Parks in British Columbia

Peter J. Dooling, Ph.D.
Editor

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the wilderness experience for visual, acoustic or other intrusions from activities on the adjacent lands poses another serious problem. During the initial boundary-setting process for the park, conservationists lost the proposal to include this buffer zone within the park boundaries. As it now stands, the Tree Farm Licence would have to include a buffer zone. How this is to be achieved remains to be seen. Two basic recommendations were put before the Symposium:

(1) that the participants of the Parks Symposium recommend to Parks Canada that an integrated marine biophysical and cultural data base be prepared for the proposed Pacific Rim National Park (modelled after the Banff and Jasper National Park inventories) to be incorporated into the Park Management Plan upon establishment of the Park.

(2) that the British Columbia government continue to liaise with the forestry company and the three local Indian bands to resolve the land use problems; and that an Advisory Planning Body be established to deal with land use problems (with proposed park boundaries and in adjacent lands) with representation from these two groups in particular, as well as appropriate government agency representatives.

17 NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT ISSUES: KOOTENAY NATIONAL PARK

Author: Larry Halverson, B.Sc.
Park Naturalist, Kootenay National Park
Parks Canada

(Session Reporter: Peter Legg, Federation of British Columbia Naturalists)

Park Setting

Kootenay National Park is located in the Rocky Mountains of southeastern British Columbia. It was established in 1920 through an agreement in which the federal government consented to build a road across the Rockies if the provincial government would grant a five mile strip of land on each side of the road to be used as a National park. So, Kootenay is a long, narrow park, which stretches between the continental divide and the Rocky Mountain Trench. The park is bordered on the north by Banff and Yoho National parks, on the east by Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park and on the south by Radium Hot Springs townsite and private properties. The remainder of Kootenay's boundaries adjoin provincial forestry lands.

Management Direction

Most of Kootenay National Park's 1406 square kilometers is managed in a

wilderness state.[1] Preservation of wildlands is an important role of our National parks (Parks Canada, 1979). There are many wilderness areas outside of National parks, but most of these areas have different land use policies and do not have the protection afforded by National parks. With the constant demand for extraction of natural resources, these unprotected wildlands will become a rarity. The aesthetic and recreational values of wilderness are well documented, (Hendee, 1970; Geist, 1979; Harvey, et al. 1980), and since these benefits cannot be replaced by any other resource, the preservation role of our National parks is essential.

Many of us are aware of the National Parks Act (1930, Sec. 4) which states:

> "The Parks are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to the provisions of this Act and the Regulations, and such parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The paradox in this guiding statement has been recognized for years. How can use be reconciled with the requirement that parks be left unimpaired? Clearly, this is difficult. Wherever human use is a part of natural areas, some impact will occur. The problem becomes one of deciding upon the relative weight to be given to use as opposed to impairment. The challenge is to have management strategies which will protect the resource and at the same time give the visitor a high quality experience (Harvey et al., 1980).

Wilderness preservation was not always an objective of National parks (Nash, 1980). When National parks were first established, there were lots of wildlands and few visitors. In fact, the numbers of visitors were so low that the Federal government conducted advertising campaigns to promote the use of National parks.

Management of Backcountry Hiking

In the past, those visitors who ventured into the backcountry travelled along existing game trails and camped near scenic attractions. The repeated use of these trails eventually created the pattern for today's trail system.

In the early years, with little use of the backcountry, there was not concern for such things as environmental impact. Then, about twenty years ago, long before his appearance in computer games, Packman hit the National parks. From the 1960's on, the numbers of Packmen increased yearly and by the

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[1]Parks Canada defines wilderness as "extensive areas which are good representatives of each of the natural history themes of the park and which are maintained in a wilderness state. Only certain activities requiring limited primitive visitor facilities appropriate to a wilderness experience will be allowed. Limits will be placed on numbers of users. No motorized access will be permitted. Management actions will ensure that visitors are dispersed" (Parks Canada, 1979).

mid-1960's, the popular areas, particularly in the alpine, became more crowded. It was obvious that Packman was causing a noticeable impact on the wilderness--vegetation was trampled, wildlife disturbed and solitude lost.

Managers had to react quickly in order to maintain the mandate of resource protection. Their first response was to manage Packman by imposing regulations to control his numbers and/or restrict his use.

Packman was confused at first because not all National parks reacted in the same way. Banff National Park instituted backcountry zones with different use restrictions for each zone. The restrictions applied to primitive camping (designated or random), party size, use of fires and horse use (Hooper & Zellermeyer, 1983).

In Kootenay National Park, restrictions were applied uniformly throughout the park's backcountry. Packman could no longer pitch his tent wherever he wished. He was asked to camp with other Packmen on tent pads in designated campsites. He could build fires only where fireboxes were provided and hopefully he used the pitprivies. To control the overcrowding of Packmen, Kootenay introduced use limits. Party size could not be greater than ten and numbers of Packmen in the backcountry at any one time were controlled by the number of available sites at each campground. The mechanism for implementing this quota system is a mandatory park use permit. Permits issued to each backcountry party state which campgrounds they will use for each night out (Hooper, 1983).

Today, we see that our direct approach of imposing restrictions and regulations on Packman has helped to fulfill Kootenay National Park's mandate of resource protection and, for most backcountry users, has maintained a quality recreational experience by reducing overcrowded conditions.

However, this "direct management approach creates a situation contrary to the freedom from regimentation which is an integral component of a wildland experience" (Hooper & Zellermeyer, 1983). There are an undetermined number of people who avoid backcountry pursuits in National parks because of these restrictions. At recent hearings on planning our four mountain parks (Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay), the public indicated that "National parks need to provide a range of recreational opportunities in the backcountry" and "management should strive to protect both the land and the spirit of wilderness in the backcountry" (Parks Canada, 1983). So, it seems that Kootenay's backcountry management technique has been insensitive to some of Packman's needs, by taking away his freedom of choice and limiting his recreational opportunities.

It is, therefore, important to consider alternative strategies for managing wildlands in our National parks. "Where possible, management approaches must seek to protect resources and ensure user satisfaction by means which do not defeat the very essence of the recreational experience" (Hooper & Zellermeyer, 1983).

Management Considerations

Parks Canada Mandate and Policy

The mandate consists of the protection of heritage resources and providing a range of high quality recreation experiences.

Policy direction with respect to backcountry is provided in the National Park Zoning System, backcountry areas are zoned as Class II Wilderness. In this zone, an emphasis is placed on the resource protection end of the dual mandate. Class II areas are extensive tracks of land which contain good examples of the park's natural resources. These areas should be relatively undisturbed by man. Visitor activities and facilities should be limited to those appropriate for a "Wilderness Experience." No motorized access will be permitted and limits may be placed on numbers of users.

Existing Backcountry Use

(a) Visitor Use. Most backcountry use consists of day trips. But because day use visitors are not required to obtain a permit, actual numbers are not known. However, some special studies indicate up to 93 percent of backcountry visits are day use, i.e. Lake Louise.

(b) Use Distribution (Uneven use of backcountry areas in space and time). Some areas are promoted more than others, inequalities in seasonal distribution and travel is restricted until snow melts. Use levels peak in July and August, particularly on long weekends, physical site capacities are exceeded and visitors feel crowded and dissatisfied. Users inevitably travel to same attractive easy access sites, (these areas are limited.)

Overnight Use

(a) Use Records

Overnight Use - Kootenay National Park

Site	Daily Quota	Total Tent/Site		User Night/Site	
		1983	1982	1983	1982
Kaufman Lake	6	67	75	149	135
Tokumm Valley	6	11	30	19	46
Ottertail Pass	6	5	8	12	11
Helmet/Ochre	6	40	45	98	75
Helmet Falls	18	303	400	700	423
Tumbling/Ochre	6	64	71	149	124
Tumbling Creek	18	434	486	999	590
Numa Creek	18	239	276	569	433
Floe Lake	12	378	409	888	717
Floe Switchbacks	6	16	84	40	151
Verdant Creek	6	14	1	29	3
Dolly Varden	6	1	6	1	12
Fay Hut	10 persons	94	187	111	230

(b) User Preferences. A number of studies have been undertaken to determine the expectations and preferences of summer backcountry users in the mountain parks. Findings include: (1) hikers prefer minimum levels of regimentation and favour some random camping areas; (2) hikers are well educated and receptive to new ideas; (3) hikers do not prefer to encounter large horse parties or horse camps; (4) hikers generally favour limited facility development; (5) many hikers are dissatisfied at the popular campgrounds because of resource impacts and levels of crowding; (6) hikers often make repeat trips to the mountain parks; (7) important factors affecting the choice of hiking areas are (in order): natural landscape and scenic values, trail length and distance between major attractions, previous knowledge of the area, the desire to visit an area for the first time and opportunities for solitude; (8) the mean size of a party for all non-outfitted backcountry use is three persons and the mean length of stay is 2.5 nights.

These characteristics vary considerably by the area visited. Hikers to popular areas are quite different in their levels of experience and expectations than visitors to more remote areas.

(c) Use Trends and Projections. Backcountry trail use increased significantly until the mid 1970's. It seems that the period of maximum growth rate has passed and use levels stabilized at 80--85 percent of the peak. Research findings in the United States suggest a continued growth in wildland recreation use.

We expect that as park use increases, backcountry use will likely increase at an equal rate. It is estimated that there will be a 10 to 15 percent increase in backcountry use over the next 10 years.

(d) Visitor Party Origin Records

	Origin	Permits	1983	1982
1.	Calgary	244	42%	48%
2.	Other Alberta Locations	118	21%	22%
	TOTAL ALBERTA	362	63%	70%
3.	British Columbia	62	11%	10%
4.	Other Canadian Provinces/Territories	43	8%	8%
5.	U.S.A.	93	16%	8%
6.	Other Countries	12	2%	4%
		210	37%	30%

Visitor Management Techniques

Visitor management techniques fall into two categories, direct controls and indirect influences:

(a) Direct Controls. Regulate Visitors Behavior.

Use Restrictions - apply uniformly throughout Kootenay National Park backcountry.

- camping must occur at designate sites and fires are allowed only where fireboxes are provided.

Use Limits
- party size not greater than ten.
- rationing is based on daily quota of tent sites at each campground.
- mandatory use permit (issued from Parks Canada offices and information centres).
- 35 percent of sites may be reserved.

Advantages
- restrictive measures are easily imposed.
- use permits control quotas and provide visitors contact with park staff--to distribute more information. (i.e., bear problems).
- most users like the permit system because it guarantees campsites and uncrowded conditions.

Problems
- lack of consistency among the Four Mountain Parks in the kinds of restrictions imposed--confuses user.
- limits the "freedom" aspect of wilderness.
- imposed restrictions requires that (1) users are aware; (2) on-site enforcement.
- use limits based on the physical capacity of primitive campsites.
- inconvenience for user to pick up permits.

(b) Indirect Influences. Modify Behavior and Minimize Regimentation.

Site Management
- Trails, campsites and sheltered accommodation are part of backcountry site management techniques.
- important in determining use patterns.
- to reduce impairment by (1) concentrating use at hardened sites; (2) dispersing use away from fragile and heavy used areas.

Trails
- 250 kilometres of trails currently exist.

Primitive Camps
- 12, typically numbered tent pads, pit privy, firebox and wood.
- spaced to reflect daily travel distances and desire to camp near scenic attractions.

Shelters
- 1 Fay Hut.

Problems
- poor trail design.
- use of designated campsites is mandatory where use levels are virtually negligible.
- some designated sites are inappropriately situated.
- regardless of the resource capability, the extent of environmental impact will be largely dependent on camping practices of hikers.

Information and Education. Kootneay National Park's approach of informing hikers is through: (1) published information--books and trail guides; (2) park staff; (3) education--canned slide programs.

Range of Opportunities Concept

Visitors seek a range of opportunities asssociated with backcountry areas. These opportunities appeal to different types of users. The concept is based on recognizing that some people seek solitude, while others enjoy the opportunity to meet other hikers, some like the comfort of backcountry accommodation, while others avoid these conveniences.

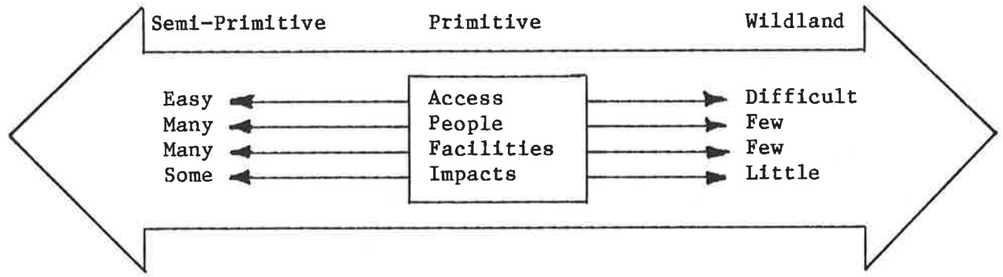
Factors that determine the range of opportunities available to backcountry visitors include: (1) the type and standard of access; (2) the nature and level of contact with other visitors; (3) the nature and standard of facilities (trails to commercial lodges); and (4) acceptable levels of resource impairment.

Parks Canada's backcountry falls into three opportunities or use areas:

Semi-primitive. Opportunities associated with areas having easy access, high levels of contact and facilities such as campsites and perhaps shelters. They are typically the heavily used areas.

Primitive. Areas with less evidence of man than in semi-primitive. At present, this is what Kootenay National Park is offering.

Wildland. Opportunities associated with low levels of use and areas that are esssentially free of man-made intrusions.



Workshop Prescription

During the workshop, I would like to discuss some of these alternatives, including: zoning wilderness areas for various activities and experiences, and using information and visitor education as a management tool to minimize impact. I would also like to hear what you think about the way Kootenay National Park manages its backcountry hiking. What type of backcountry do you want to see in Kootenay National Park? Should we provide all things to all

people? Are some types of recreation more appropriate than others? What level of use should we emphasize? What role should Kootenay National Park play in providing recreational opportunites in a regional context?

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Kootenay National Park Workshop Session Report

Mr. Halverson described the park and outlined the mandate of the National Parks Act which states, in effect, that the National parks are for the use of the people of Canada and that they are to be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired. Mr. Halverson then pointed out the dilemma facing the park management. How do the people of Canada make use of the parks and still leave them unimpaired--i.e., in a wilderness state as they were when they were established? The management of Kootenay National Park has approached this problem by putting restrictions on use. Entry permits required, hiking confined to trails, camping only at designated sites, limit to party size, limited number at each camp site and so on. Many users seem to be satisfied with this but on the other hand many more feel that these restrictions detract from the wilderness experience.