group responded with their own petition seeking signatures from those supporting a national park reserve. Sponsored by the South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Network, the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, a petition with over 19,000 signatures was submitted to the federal government in 2008.

SURVEYS

A 2008 public opinion survey (Species at Risk Public Opinion Survey) sponsored by the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program addressed conservation attitudes more generally and found continuing support for additional conservation efforts. The survey was based on a random telephone survey of 300 Okanagan-Similkameen residents.

Most recently, a random telephone survey was funded by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (Local support for a national park in the Southern Okanagan-Similkameen, McAllister Opinion Research, 2010). 405 respondents in the Southern Okanagan-Similkameen region were asked, "Would you favour or oppose protecting a portion of the South Okanagan-Similkameen in a national park?" The study found that 63% of respondents favoured protecting a portion the South Okanagan-Similkameen in a national park, and 26% opposed protection in a national park.

Would you favour or oppose protecting a portion of the South Okanagan-Similkameen?	
Strongly Favour	43
Somewhat Favour	20
Total Favour	63
Depends/Neutral	4
Somewhat Oppose	8
Strongly Oppose	18
Total Oppose	26
Don't Care/Not Applicable	7

In the last year, key discussions with the ranching community, the science community, park supporters, local/regional government and provincial government agency staff regarding the new, 2010 Park Concept have suggested that perceptions may be shifting with support increasing for development of a national park in the region, based on the new 2010 Park Concept including a smaller footprint and a new approach to livestock grazing.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

**HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF CANADA
AS REPRESENTED BY THE MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT
FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE PARKS CANADA AGENCY
("Canada")**

AND

**HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
AS REPRESENTED BY THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT
("British Columbia")**

RESPECTING

**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL PARK RESERVE IN THE SOUTH
OKANAGAN LOWER SIMILKAMEEN**

WHEREAS in 2003 Canada and British Columbia signed a Memorandum of Understanding respecting the establishment of national park reserves and national marine conservation area reserves in the province of British Columbia which included a commitment to assess the feasibility of establishing a national park reserve in the South Okanagan Lower Similkameen;

WHEREAS in December 2010, the Canada – British Columbia Steering Committee concluded that the establishment of a national park reserve in the South Okanagan Lower Similkameen is feasible;

WHEREAS the Okanagan Nation Alliance has stated a willingness to work with Parks Canada toward protection of ecological and cultural integrity for present and future generations as part of the national park reserve;

WHEREAS the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia have considered and concur with the Steering Committee's recommendations;

THEREFORE the governments of Canada and British Columbia agree to the following:

1.0 NATIONAL PARK RESERVE BOUNDARIES

- 1.1 Canada and British Columbia agree that the boundary for the national park reserve will be consistent with the conceptual boundary depicted on the map in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Canada and British Columbia agree that the national park reserve will be comprised of the following lands:
 - (a) the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area;
 - (b) the Crown lands shown in olive green on the map in Appendix 1;
 - (c) private lands; and
 - (d) existing federal lands, including the Vaseux Lake Migratory Bird Sanctuary and Vaseux Bighorn Wildlife National Wildlife Management Area.
- 1.3 With respect to lands identified under 1.2 (a) and (b), British Columbia agrees to transfer to Canada those lands, including the sub-surface, within the boundary under the terms and conditions to be identified in the national park reserve establishment agreement.
- 1.4 With respect to private lands, these will only be acquired on a willing seller – willing buyer basis.

2.0 NATIONAL PARK RESERVE ESTABLISHMENT AGREEMENT

- 2.1 Canada and British Columbia will negotiate a national park reserve establishment agreement and will strive to complete this agreement within 12 months from the date of the last signature of this memorandum of understanding.
- 2.2 The federal-provincial agreement will include the following:
 - (a) the legal descriptions of lands to be included in the first phase of national park reserve establishment;
 - (b) a list of all encumbrances affecting the land and a strategy for Canada, with the non-financial assistance of British Columbia, to remove the encumbrances, if required for park reserve establishment, over time;
 - (c) the timing for and terms and conditions by which British Columbia will transfer the administration, control and benefit of provincial Crown lands (including the sub-surface and water) which are to be included in the national park reserve;

- (d) the amount of public funds to be expended by Canada to establish, maintain and operate the national park reserve, subject to Parliamentary appropriations;
- (e) the economic initiatives and employment and procurement practices to be undertaken by Canada with respect to the establishment and operation of the national park reserve to benefit, among others, local persons and communities;
- (f) the strategy for the management of the lands within the national park reserve boundary during the transition period, using a combination of federal and provincial legislative tools and land managers, that will allow for protection of the lands and management of uses, before the lands are fully protected under the *Canada National Parks Act*;
- (g) matters respecting which Canada, British Columbia and others may work in partnership with on stewardship of lands adjacent to the national park reserve and in the surrounding area; and
- (h) any other items that the two parties may agree to.

3.0 ACQUISITION OF PRIVATE LANDS

- 3.1 British Columbia agrees that, should Canada purchase privately owned lands on a willing seller - willing buyer basis for inclusion in the national park reserve, British Columbia will, at the discretion of Canada, either maintain, transfer to Canada, or extinguish any subsurface rights held by British Columbia and any provincially authorized grazing rights or water rights associated with the private land.

4.0 INTERIM PROTECTION MEASURES

- 4.1 Before a national park reserve establishment agreement is concluded, and within XX days of signing this agreement, British Columbia will seek approval for interim protection measures such as *Land Act* reserves and no staking reserves on provincial Crown lands that are required to protect the Crown lands from disposition and incompatible uses.
- 4.2 British Columbia agrees to maintain such interim protection measures until such time the lands implicated in 4.1 are scheduled under the *Canada National Parks Act* or otherwise indicated by Canada.

5.0 OKANAGAN NATION

- 5.1 Canada and British Columbia will work together with the Okanagan Nation to design a model of collaboration that will meet all relevant consultation obligations before a national park reserve agreement is finalized.
- 5.2 Canada will continue to consult and collaborate with the Okanagan Nation to build a long term relationship and a model for the establishment and management of a national park reserve that does not fetter or limit the rights, jurisdiction, authority or responsibilities of any party.
- 5.3 Canada will consult with the Okanagan Nation on behalf of British Columbia regarding the proposed interim protection measures and transfer of provincial Crown lands to Canada.

6.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 Canada and British Columbia will jointly determine how best to communicate the results of the feasibility assessment conducted as part of the 2003 Canada-British Columbia Memorandum of Understanding.
- 6.2 Canada and British Columbia will work with the Okanagan Nation and key stakeholders to coordinate communication activities regarding progress towards establishing a national park reserve.
- 6.3 Canada and British Columbia will continue to engage local governments and stakeholders as required.

7.0 AMENDMENTS

- 7.1 This memorandum of understanding may be amended with the mutual written consent of both parties.

8.0 EFFECT OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- 8.1 This Memorandum of Understanding is an expression of the mutual intentions of the parties and is not legally binding on them or enforceable against them.
- 8.2 This Memorandum of Understanding is without prejudice to the outcome of negotiations on a national park reserve establishment agreement

THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING signed by the Governments of Canada and British Columbia at

XXXX on XXX, 2010.

FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA:

**The Honourable Murray Coell
Minister of Environment**

DRAFT

The Honourable Murray Coell

In the presence of

WITNESS

FOR CANADA:

**The Honourable John Baird
Minister of the Environment and
Minister responsible for Parks Canada Agency**

DRAFT

The Honourable John Baird

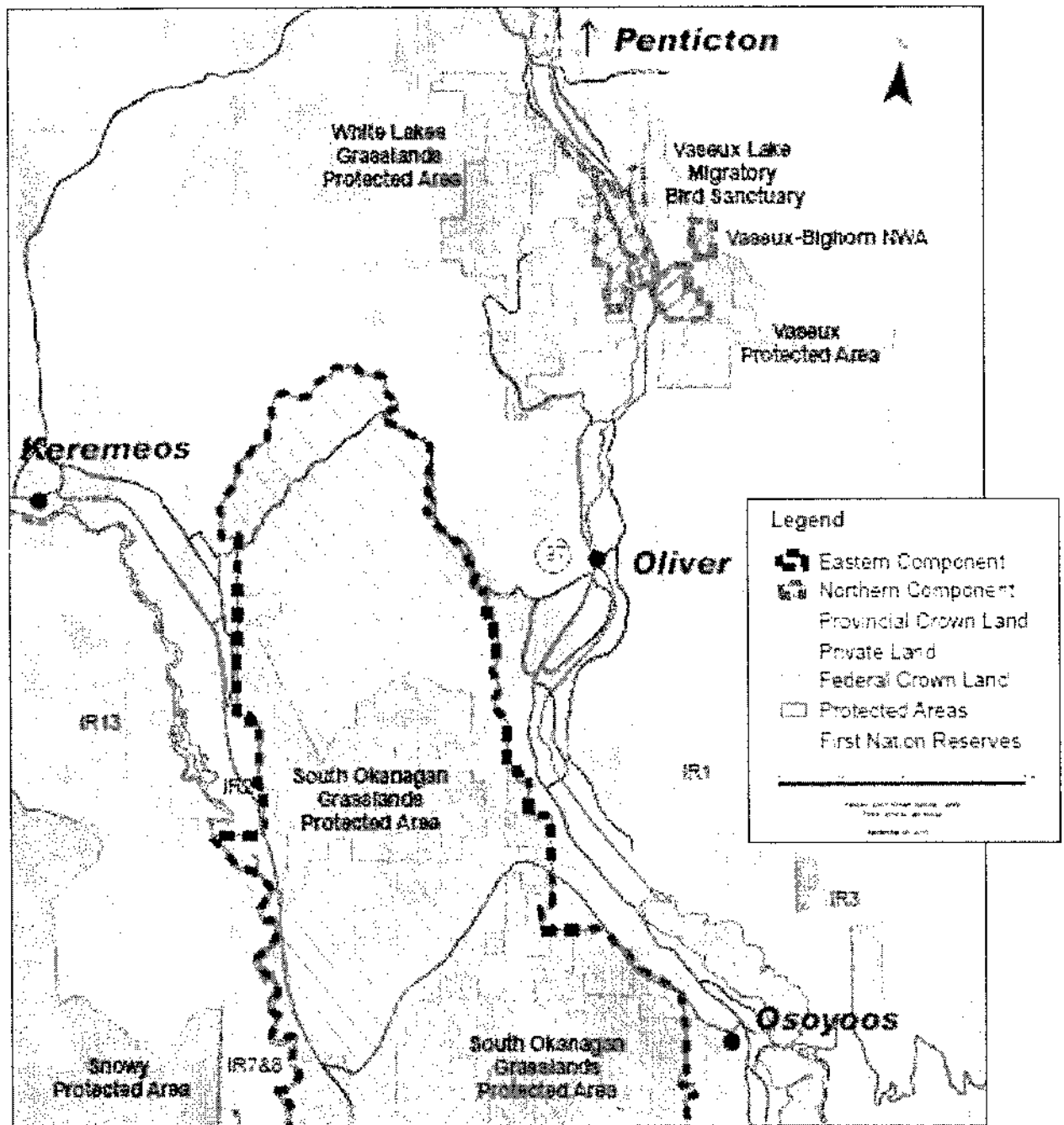
In the presence of

WITNESS

Canada 

APPENDIX 1

BOUNDARY FOR THE INITIAL PHASE OF A NATIONAL PARK RESERVE IN SOUTH OKANAGAN LOWER SIMILKAMEEN



Moving forward with the future Southern Strait of Georgia NMCA Reserve

Report to the Canada/BC Steering Committee

December 21, 2010

Key considerations:

1. The Honourable Murray Coell, Minister of Environment for BC is seeking to advance the feasibility study for the proposed southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) Reserve.
2. The Ministry of Environment (on behalf of the Province of BC) and Parks Canada Agency (on behalf of the Government of Canada) will act as co-leads for the southern Strait of Georgia NMCA initiative.
3. Senior direction and oversight will be provided by Tessa Graham, A/Executive Director, Parks and Protected Areas Division; Steve Langdon, Field Unit Superintendent, Coastal BC; and Richard Carson, Director, Western Establishment Initiatives. Also supporting the initiative will be Brett Hudson, Sr Planner BC Parks; Brian Bawtinheimer, Director, BC Parks; Karen Topelko, Oceans Policy Analyst, BC Parks; and Leah Malkison, Ministry of Natural Resource Operations for the Province of BC as well as Wayne Bourque for Parks Canada.
4. First Nations engagement will be the principal focus for the next six months, however, there is also an identified need for further work on socio-economic opportunities and priorities.

Announcements:

There is a potential for two announcements in the near term:

- i) By late January, Minister Coell and Minister Baird could announce intent to advance the feasibility assessment for the southern Strait of Georgia NMCA Reserve subject to the following:
 - The announcement should emphasize that engagement with First Nations will be the most important priority for the feasibility study in the coming months.
 - The proposed new protected area will enable new opportunities and economic priorities but will also stress the importance of tackling critical issues affecting the ocean waters and habitat in the southern Strait area. This must include a focus on reducing and where possible eliminating pollution, environmental impacts and strengthening fish stocks and restoring future fishing opportunities.
- ii) Highly contingent upon discussions with affected First Nations, by mid-late summer, 2011, both Ministers could seek to announce that the feasibility assessment for an NMCA Reserve in the southern Strait region has concluded and that the Province of BC and Government of Canada will develop an Establishment Agreement leading toward formal establishment in law for the new protected area.

Short Term Actions:

The priority focus for the next month will be engaging First Nations to understand interests and impacts that a proposed NMCA may have.

1. A staff person will be identified to lead the First Nations engagement. There are no staff members within Parks Canada immediately available who have the expertise to support this work. The Province of BC will determine whether an individual with aboriginal expertise could be made available. Parks Canada would consider funding support if a provincial staff member were dedicated to First Nations consultation for the feasibility study.
2. Parks Canada will seek opportunities to identify two or more members of involved First Nations communities who may be available to assist the two governments in a collaborative engagement approach.
3. An initial analysis is required within the next few weeks to propose a process for moving forward. This must recognize the diversity among the nineteen First Nations who may have an interest in the future NMCA Reserve. There are important differences in views and priorities among the First Nations and the engagement process must be sufficiently robust to address these differences.
4. Steps to move forward include:
 - Determining awareness among individual Bands, Nations and Tribal Councils about the NMCA Reserve proposal.
 - Confirming assertions that may be made by the First Nations respecting seabed, title as well as specific asserted rights including fishing under the Douglas Treaty.
 - Evaluating the potential for involvement in development of an Interim Management Plan and other key aspects of the NMCA Reserve.
 - Identifying a candidate to take on the role of Project Manager and re-establishing the Project Team for this initiative. This is not an immediate requirement and steps to move forward with First Nations engagement should be considered as the first priority.

NOTE: First Nations are aware of the proposed NMCA project through modest communications with them over the past 7 years, including an effort last year to determine what their potential consultative needs are. It has not been possible until now, however, to determine a more formal approach to consultations until a defined NMCA proposal was determined.