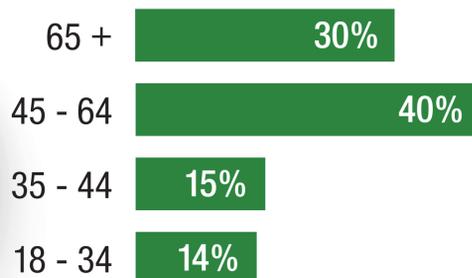


What we heard: background

Summary of input and feedback provided by the public and key stakeholders during the consultation and engagement process on the proposed national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen area. The consultation period was from December 10, 2018 to March 15, 2019, and involved the following components:

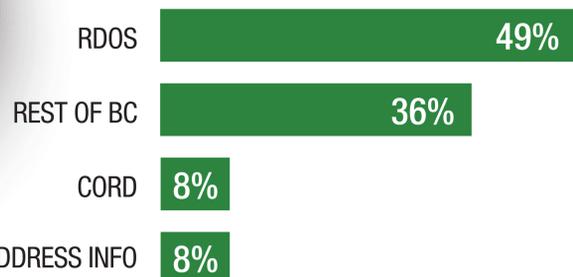
- **In-person and conference call presentations with stakeholder and membership organizations within the vicinity of the proposed national park reserve:** reached 627 individuals through 39 in person and/or conference call sessions.
- **“Pin the Map” exercise:** members of the public were encouraged on the “Let’s Talk South Okanagan-Similkameen” website to pin their activities on a map of the working national park reserve boundary: 146 pins were plotted, of which 116 were inside the boundary and 30 were outside of it.
- **Public consultation survey:** 2,848 surveys, of which 2,488 were directly completed online at the “Let’s Talk South Okanagan-Similkameen” website and 360 were sent in via mail and email.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



- The bulk of respondents (92%) live in the province of BC.
- One-half (49%) reside in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS), 8% in Central Okanagan Regional District and over one-third (36%) in the rest of BC and other areas.
- Remaining 8% is spread out between Alberta (3%), Ontario (2%), the rest of Canada (2%) and the United States (1%).

Areas of Residence



RESPONDENT SELF-CATEGORIZATION

Respondents were asked to describe themselves in one or more categories from nine provided in the survey (or write in their own category).

53%
Over one-half (53%) categorize themselves as a local non-Indigenous resident



29%
say they are a non-local member of the general public



15% are business-oriented



identifying themselves as a business
8%



or part of the tourism/hospitality industry
7%

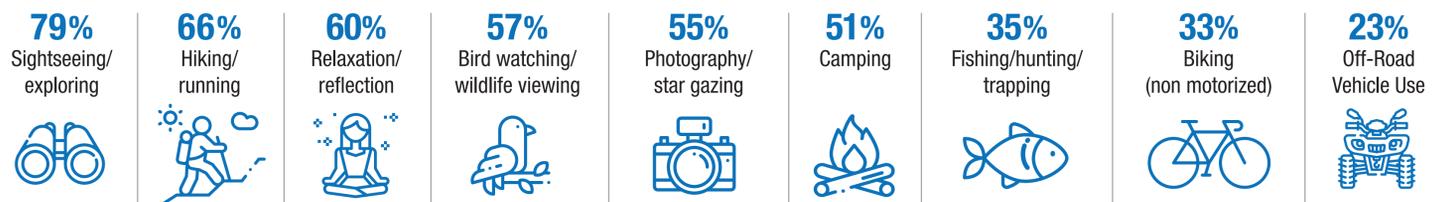


Parks Canada
Parcs Canada

Canada

What we heard: public consultation survey

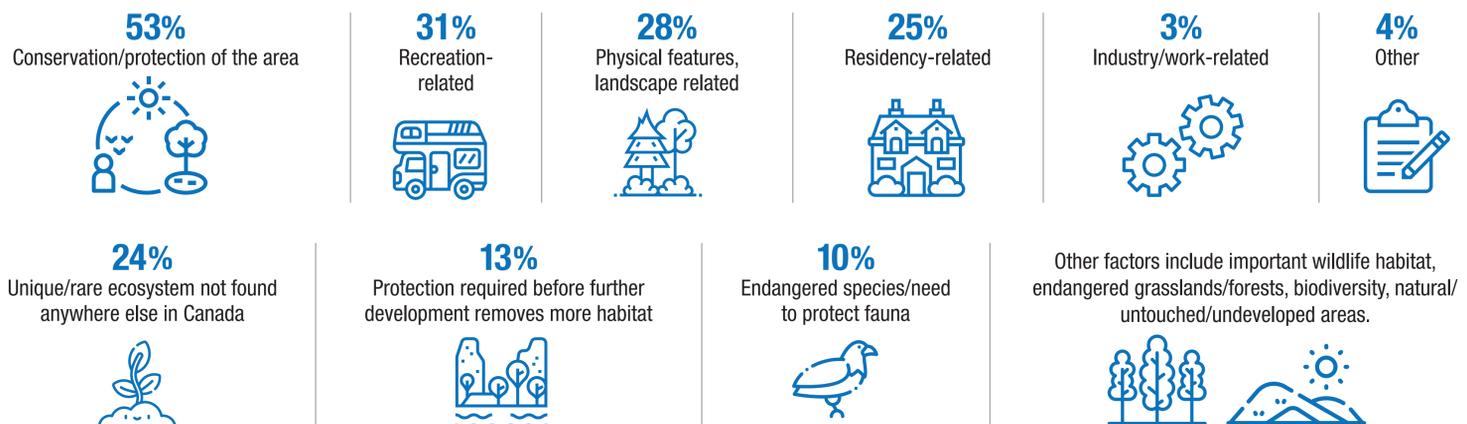
MAIN ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN THE SOUTH OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN AREA



Residents of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) are more likely to engage in fishing/hunting/trapping activities and off-road vehicle use than those from other areas.

WHAT MAKES THE SOUTH OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN AREA SPECIAL?

Unprompted, over half (53%) of participants in the consultation survey feel the South Okanagan-Similkameen area is special because of conservation and protection-related factors, especially non-local residents. Other categories regarding the specialness of the area include recreation-related (31%, e.g. hunting/fishing, hiking, camping), the physical features/landscape of the area (28%, e.g. “beautiful”/ “scenic,” mountains/valleys) and residency-related (25%, e.g. current residence, grew up/lived there).



BENEFITS AND CONCERNS: HOW A NATIONAL PARK RESERVE MIGHT AFFECT AREA USE

Benefits

One-half (49%) of survey respondents (primarily non-residents) identify the following benefits of a national park reserve:

- Preserve the area/ecosystem/have less impacts (20%)
- Wildlife/habitat conservation (8%)
- I would use/enjoy it more/enhanced experience (7%)
- Tourism boost/helps local businesses/more jobs (6%)
- Allows land use for future generations (5%)
- Less impact from ATV/off-road vehicle use/motor vehicle restrictions (4%)

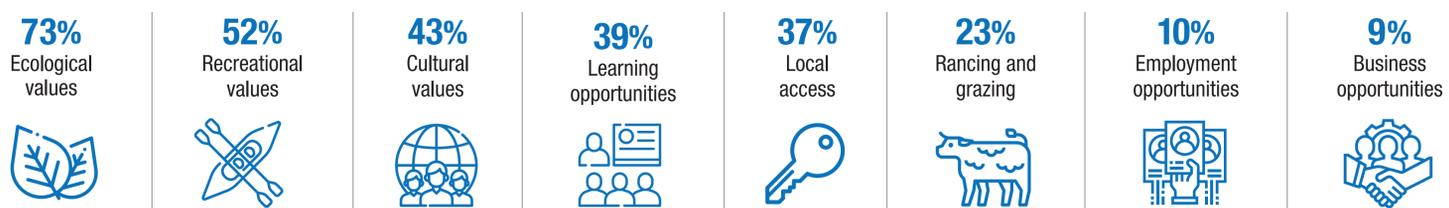
Concerns

Four in ten (41%) respondents (primarily local residents) bring up the following concerns of having a national park reserve:

- Restricted access/limits to land use/less freedom (14%)
- Hunting/fishing restrictions (8%)
- Increased fees (e.g. park entrance fee, day pass, etc.) (5%)
- Negative impacts to the area/ecosystem (5%)
- Will cause too much tourist activity (3%)
- ATV/off-road vehicle user restrictions (3%)
- Less recreation/outdoor opportunities (3%)

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

The consultation survey provided a list of eight factors and asked respondents to put them in order of importance to consider in establishing a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. “Ecological values” are again at the top by far, with non-residents tending more to rate this amongst their top three factors.



Respondents were also able to write in factors and rate them: of these, 153 wrote in “no national park,” of which 66% rated it in the top three in importance, primarily local residents. Much fewer respondents wrote in other factors: use for all/ accessibility for all (34 write-ins), restricting public access to the area and activities (24 write-ins), ensure consultation with First Nations (23), consultation with local residents (18) and fire prevention (15).



What we heard: stakeholder consultation meetings



- 39 stakeholder consultation meetings were held with 627 participants
- Most questions and discussions related to how the lands will be managed, and specifically how current and historic land uses will be impacted or altered if the proposed national park reserve is established.

1. Governance

Governance/Management:

- Questions from both those opposed and in favour of the national park reserve pertained to how cooperative management within a national park reserve would work.
- In general, people want to know what will change, and how the national park reserve will affect existing activities within and adjacent to the boundaries.



Boundaries:

- The main questions refer to how boundaries were established and whether or not they can be changed in the future.
- For several environmental groups, the boundaries should include adjacent conservation lands.

Law Enforcement:

- Most of the questions relate to visitor activities encroaching on private lands and how hunting methods carried out by First Nations will be enforced.

2. Private land and tenure



Water rights:

- Significant concern among ranchers, agriculture growers, Indigenous peoples and other local residents.
- Specific issues include the potential national park reserve's impact on existing water licenses and whether water infrastructure will be continued.

Tenures and licenses:

- Generally a good understanding that privately owned lands will remain under the title of the private owner(s).

Autonomy over private lands:

- Significant concern among fruit tree growers.

Access and Fees:

- Questions on potential for new roads or trails, and how these would impact existing land uses.
- Ranchers were concerned about how increased access would impact their cattle.

Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR):

- Main issues relating to whether or not ALR land will be lost to the federal government and if so, will they be replaced elsewhere?
- ALR lands are seen as an important asset to ranching.

Ranching and Grazing:

- Opposing views on ranching and grazing within the national park reserve; grazing as an inhibitor to environmental sustainability vs. conservator of biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Concerns that a national park reserve will impact ranching as is a way of life and as an economic driver in the region.



What we heard: stakeholder consultation meetings



- 39 stakeholder consultation meetings were held with 627 participants
- Most questions and discussions related to how the lands will be managed, and specifically how current and historic land uses will be impacted or altered if the proposed national park reserve is established.

3. Visitor Activities

Activities:

- Commentary primarily related to what will change if the area is designated a national park reserve.
- Concerns were very specific to stakeholder groups.
- There are a number of current uses that are not allowed within Canada's national parks—stakeholders want clarification on how this national park reserve might differ.



Restrictions on consumptive uses were raised by a number of groups:

- Restrictions on hunting are seen as a loss of a resource to some locals; some questioned why First Nations will be able to continue hunting and gathering.
- Ranchers and growers voiced the opinion that no hunting will lead to overpopulation of certain 'pest' and 'predator' species, which will impact commercial operations.
- Several groups also expressed interest in knowing what future activities would be developed, and where these would be located, e.g. trails developed for hiking, horseback riding, geocaching, off-road vehicles paragliding/hang-gliding and mountain biking—would these be in areas not currently used for these activities?
- Would formalized camping be developed, and if so, where, and how much?

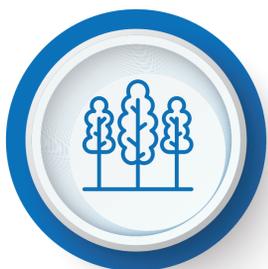
Socio-economic benefits and impacts:

- Wineries and other private property owners raised concerns about the potential for increased local taxation associated with increased property values or conversely decreased property values.
- Will there be compensation for socio-economic impacts, such as loss of business or higher taxes?
- Concern also over potential of land values declining, and the suggestion that Parks Canada should compensate land owners if this occurs.

Business Opportunities:

- Stakeholders recognize business opportunities may arise as a result of the national park reserve, especially in relation to support services for visitors.
- Who will have an opportunity to offer these services? Will First Nations alone will be given the opportunities for new business ventures, or will they have first right of refusal?

4. Conservation



Ecology, Environment and Species at Risk:

- Views on this topic in the stakeholder meetings were highly variable.
- Environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) raised concerns about Parks Canada's integrated mandate and questioned how continued cattle grazing will result in any conservation gains. The ranching industry's stance is that grazing enhances biodiversity of the ecosystem and would like Parks Canada to assist with communicating this position to the general public.

Fire Management:

- Local firefighting groups are supportive of additional firefighting resources.
- Presentations with a Parks Canada Fire Management Officer were offered to all fire departments and volunteer fire departments in the area. Three fire departments responded.

Cultural Heritage:

- Recognition of the recent history of settlers to the area (pre and post cultural heritage) was raised as an important consideration by local historians.
- It was suggested Parks Canada should consult with local experts to assist with telling the story of settlement history in the national park reserve.



What we heard: recommendations on next steps*



There is a spectrum of opinions regarding the proposed national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

- While there is no clear consensus, **the public consultation process is not intended to build consensus, but to identify challenges and opportunities associated with the proposed national park reserve that require ongoing efforts to address.**
- **Public consultation survey:** line drawn between conserving and protecting the ecosystem versus specific local interests, especially activities (e.g. off-road vehicles, hunting/trapping/gathering) that would be prohibited from the area if the national park reserve is established.
- **Stakeholder meetings:** the opposition to and concerns about the national park reserve were expressed more vocally.



Recommendations

- 1. Develop ways to engage the local community to provide advice on park issues as they pertain to local community matters and future next steps.**
- 2. Develop and distribute regular communications materials to the public,** especially those who live in the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) and the Central Okanagan Regional District (CORD).
- 3. Hold meetings with municipal and regional district planners on the interlinkages between the proposed national park reserve and municipal and regional management issues.**
 - **Local residents want to know how adaptable the process is and if public opinion will influence the final decision.** Establishing a national park reserve will require ongoing efforts to reconcile differing views on the initiative. If polls are conducted, ensure they are statistically valid for the area (RDOS and CORD).
- 4. Provide further communications and information to educate the community, municipalities and regional districts on First Nations rights and title.**
- 5. Consider clarifying which activities are permitted or not permitted within the national park reserve.**
- 6. Provide further clarity on maps to delineate private land outside of national park reserve jurisdiction, municipal boundary lines and make Agricultural Land Reserve areas more visible.**
- 7. Provide additional information on process and timelines.**



* From NRG Research Group, based on analysis of feedback.



Process to Establish a National Park Reserve

The following are the general steps involved in the establishment of a new national park/reserve.



Feasibility Assessment

- Parks Canada, in conjunction with provincial/territorial and Indigenous governments, work to determine if the creation of a proposed national park reserve is feasible.
- The focus is on developing a boundary and a park concept that is focused on conservation of natural and cultural features and providing opportunities for visitor experiences.
- Through extensive public consultation, the challenges and opportunities associated with the proposal are identified.
- If it is determined that the proposal is feasible, and there is public and First Nations support, governments **may decide** to proceed with the negotiation of an establishment agreement.



Negotiation

- New national park establishment agreements are negotiated between the Government of Canada and provincial/territorial governments.
- Agreements are negotiated with Indigenous people as well.
- The agreement commits the parties to establishing a national park reserve under the *Canada National Parks Act*; sets out the terms and conditions under which this will take place; confirms the final boundary and a land acquisition strategy (one that prohibits expropriation); management planning, consultations; and other issues of interest.
- **If successful**, negotiations result in a formal agreement signed by the Ministers and Indigenous governments.
- Otherwise, the proposal will not proceed.



Establishment

- Should the parties successfully conclude establishment agreements, and once the land for a new national park has been acquired by Parks Canada, legislation to formally protect the area under the *Canada National Parks Act* is tabled in Parliament.
- As part of this process, Parliamentary standing committees may invite witnesses to provide their views on the proposed national park reserve.
- Once passed, the boundary of the park is described in the Act.
- In addition, the legislation would include any provisions that are required to implement the negotiated establishment agreements.



Management Plan

- Is a strategic long-term guide for the future management of the national park reserve must be tabled in Parliament within 5 years of the park having been legally established.
- It is required by legislation and guided by First Nations community engagement and public consultation.
- Its primary goal is to ensure that there is clearly defined direction to maintain ecological integrity for the maintenance, restoration, and appropriate use of national park reserve lands.
- The long-term management plan is reviewed and must be revised every five to ten years.

