Recommendations

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Executive Summary

On the banks of the North Saskatchewan River in west central Alberta, Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site invites visitors to experience one of the pivotal eras in Canadian history. The site’s dramatic setting, preserved archaeological resources, dynamic programs, and memorable Visitor Centre strongly connect people to this special place. The Hudson’s Bay Company and North West Company managed fur trade posts on this location for much of the 19th century. David Thompson — celebrated explorer, trader and surveyor — used it as a base of explorations through the Rocky Mountains. The historic confluence area of the North Saskatchewan and the Clearwater Rivers has been an important gathering place for Indigenous people for countless generations. For this reason it was identified as a strategic location, and the Companies built posts hoping to capitalize on Indigenous knowledge of the area and opportunities for trade.

The site encompasses various archaeological remains of: pre-contact Indigenous sites; several trading posts built and occupied between 1799 and 1875; and an important fur trade era burial ground. Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site enjoys strong support from the region, including close ties to local Métis and First Nations groups, local associations and municipal and regional governments. The last management plan was approved in 2007. Based on direction in the 2007 plan, significant improvements have been made to reduce the threat of erosion along the riverbank, to work in partnership with others to promote the site and to expand visitor opportunities especially in the area of new overnight accommodation (Trapper Tents, Heritage Tipis and a RV parking area).

The new management plan will focus on three proposed key strategies:

**Key Strategy 1: Employing an integrated approach to protect and manage archaeological sites, viewscapes, natural landscape features and contemporary assets.**

The strategy addresses the need to work collaboratively with industry operators to minimize their activities’ disturbances to the site’s cultural and natural resources and to the sensory values such as sound and smell that contribute to a positive visitor experience. A key element of the strategy is to integrate cultural resource management with visitor opportunities in ways that inspire memorable visitor experiences while contributing to the long-term protection of the site’s landscape, which includes natural landscape features, viewscapes, assets and archaeological sites.

**Key Strategy 2: Strengthening relationships with Métis and First Nations peoples and organizations**

This strategy focuses both on nurturing existing relationships and establishing new relationships, in order to identify opportunities for increased collaborative activities and to demonstrate leadership in reconciliation.

**Key Strategy 3: Enriching and creating new visitor experiences**

This strategy aims at enriching the visitor experience through planning, new program offers and diversification of partnerships with interested people, organizations and groups. Parks Canada will work with new and longstanding partners — such as the Confluence Heritage Society, First Nation groups, the Town of Rocky Mountain House, the County of Clearwater, and Métis Local 845 — to enhance the protection of cultural and natural resources, share stories and knowledge, increase visitation, and position the site as an authentic regional attraction and gathering place.
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1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency’s mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency’s vision:

*Canada’s treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.*

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The *Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada’s accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency’s mandate.

This management plan will replace the 2007 Management Plan for Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site, which provided management direction for resource protection, visitor experience and heritage presentation. Since the implementation of that plan, extensive work has been undertaken to protect archaeological resources and upgrade assets in response to a major 2013 flood of the site. Major projects were completed to stabilize a section of the bank of the North Saskatchewan River and to provide facilities to enhance the overnight accommodation offer (Trappers Tents, Heritage Tipis and a new RV parking area). Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site has also worked with a number of longstanding and new partners to diversity and enhance the experience and promote the site through special events.

The proposed plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site in years to come.
Map 1: Regional Setting
Map 2: Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site
2.0 Significance of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site

Archaeological research identifies that the confluence areas of the North Saskatchewan and Clearwater Rivers was occupied and used for thousands of years by Indigenous peoples prior to establishment of the fur trade forts. In 1799, at the junction of these two rivers, the North West Company (NWC) built Rocky Mountain House fur trade post hoping to attract trade from the Kutenai First Nations residing west of the mountains, and to establish a base of exploration for new fur trade territories. In that same year, the competing Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) established Acton House nearby. The posts were strategically situated in close proximity to the hunting grounds of the Northern Blackfoot tribes, the Piikani (Peigan), Kainai (Blood), and Siksika who became the principal traders.

For several years explorer and map-maker David Thompson lived at Rocky Mountain House with his wife Charlotte Small, an accomplished translator and Métis hunter in her own right. From this location, Thompson was determined to launch his expeditions across the Rocky Mountains, and thus to fulfill the North West Company’s dream of a practical route to the Pacific Ocean and China. In 1807, he went upriver from Rocky Mountain House and crossed the mountains through Howse Pass to the Columbia River. But the Piikani resisted this push across the mountains, as it threatened their own dominance of the trans-mountain trade in that region. In 1811 Thompson’s foray through Athabasca Pass allowed the traders to bypass the Piikani. The Piikani responded to the incursions on their trade by increasing their beaver trapping, providing a new basis for their relationship with the trading companies, which amalgamated under the Hudson’s Bay Company name in 1821.

Circumstances changed again by 1830, however, as American traders stabilized relations with the Nitsitapi (Blackfoot speaking peoples) and built trading posts close to the heart of Piikani territory in what is now known as Southern Alberta. The loss of the lucrative Piikani trade relegated Rocky Mountain House's status to that of seasonal outpost, manned every winter by traders from Edmonton. Nevertheless, the post found some success as a boat building centre, and played host to numerous travelers, explorers, artists and missionaries during the middle of the 19th century.

After the West was annexed by Canada in 1870, and farming and ranching began to develop on the prairies, Rocky Mountain House fur trade post was eventually abandoned (in 1875) in favour of posts closer to burgeoning settlements and North-West Mounted Police outposts like Fort Calgary. After the fur trade posts were abandoned in 1875 and before the Brierley family purchased the land in 1924 from the Hudson Bay Company, the location was used by the Métis.

The above information is based on the Commemorative Integrity Statement and historical research conducted to date. The Indigenous perspective on the history of the site is lacking and needs to be addressed through Indigenous engagement and collaboration.
The Historic Site and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) recommended the designation of Rocky Mountain House as a national historic site in 1926. In 1968, the HSMBC further recommended that a national historic park be established. Accordingly, land purchases were made in the 1970s. In 1978, a 541 acre national historic park opened to the public with a new visitor centre and trails to the four fort sites. The Commemorative Intent of the site is expressed in the following statement: “Rocky Mountain House is of national historic significance because of its role in the historic fur trade; its association with David Thompson and exploration towards the westward; and its relationship with the Blackfoot peoples (Nitsitapi), particularly the Peigan (Piikani). The designation encompasses the trading establishments built and occupied between 1799 and 1875 on the west bank of the North Saskatchewan River, including a fur trade era burying ground. The extensive in-situ archeological remains of the four forts, the fur trade era burial ground and the natural setting along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River all contribute to the integrity of the site’s heritage value.

3.0 Planning Context

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is a large scale and complex landscape that consists of the underlying physical features of the natural landscape, such as the North Saskatchewan River with its broad floodplain and associated river terraces, upon which the fur trade posts, trails and other cultural features have been built over time. The interplay between the site’s North Saskatchewan riverside setting, its nationally significant cultural resources and its preserved setting provide meaning and context to this special place. All of these elements work together to provide an intact and evocative landscape where visitors come to imagine and appreciate the rich history of the fur trade at Rocky Mountain House during the 1799-1875 period.

Within the region and community of Rocky Mountain House, the site has experienced a resurgence of interest and relevancy since approval of the 2007 management plan. A number of factors have contributed to this, including strong community support, increased promotions and collaboration with the tourism industry, new Indigenous cultural tourism products, use of the site for behind the scenes reconciliation activities and the hosting of a range of celebratory events. The 2017 “David Thompson Country Tourism Strategy” identifies the national historic site as a key attraction. The camping offer became available on the Parks Canada Reservation System as of January 11th, 2018. It is anticipated that this will result in a significant increase in awareness of the national historic site and improve its status as a destination location.

As of 2018, the site is open seven days a week from May to Labour Day and four days a week from Labour Day to end of September. A significant part of the programming is targeted at school groups. Over 12 % of the site’s annual visitation is comprised of students (3000) who spend a half day or more participating in experiential activities between May and June. Since 2015, school programs and teacher training workshops are increasingly requesting Indigenous teachings. In 2016, 600 teachers spent time at the site participating in reconciliation training. The program was coordinated by Parks Canada staff in conjunction with the school division’s Indigenous wellness team. July through September is focused on partner led interpretive programs, special events and camping.
Two main interpretive trails take visitors through the archaeological remains of the four forts. Visitors can see a display herd of bison. Interpretive panels and props are located throughout the site including a York Boat, a children's Play Fort, a demonstration tipi, a Métis camp and day use picnic areas.

Heritage Camping is an overnight experience on the shores of the North Saskatchewan River in six Métis trapper tents, three tipi accommodations and two trap line cabins. Front country camping for 24 RV/tent trailers and 12 walk-in tenting sites is also available. Camping reservation trends at the site show a growing interest in the Heritage Camping, with the Heritage Camping product being a modest but unique cornerstone of the camping offer.

The national historic site operations is supported through a number of long standing partnerships that are integral to its success and authenticity. The main partners, Métis Local 845 and Confluence Heritage Society, have been increasing their profile as deliverers of cultural programming. Since 1984, the Confluence Heritage Society (CHS) have been a significant partner for Parks Canada. The CHS collects entry fees and operates the Trading Post gift shop in the Visitor Centre, they run the David Thompson puppet show as an aspect of the site’s daily offer, and promote a number of reservable programs. The relationship with the CHS is supported by a Licence of Occupation and Memorandum of Understanding.

The Métis Local 845 is a longstanding partner delivering cultural programming at the site. Their contribution includes regular daily programs and special events featuring traditional Métis skills and crafts. The relationship with the Métis Local 845 is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding and a Contract for Services.

In 2016, the Indigenous group Kis Sai Wah Toe Tat Towin Society (KSWTTWS) meaning “Coming together and taking care of one another in humbleness and wellness” and the site entered into a 3 year Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU supports collaborative activities focused on reconciliation including the Sacred Hoop of 100 Eagle Feathers movement, the creation of community healing lodges and various initiatives with Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers and youth.

**Key Issues and Opportunities**

**Impacts of Industrial Development**

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site sits in the heart of one of Alberta’s premier oil and gas fields. Oil and gas activity first started near the historic fort sites in the late 1960s before Parks Canada acquired the property. When Parks Canada purchased the property from a local land owner, encumbrances that were negotiated by the previous owner related to an existing gas plant and buried pipelines entering it, came with the purchase. While the bulk of the gas plant is located on federal lease land, these agreements allow owners of the gas plant and pipeline companies to operate in perpetuity. An extensive network of pipelines cross the site to the plant. Workers building the original gas plant uncovered the Seafort Burial Site in 1969. The interred remains of 13 individuals were recovered in 1969 and one more was found in 1971. In 1979, three additional burials were impacted by construction. Construction was stopped and during investigations nine additional graves were located. All remains and associated burial
artifacts recovered during the archaeological work have been re-interred within the NHS, a short distance from their original location.

A large deposit of gravel is located immediately west and north of the boundary of the site. While large scale mining has not started, it is expected to start in the near future. Dust and noise will be a significant concern near campground facilities and interpretive trails at the southwestern corner of the site and near the entrance to the site.

Large scale natural flood events on the North Saskatchewan River and fluctuating water levels from the Bighorn Dam, approximately 120 km upstream, cause periodic flooding and ice dams. In the past, releases of water from the dam upstream have posed an ongoing concern for the protection of assets and intact archaeological resources near the riverbank. Parks staff work closely with Trans-Alta Utilities in monitoring water releases. A large scale flood of the North Saskatchewan River in 2013 resulted in major damage to visitor facilities and cultural resources.

Recent events such as the flood of 2013 necessitated a major project to stabilize a key section of the bank with large boulders to protect resources. This has impacted visual aspects of the cultural landscape. Since 2013 Parks Canada has prioritised the growth of camping facilities in the western section of the site which is directly adjacent to the archaeological site of Acton House (1799-1835). Though the proximity of camping to the archaeological site enhances the sense of authenticity of the visitor experience and better positions the site as a cultural tourism destination, it will be important to carefully manage the camping operations to ensure it does not have an impact on the sites historic viewsapes.

Improving Visitation and Increasing Awareness
The site is part of a number of attractions in the vicinity of the town of Rocky Mountain House but it has not been positioned as a destination on its own. Recent improvements in visitor experience products, and renewed special event programs such as Canada Day have resulted in a 30% increase in visitation over the last five years. Looking forward, the market growth strategy and tourism trends identify a strong opportunity to connect the site’s unique visitor experience offer with Canadians living beyond the local community. The focus will be on the independent travel market and the incentive to make the trip a destination by promoting heritage camping facilities and Indigenous tourism experiences.

Improving Campground Access
Current access to the campground is on a county-maintained gravel road that exits Highway 11a approximately 1.6 km west of the main entrance to the site. The total distance between the main entrance to the NHS off Highway 11a and the campground is 5.8 kms. Sections of the campground access road located immediately adjacent to the North Saskatchewan River are susceptible to flooding and possible closure, which would close off access to and from the campground. Neighbours have raised concerns with dust on the road as use of the campground has increased over the last two years. Construction of a new 1 km road extension on a provincial road allowance on the west side of the site would provide a more direct connection to the campground in the southwest corner of the site, and integrate the access with the main entrance to the National Historic Site.
4.0 Vision

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is a popular cultural destination where visitors learn about the fur trade, how it led to David Thompson’s Rocky Mountain exploration and the role it played in the complex relationship between European traders and Indigenous Peoples past and present. Visitors connect with Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site through the evocative landscape along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, high profile presence of Indigenous partners and programs, popular school programs, community driven special events and a unique camping offer. Indigenous communities advise, influence and contribute to the site’s public programs during the summer months, and access the site on a year round basis for reconciliation and traditional practices on the land. Strategies are in place to ensure the site’s cultural and natural resources are secure and safeguarded and the reasons for its national historic significance are effectively communicated. The spirit of cooperation is strong between Parks Canada, partners, neighbouring land owners, industry representatives and local government.

5.0 Proposed Key Strategies

Key Strategy 1: Employing an integrated approach to protect and manage archaeological sites, viewscapes, natural landscape features and contemporary assets.

The strategy emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural resource management with the facilitation of visitor opportunities that inspire memorable experiences, but also contributes to the long term protection of the site’s sublime cultural and natural setting and archaeological sites. This strategy also addresses the ongoing need to work collaboratively with industry leaders to minimize disturbance of their activities on cultural and natural resources. Riverbank erosion during large flood events has been an important issue for the site for a long time. The impacts of climate change (e.g., extreme events) is a real concern for this site. The strategy is aimed at monitoring and mitigating where necessary impacts if threats are identified.

Objective 1.1
Archaeological sites, viewscapes and the landscape are protected.

Targets

- A cultural resource strategy, including a landscape maintenance and vegetation component, is produced by 2020. Traditional knowledge and Indigenous participation is integrated in the strategy.
- Measures are implemented from the plan on an annual basis to safeguard the condition of archaeological sites viewscapes and the landscape as well as the condition of historical objects and archaeological artifacts on display in the Visitor Centre.
- Measures are in place to safeguard archaeological artifacts in storage.
- Monitoring of the riverbank is undertaken on a regular basis and an annual report is completed to assess the stability of the riverbank and the condition of threatened archaeological sites.
- A strategy in the first few years of the plan is developed for citizen engagement to assist in the inventory and understanding of archeological resources and the values significance of the landscape through citizen science.

**Objective 1.2**

Industry operators (e.g., oil, gas, gravel extraction, propane storage) actively involved on and adjacent to the site understand its purpose and work with Parks Canada in ways that complement the national historic site. Existing Parks Canada federal requirements and processes related to reviewing impacts of projects on sites resources are followed for all maintenance or development of industry facilities on the site.

**Targets**
- By 2021, a document outlining protocols and guidelines for environmental review, cultural resource impact assessment and protection of the fur trade era burial ground is developed with operators of the gas plant facilities located within the national historic site.
- Site staff work with the County of Clearwater and gravel pit operators to ensure visual screening and other measures are in place to buffer new gravel pits immediately outside site boundaries.
- All lease, right-of-way, licence of occupation and related agreements that exist between industry and Parks Canada are reviewed and updated when their terms dictate review or renewal. When industry approach Parks Canada regarding maintenance or development of facilities, these requests are used as opportunities to work through any outstanding agreements or lapses in terms within existing agreements.
- Gas plant operators continue to submit an annual groundwater monitoring report to Parks Canada to ensure no downstream contamination to national historic site lands.

**Objective 1.3**

Priority items are identified in multi-year investment plans in order to ensure that maintenance of contemporary assets is addressed in a timely fashion.

**Targets**
- Contemporary assets are rated as good condition within 10 years of plan approval.
- By 2020, a fire sprinkler system is installed in the visitor reception centre.
- By 2020, repairs to the Visitor Centre washroom, the Play Fort Corner bastions, the bison view platform and trails and bridges are completed.
- By 2021, repair of the existing visitor centre water system (including chlorination system) is completed.
- By 2021, the security fencing around the maintenance compound is improved to be more visually sympathetic to the sense of place.
### Key Strategy 2: Strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples and organizations

The strategy focuses on nurturing existing relationships and establishing new relationships which demonstrate leadership in reconciliation. Relationship with Indigenous and Métis Peoples establish the framework for collaborative initiatives and opportunities to achieve outcomes based on the Truth and Reconciliation calls to “…integrate Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada’s national heritage and history.”

Objectives and targets to be developed through discussion with Indigenous nations.

**Objective 2.1**

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is a gathering place for reconciliation and the sharing of Indigenous cultures.

**Targets**

- The site continues to partner with Métis Local 845 and with the Indigenous group Kis Sai Wah Toe Tat Towin Society (KSWTTWS) on the delivery of cultural programs and reconciliation activities.
- On an annual basis, at least 2 events and/or programs are facilitated in partnership with Indigenous groups.
- The site remains open to the establishment of temporary cultural structures related to on-site activities (e.g., sweat lodge).
- Options to establish an Indigenous advisory circle or forum for ongoing dialogue and relationship building are explored and should the exploration be positive, implemented.
- The site develops a collaborative partnership with the Rocky Mountain House Native Friendship Centre by 2019.
- The site works with School Divisions to develop and deliver professional development programs for teachers on reconciliation and traditional knowledge.

**Objective 2.2**

This objective focuses on working with Indigenous Peoples to build relationships that demonstrate leadership in reconciliation and contribute to collaborative initiatives and opportunities for strengthening diversity and inclusion.

Target to be developed through discussion with Indigenous nations.

- Through interpretation, exhibits and advisory roles, the historic relationship of the Nitsitapi people particularly the Piikani to the site is acknowledged.
- Working collaboratively with Indigenous communities, research is undertaken to strengthen understanding of the Indigenous significance of this place and a multi-voice perspective on the fur trade era.
Key Strategy 3: Enriching and creating new visitor experiences

The strategy focuses on enriching visitor experience opportunities through planning, new program offers and partnerships with people, organizations and groups who value the national historic site. Visitors will be inspired by an enriched offer and will be encouraged to come often to attend special events, to participate in hands on activities, to see the daily offer, to stay overnight and to simply enjoy and relax at this special place.

Objective 3.1
Visitors are inspired by the features that make Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site a unique visitor destination.

Targets
- By 2021, a new Visitor Experience Strategy is developed. The strategy is built around the site’s unique features, partnership engagement, Indigenous engagement, target market research, historical and archaeological research and innovative interpretive methods. Full implementation will be achieved by 2022.
- In the first years of the new strategy, approaches are explored for more volunteer engagement including international voluntourism and student researchers in relation to target market research, historic and archeological research and innovative interpretive methods.
- Archaeological specimens and historical objects in storage are assessed to evaluate opportunities for visitor experience, public appreciation and understanding by 2021.
- At least 90% of visitors leave with a deeper appreciation of the role of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site in the history of Canada.

Objective 3.2
The sense of arrival to the national historic site is improved including the potential to integrate the campground access with the main access to the National Historic Site.

Targets
- By 2019, directional signage to the site is updated.
- A feasibility study to improve and shorten road access to the campground through construction of a new 1 km extension of the section of road on a provincial road allowance immediately west of the site is completed by 2020 in consultation with neighbours, stakeholders and Indigenous groups. The study investigates cost-share options with the County of Clearwater and industry representatives and contains a scoping assessment of archaeological and environmental impacts.

Objective 3.3
Exhibits, programming and visitor experience opportunities resonate with key market segments inspiring first visits and repeat visitation.

Targets
- More people volunteer with the Confluence Heritage Society over 2017/18 levels.
- Within ten years, at least 90% of visitors enjoy their visit.
- Within five years, 90% of visitors are satisfied and/or very satisfied with their overall visit.
- A feasibility study of constructing a “climb through time” playground is completed by 2021.
- Camping increases by 20% over 2016/17 levels by 2023.
- The site offers two “learn to camp” opportunities per year.
- Enhanced reservable experiences identified in the 2017 Activities Guide resonate with target markets and create a new revenue stream for the site.
- Within the first years of the new plan, specific promotional strategies are developed to reach visitors from Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer focused on markets identified in the Visitor Experience Strategy.
- By 2023, a refresh of the main exhibits and on-site interpretation is undertaken.
- Key artifacts and objects of public interest from the archaeological collection in storage are assessed and incorporated where feasible into learning opportunities and exhibits.

Objective 3.4
Parks Canada continues to work in close partnership with community partners to protect, present and promote Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site.

Targets
- Confluence Heritage Society (CHS) continues in its role as one of the key deliverers of the interpretation program. They continue to operate the point of sale and gift shop.
- Parks Canada is an ex-officio member of the CHS and Métis Local 845 boards.
- Parks Canada works with Alberta Provincial Parks, Alberta Resource Conservation and Alberta Culture and Tourism relating to archaeological management issues, fire protection, prevention and public safety.
- Collaboration with school divisions results in 3000 students attending on site programs annually.

Objective 3.5
The site is positioned as a high profile destination of the David Thompson Tourism corridor strategy. Communities collaborate with Parks Canada to develop, implement and market integrated and exciting cultural tourism experiences through the spring to fall.

Targets
- Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is profiled in regional marketing and media on a consistent basis.
- The Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site social media membership increases by 15%/year.
- Parks Canada works in collaboration with other Central Alberta and David Thompson Country tourism organizations to cross promote the national historic site.
- More visitors come more frequently, stay longer and include the site in their itinerary. By 2028, there is a 30% increase in visitation over 2016/17 levels.
- Parks staff collaborate with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) to enhance how Indigenous stories can be told in their own voice at the site.
- A minimum of one commercial tour operator adds Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site to their itinerary by 2021.

6.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and on cultural resources. A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was conducted for Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site Management Plan pursuant to the 2010 “Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals” (CEA Agency/Privy Council Office 2010). Strategic environmental assessment provides an opportunity to identify broad and unintended impacts of proposed management actions resulting from a proposed policy, plan or program, including the cumulative environmental impacts of multiple activities. Strategic environmental assessment also informs the subsequent assessment of related projects.

The spatial scope of the SEA included areas within the boundary of Rocky Mountain National Historic Site, and the temporal scope was a period of ten years from the date of plan approval, at which time the plan will be reviewed. The resources considered to be Valued Components are mainly the cultural resources, as well as the riverbank, the bison herd, wetlands and species at risk and their relevant habitat. Visitor experience resources including the various facilities are also important resources considered in the assessment.

Providing industry operators with protocols and a clear set of guidelines for environmental/cultural resource review is a very positive step in ensuring consistent application of conservation principles and should help improve the understanding of the values of the site and relations in general.

The inclusion of an environmental/cultural impacts scoping exercise in the access road feasibility study is an excellent step towards protecting resources that could potentially be adversely affected by road construction. This approach allows for early identification of potential risks to resources, and can be an effective early start to the impact assessment process for the project.

A significant positive effect of the management plan will be to expose Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site to many more visitors, improving awareness and appreciation of the historic value of the site. Enhanced stability and conservation of the resources at these sites will contribute to the mandate of the Agency and overall quality of the visitor experience, as will improvements to contemporary visitor facilities. Any potential negative environmental effects from increased visitation can be mitigated through the use of existing policies and instruments and by carefully managing visitor use of the areas.

Project-level impact assessment will be able to mitigate any potential adverse impacts from individual projects resulting from this plan. If the appropriate mitigation measures are applied, there are no important adverse environmental effects anticipated from
implementation of the management plan. The overall environmental effects of the strategies, objectives and targets of the plan are expected to be positive.