



# Banff

National Park of Canada

## Annual Report

2023 & 2024



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines Parks Canada milestones and achievements in managing Banff National Park in the 2023 and 2024 fiscal years, guided by the 2022 Banff National Park of Canada Park Management Plan.

Managing Banff National Park carries special responsibility for demonstrating excellence in conservation science and protected area management, while welcoming and providing memorable experiences to millions of visitors each year.

The park's management plan sets out a ten-year vision and roadmap for the park as a place characterized by respect. It envisions Banff as a place where visitors are inspired to become part of the shared enterprise of sustaining and preserving all that is valued about the national park system, and the natural and cultural resources that are part of our heritage.

This is the inaugural report since releasing the 2022 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan. Parks Canada is pleased to present to you an account of our endeavors to manage Banff National Park in a manner that is responsible and that supports Parks Canada's mandate.

*On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.*

# INTRODUCTION

The Annual Report highlights Parks Canada's work in Banff National Park in 2023 and 2024. Thank you to Indigenous groups, stakeholders, visitors, community residents, and local businesses who all play an important role in protecting Banff National Park and fostering public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of this special place.

Parks Canada prepares a public report to outline progress in implementing the management plan for Banff National Park.

The following marks our first report on the 2022 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan. This report outlines key highlights of progress made in 2023 and 2024, towards the strategies and management areas outlined in the plan:

1. Conserving natural and cultural heritage
2. True-to-place experiences
3. Strengthening Indigenous relations
4. Connecting with Canadians
5. Managing development
6. Regional connectivity and landscapes
7. Climate change
8. Moving people sustainably
9. Park communities

Management Area: Lake Minnewanka Area

Management Area: Lake Louise Area

# HIGHLIGHTS

## BANFF NATIONAL PARK BY THE NUMBERS

**Number of Visitors**

**4,282,605** in 2023



**4,214,353** in 2024

### Aquatic Invasive Species

**39** self-certification stations

**10,000+** self-certification permits received

### Landscape Restoration

**10,000+** native vegetation planted



### Visitor Experience Camping<sup>1</sup>



**407,212**  
Frontcountry  
campsite nights

**50,872**  
Backcountry  
campers



**258** wildlife jams<sup>1</sup>  
**intercepted**



Banff National Park




**6,641 km<sup>2</sup>**  
with  
**1,600 km**  
of trails

**24,166**  
Average Daily  
Visitors  
Peak Season  
(June – September)

**8,929**  
Average Daily  
Visitors  
Non-Peak Season



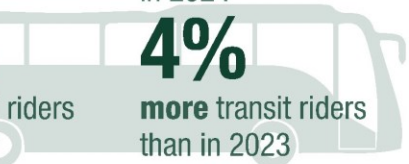
**4,100** volunteers contributed  
**37,700** hours



and spoke with **5,400** visitors<sup>1</sup>

### Transit Use

in 2023	in 2024
<b>34%</b>	<b>4%</b>
more transit riders than in 2022	more transit riders than in 2023



### Bow Valley Parkway Cycling Pilot

**79,299** rides in 2023  
up **24%** from 2022



**82,661** rides in 2024  
up **4%** from 2023

<sup>1</sup>Represents total for both 2023 & 2024

## Visitation

In 2023, Banff National Park welcomed **4.28 million visitors**, the highest level of visitation to date, surpassing the previous year's attendance by 4%. During this year, front country campgrounds were open and hosted over 500,000 total camper nights. To compare, 2022 saw around 480,000 total camper nights. In 2024 Parks Canada welcomed **4.21 million visitors** and hosted a similar number of total camper nights to 2023.

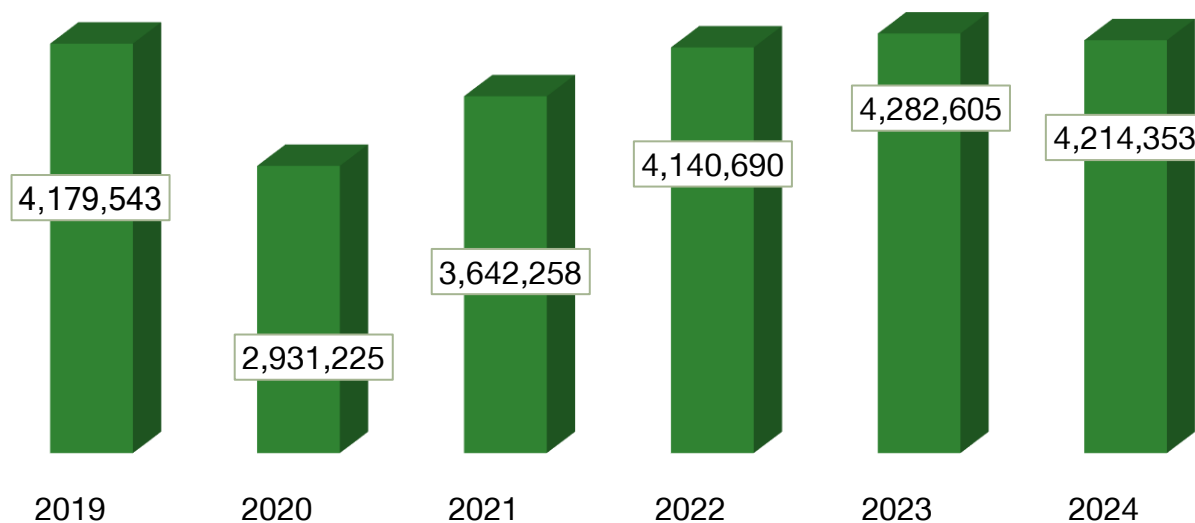


Figure 1: Banff National Park Visitation by Year

Notes: 2020 coincided with COVID-19.

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP

### Species at Risk

Parks Canada is committed to protecting endangered species. Over 2023 and 2024, we made significant progress in updating the 2017 Multi Species at Risk Action Plan with strategies to protect species like whitebark and limber pine trees, black swift birds, and the identification of critical habitats for key species.

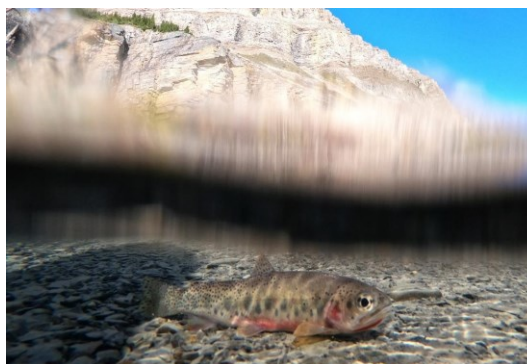


### Combatting Aquatic Invaders

The Parks Canada team has been working to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. In 2023 and 2024 a prevention program for Banff National Park was deployed. With 39 self-certification stations and targeted education, we have been taking action to stop the spread of aquatic invasives and protect our aquatic ecosystems' health.

### Revitalizing Native Trout

Parks Canada made significant strides in native trout restoration over the past two years. Efforts included removing non-native species from Margaret Lake and completing the reintroduction of Westlope Cutthroat Trout to Hidden Lake and upper Corral Creek, marking the reestablishment of native fish populations at sites where they have not been present for over 50 years. In 2024, after years of restoring Cascade Creek as suitable habitat for Westlope Cutthroat Trout, Parks Canada reintroduced genetically pure specimens back into Cascade Creek, boosting the population, their distribution, and supporting the species' recovery.



## Mapping Wetlands

Wetlands play a critical role in supporting important ecological functions. Parks Canada completed wetland mapping for priority areas in the Banff Bow Valley. These areas, previously unmapped, are rich in biodiversity. This work enhances our understanding of aquatic ecosystems and strengthens their protection for the future.



## Restoring Bison

2023 marked the successful conclusion of our five-year bison reintroduction project in Banff National Park. Public feedback has overwhelmingly supported the continued presence of bison, underscoring the project's success and the significance of these iconic animals in the parks' ecosystem.

## Supporting Wildlife Corridors

Parks Canada implemented several initiatives to reduce human disturbance in critical wildlife corridors within Banff National Park. Notably, a wildlife underpass was installed on Whitehorn Drive in partnership with Lake Louise Ski Area to facilitate safe animal crossings. Several area closures have been implemented to enable secure movement of wildlife. These measures enhance the effectiveness of wildlife corridors, ensuring animals can move safely through their habitats.

## Prescribed Fires and Wildfire Risk Reduction

In 2023 and 2024, Parks Canada used prescribed fires to improve forest health and mitigate wildfire risks. Projects such as the Banff airstrip prescribed burn helped protect park infrastructure, nearby communities, and restore habitats for vegetation and wildlife. In 2024, mechanical tree removal began in Lake Louise and the Tunnel Mountain area to create fire guards, further reducing wildfire risks to surrounding communities. These projects build on more than a decade of wildfire mitigation work in Banff National Park. They represent proactive measures to reduce the risk of future wildfires to communities and surrounding areas.



## Restoring and Reclaiming Lands

Parks Canada has made notable progress in restoring and reclaiming key sites across the park. Work in 2023 and 2024 transformed the former 40-mile landfill into an aspen-grassland, now supporting diverse wildlife and native plants. Additionally, we have enhanced critical wildlife habitats by introducing bear-friendly, plant-based food sources, improving foraging opportunities and supporting species recovery efforts.



## Managing Cultural Resources

Following the necessary dismantling of the Abbot Pass Hut due to structural and safety concerns, Parks Canada engaged the public on how we should commemorate this iconic heritage site. At Howse Pass, a historic site steeped in history and natural beauty, work was undertaken to re-mount the HSMBC plaque on new posts, install a new bench for visitors to use while appreciating the site, and the remains of illegal campfire rings and refuse were removed.

These works reflect Parks Canada's commitment to managing cultural heritage in a manner that ensures future generations can appreciate and learn from the rich heritage and storied past of the park.

## ENHANCING VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND ACCESS

### Visitor Management Planning

With the goal of ensuring memorable visitor experiences that reflect and respect both the place and the environment, Parks Canada initiated important visitor use management projects in 2023 and 2024. We harnessed new technologies to gather data in key areas such as Lake Minnewanka and Sulphur Mountain. New data will enable us to develop and implement strategies that reflect the distinct patterns of visitor use. Planning also began for Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, two high-priority and high-traffic sites within Banff National Park.



### Moving People Sustainably

Parks Canada has taken actions to reduce private vehicle arrival through our partnership with On-It, which we expanded in 2024 with a direct route from Calgary to Banff National Park. We made further improvements to attract use of public transportation such as incentivizing shuttle use in Lake Louise and launching campaigns to promote public transportation ridership. Transit ridership grew on all ROAM transit routes in 2023 year (up 34% from 2022) and again in 2024 (up 4% from 2023).

In response to growing safety concerns, in 2023 Parks Canada closed the Moraine Lake Road to private vehicles. This action was supported with the facilitation of public transit and shuttle services. 2023 and 2024 were the busiest seasons yet for the Lake Louise and Moraine Lake Shuttles.

Alongside public transportation, Parks Canada also promoted active transportation through programs like the Bow Valley Parkway Cycling Pilot. The final phase of the 3-year Bow Valley Cycling Pilot concluded September 30, 2024. During the pilot, vehicle use was restricted on the eastern section of the parkway, to create a 17-kilometre motorist-free cycling route from May 1 to June 25 and from August 30 – September 30 each year. The program proved successful, with significant increases in rides year over year. Positive feedback indicates strong appreciation for the initiative.

Building on Park Management Plan commitments, the *Lead Tourism for Good: 10 Year Vision*, and the *Expert Panel Report on Moving People Sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley*, Parks Canada is drafting a framework for moving people sustainably. Recognizing that Banff National Park contains a primary travel corridor for Canada and that this work is of shared interest to multiple parties and jurisdictions, the framework

takes a principles-based approach. It is anticipated that the framework will be a helpful guide and will identify shared strategic objectives for planners and decision-makers for all interested organizations. The framework will meet our commitment to develop a sustainable people movement strategy and outline how Parks Canada will work with partners to improve the quality of existing and future transportation options. The framework will provide flexibility to adapt to new information and developments.

Development of the framework has involved key partners and experts in the Bow Valley and considers the larger regional context for how visitors travel to and within Banff National Park. The framework incorporates what was heard from Canadians during engagement processes for the 2022 Banff National Park Management Plan, ongoing visitor use management planning processes, and Parks Canada visitor surveys in 2018 and 2024. In 2025, Parks Canada will work with partners to finalize a framework for shared use.

## STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

Banff National Park hosts an Indigenous Advisory Circle. The Circle provides a forum for meaningful involvement of Indigenous Nations with a long-standing connection to the area on topics and activities relating to park management. The Indigenous Advisory Circle is a place where members advise on park management, where they may voice their interests directly to the Superintendents, and where we can listen, learn, and seek guidance to make meaningful change. The Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle met throughout 2023 and 2024. Several priority projects were identified and initiated. In 2024, the Circle celebrated the unveiling of the east gate welcome sign which includes messages in Stoney Nakoda, Blackfoot, Dene, and Michif.



## Restoring Cultural Connections

Parks Canada has supported an average of 25+ cultural use agreements per year with Indigenous community members to sustainably harvest natural materials for a variety of cultural practices and uses (such as tipi poles, medicinal plants, rocks for sweat lodges, and sacred bundles) and to access traditionally significant areas in the park.

## Indigenous Storytelling

Another resounding highlight for both 2023 and 2024 was the implementation of the second and third years of the mural box project at the Cave and Basin. Indigenous artists shared perspectives on the theme “Stories of this Place” on mural boxes displayed at the Cave and Basin.



Parks Canada also worked closely with the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle to improve Indigenous cultural content and stories in the Lake Louise area. A working group was established to develop an interpretive plan focused on opportunities to prominently position Indigenous culture, history and perspectives. The group delivered an Indigenous Interpretation Pilot Program that offered in-person, engaging and educational programming to park visitors and residents. Programming integrated local Indigenous views, culture and heritage and supported local Indigenous artists, businesses and organizations.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

### Education and Outreach

In 2023 and again in 2024 Parks Canada staff facilitated over 80,000 in-depth visitor interactions on a variety of topics in the park. We featured species at risk in the Banff National Park Visitor Guide and shared our westslope cutthroat trout restoration work through guided hikes and interpretive trail panels. We also implemented a park behavior awareness campaign on Roam Transit.



### Volunteers

Parks Canada increased visibility of our volunteer program through posters and social media, leading to doubling of volunteer inquiries. In 2023, 1,900 volunteers contributed over 17,000 hours and had the opportunity to work on Park Canada projects throughout Banff National Park. In 2024, volunteer efforts increased again to 2,200 volunteers who contributed 20,800 hours.

## Engagement on Park Management Activities

Parks Canada manages national parks in trust for present and future generations of Canadians and we recognize the importance of actively engaging with Canadians in the decision-making process for key park management activities. Engaging Canadians and understanding the needs and perspectives of diverse audiences strengthens park management. In addition to the Annual Planning Forum, 2023 and 2024 saw Parks Canada conduct in-depth engagement on numerous proposals such as the 200 Block Banff Avenue Project, the Abbot Pass Hut Commemoration, the Lake Minnewanka Area Plan, the Lake Louise Community Plan, and Lake Louise and Moraine Area Visitor Use Management Planning.

## MANAGING DEVELOPMENT



### Maintaining Infrastructure

Banff's distinctive true-to-place experiences are supported by our continual investment into core infrastructure to ensure safe, revitalized, and well-maintained visitor facilities (day use areas, campgrounds, trails, visitor attractions, and scenic roads).

Significant funding has been invested into infrastructure improvement between 2023 and 2024 such as:

- Utility upgrades
- Lake Louise Drive redevelopment
- Campground enhancements
- Road repairs and maintenance
- Trail maintenance
- Transit shelter installations
- Improvements to visitor center service spaces

## REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Cross-Jurisdictional Coordination



By working together across jurisdictions, we enhance our effectiveness on key issues like species recovery, invasive species control, tourism, and climate change, to name a few. These challenges don't stop at our boundaries, and neither do our efforts.

In 2023 and 2024 Parks Canada continued to demonstrate our cross-jurisdictional work through collaborations such as: The Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission/Roam, on which we work with regional municipalities. Human-Wildlife Coexistence Technical Working group with provincial and municipal levels of government, and the work with the members of the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle. We worked across boundaries through data-sharing agreements, expert contributions to others, and research publications. Of note, we improved our Open Data sets, shared 7 million wildlife camera images to a global collaboration, and we joined the Banff Data Collective.

### Climate Change

Climate change and emergency preparedness are examples of challenges that do not stop at boundaries and that require broader collaboration to succeed. Between 2023 and 2024, Parks Canada completed a draft climate summary for the park, to be finalized and publicly released in 2025. We also began transitioning fleet vehicles to zero emission or hybrids, added new Zero Emission Vehicles, and installed electric vehicle infrastructure at priority locations. Climate change considerations across all our work helps us prepare for emergencies that can affect the region. Parks Canada also updated emergency preparedness plans for Lake Louise and Banff and re-evaluated wildfire risk to account for updated scenarios driven by climate change.



## MANAGEMENT AREAS

### Lake Louise Area

The last time amendments were done to the Lake Louise Community Plan was two decades ago in 2003. Since then, there have been significant changes. The goal is to draft a modernized community plan that can be used by a variety of people, is relevant in today's world and stays relevant over the lifespan of the document. In 2023, Parks Canada compiled background information on the current state of the community, reviewed the existing community plan for success and challenges, and introduced the project to stakeholders and partners. Parks Canada engaged the public in the spring of 2024 via an online survey aimed at understanding community needs.

### Lake Minnewanka Area

In 2023 Parks Canada initiated baseline assessments and plan scoping to understand the Lake Minnewanka area's history and current conditions, natural and cultural values, visitor use patterns, key considerations to keep front of mind, as well as identifying gaps and desired outcomes, and key challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed. In 2024, planning further progressed with the launch of the first phase of public and Indigenous engagement, with the focus being on uncovering what people envision for the area, needs, priorities, and scoping the plan. The goal is to draft a plan that provides clear management direction and enables a bright and sustainable future for this special place.