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Howse Pass

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Statement

2017



Approval

Approved by:



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Rick Kubian
*A/Field Unit Superintendent
Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay
Parks Canada*

Date

Introduction and Overview

The Parks Canada Agency manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic areas in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. This management statement outlines Parks Canada's management approach and objectives for Howse Pass National Historic Site.

Howse Pass National Historic Site was designated in 1978 to recognise the importance of this mountain pass as a travel route for the Ktunaxa First Nation who used it to reach bison herds east of the Rockies, and as the route used by David Thompson of the Northwest Company to travel west of the Rockies and establish his first post in the Columbia River basin. The site is a large, 30-km long wilderness landscape that stretches from the confluence of the Howse and North Saskatchewan rivers in Banff National Park, Alberta across the Continental Divide to the confluence of the Blaeberry River and Cairnes Creek in the Province of British Columbia. The designated place is demarcated by the 1640m contour line in Banff National Park, and by a corridor 200m on either side of the Howse Pass Trail in British Columbia. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board plaque is situated at the pass, along with an older wooden sign that commemorates Thompson's crossing of the pass in 1807. The main interpretive exhibit is located off-site near Saskatchewan Crossing at a location offering evocative views of the Howse River valley. This exhibit describes the historical significance of the pass, and includes information on important links with local Indigenous communities presented in Ktunaxa, Stoney and Piikani languages. There is archaeological evidence of Indigenous campsites near the pass, but the relationship of these camps to the commemorative intent of the national historic site is not well understood.

The pass is a remote site that retains a strong sense of place. It is accessible via a long, challenging trail that provides self-reliant travellers with an opportunity to experience this historic route in conditions that are little changed from those of the past. Parks Canada has discontinued regular maintenance on the Howse Pass Trail from the Glacier Lake junction to the pass. The trail in British Columbia has not been maintained in recent years, and is not easily accessible due to deterioration of the Blaeberry Forest Service Road.

Management Approach

Parks Canada will continue to manage Howse Pass National Historic Site as a wilderness landscape without significant infrastructure. The trail will be managed as a wilderness route without regular trail maintenance. Parks Canada may consider opportunities to work with others, including the Province of British Columbia and the Great Divide Trail Association, on basic trail maintenance. The interpretive site near Saskatchewan Crossing will continue to be the focus of communication efforts within the park, where the key messages can reach a greater number of visitors travelling on the Icefield Parkway. The significance of Howse Pass will also be communicated through linkages with related sites, especially Rocky Mountain House and Kootenae House national historic sites, and through digital media.

Management Objectives

Collaboration With Others: Collaboration with others, including Indigenous communities, the Province of British Columbia and the Great Divide Trail Association, enhances Parks Canada's efforts to communicate the story of Howse Pass and provide experiential opportunities.

Resource Conservation and Visitor Experience: The Howse Pass cultural landscape retains its wilderness character and sense of place, and in-situ cultural resources are not impaired.

Public Understanding and Appreciation: Key messages that reflect accurately the cultural significance of Howse Pass, as determined through historical research and an understanding of traditional knowledge of Indigenous communities, are communicated to audiences in the park and to others through digital media.

Links: [Howse Pass National Historic Site](#)

For more information, please contact: *Banff National Park, Lake Louise, Alberta, T0L 1E0*

Cover photo: Todd Keith/Parks Canada