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# Banff

National Park of Canada

## Management Plan

2022

A UNESCO  
World Heritage Site



2022

# Banff

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

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BANFF NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2022.

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Note to readers:

The health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians are of the utmost importance. Parks Canada is following the advice and guidance of public health experts to limit the spread of COVID-19 while allowing Canadians to experience Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have unforeseeable impacts on the *Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan*. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders, and the public of any such impacts through its annual update on the implementation of this plan.

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## Foreword



From coast to coast to coast, national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas are a source of shared pride for Canadians. They reflect Canada's natural and cultural heritage and tell stories of who we are, including the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples.

These cherished places are a priority for the Government of Canada. We are committed to protecting natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places, and contributing to the recovery of species at risk.

At the same time, we continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities to ensure that more Canadians can experience these iconic destinations and learn about history, culture and the environment.

In collaboration with Indigenous communities and key partners, Parks Canada conserves and protects national historic sites and national parks; enables people to discover and connect with history and nature; and helps sustain the economic value of these places for local and regional communities.

This new management plan for Banff National Park of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed by a dedicated team at Parks Canada through extensive consultation and input from Indigenous partners, other partners and stakeholders, local communities, as well as visitors past and present. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of cooperation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the *Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan*.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steven Guilbeault', written in a cursive style.

**Steven Guilbeault**  
*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and  
Minister responsible for Parks Canada*



## Recommendations

*Recommended by:*



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## Executive Summary

Established in 1885, Banff is Canada's first national park, part of the UNESCO<sup>1</sup> Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, and a global symbol of Canada. As such, it 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.

This management plan sets out a long-term vision for the park as a place characterized by respect: respect for the Indigenous peoples as the original inhabitants and stewards of the area for millennia before the park was established, and for their knowledge of the land; respect for the inherent value of unimpaired natural landscapes and ecosystem processes; and respect for experiences based on the unique human and natural history of this special place. The vision also aspires to highlight 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 parks system, and the natural and cultural resources that are part of our heritage.

The path to achieving this vision will be a demanding one. Among the challenges flagged in the *Banff National Park State of the Park Assessment* (Parks Canada 2018) were the need to:

- improve and protect habitat quality and connectivity for land-based and aquatic species;
- advance the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems;
- better identify and manage cultural resources and rising visitation;
- advance respectful and inclusive relationships with Indigenous communities; and
- adequately maintain Parks Canada's built assets/infrastructure.

The reality of a warming climate is anticipated to make most, if not all, of these challenges even more formidable.

With a commitment to ecological integrity as its cornerstone, this management plan builds upon the direction and accomplishments of the last four plans, and considers relevant research, government priorities and obligations, and the views of Indigenous groups, the public, and stakeholders.

At the heart of the plan are nine high-level, key strategies for

- conserving natural and cultural resources;
- providing true-to-place experiences;
- strengthening Indigenous relations;
- connecting with Canadians;
- managing development;
- regional connectivity and landscapes;
- addressing climate change;
- moving people sustainably; and
- managing park communities.

Some strategies—such as those addressing climate change, moving people sustainably, and strengthening Indigenous relations—are new to this plan, while others—such as those for conserving resources, managing development, and providing true-to-place experiences—advance the direction established in previous plans. Compared to earlier plans, this plan offers improved attention to:

- respectful inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the life and work of the park;
- the identification and management of cultural resources;
- the need to plan for and manage visitation in high-use areas to ensure the experience is authentic, sustainable and safe;
- the importance of accessibility and inclusivity for services and facilities; and
- the application of climate change lens to the park's management approach.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO: United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Each strategy is accompanied by one or more objectives describing the desired outcomes after the strategy's successful implementation, and targets that pinpoint tangible steps toward achieving each objective.

The plan also includes additional direction for three important areas that have important natural and/or cultural values combined with high visitation, substantial public interest, and significant physical (built) infrastructure: these areas are the Town of Banff, the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area, and the Lake Louise Area.

It is important to note that individual strategies do not stand in isolation from one another; rather, they are highly integrated and must be considered as a whole in order to picture the total effort toward achieving the goals and objectives of the park. All strategies are intended to be applied on a park-wide basis. A strategic environmental assessment has been carried out on this plan, and it was determined that when taken together, the actions described in this plan will have an overall positive effect over the life of the plan.

While the key strategies represent Parks Canada's best overall plan for moving forward, park management takes place in a dynamic environment where there are always uncertainties, natural variability, new technologies, and new information and outcomes to be considered. Consequently, Parks Canada uses an adaptive management approach where, after careful monitoring of on-the-ground indicators, strategies may be adjusted to improve decision-making and management effectiveness.

This management plan is intended to focus on high-level approaches that will be taken over the next decade. In certain areas, it is evident that more research, planning and/or input is needed to provide a robust management framework and detailed direction for the future. In such cases, this management plan calls for a subsidiary plan, strategy, or program to be developed or updated. These include:

- Cultural Resource Values Statement;
- Cultural Resources Management Plan;
- Visitor Asset Sustainability Plan;
- Visitor management plans for high priority areas;
- Indigenous Youth-Elder Cultural Connections Mentoring Program;
- Accessibility Remediation Plan for Parks Canada Services and Facilities;
- Climate Change Action Plan;
- Sustainable People Movement Plan;
- Community Plan for the visitor centres of Lake Louise and Banff;
- Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area Plan; and
- Lake Louise Area Strategy.

Where not otherwise specified within this plan, the timing, milestones and process for completing each of the above will be identified by park managers subsequent to approval and tabling in Parliament of this park management plan.

Parks Canada is committed to working collaboratively with Indigenous nations whose traditionally used lands and waters include Banff National Park, recognizing that this work together must consider the capacity, interests and protocols of those nations.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers 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 historic site, national park, national marine conservation area and heritage canal administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

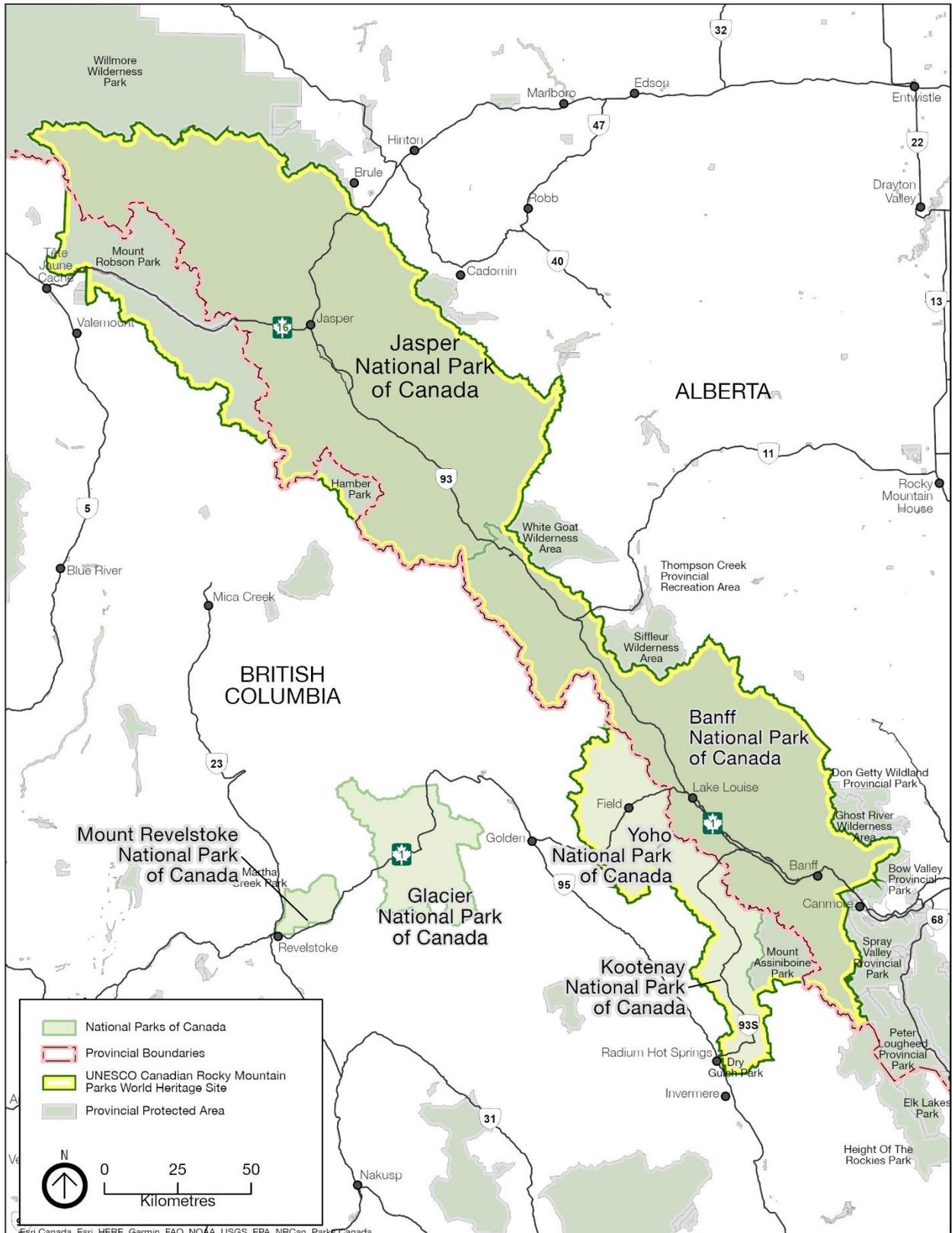
*Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.*

The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *Banff National Park 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 park management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

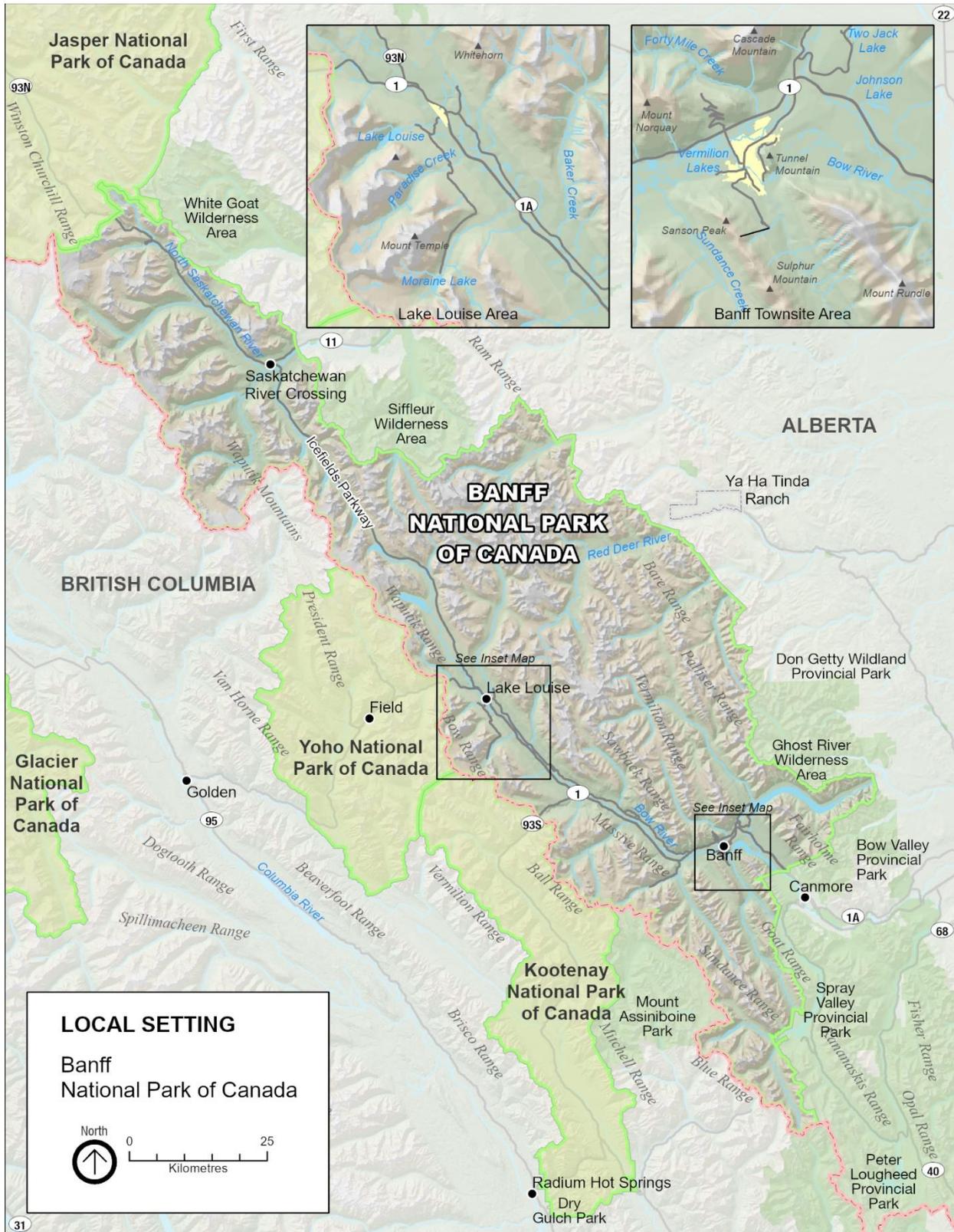
Indigenous peoples are important partners in the stewardship of heritage places, with connections to the lands and waters since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Banff National Park by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan's 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, and, where appropriate, consultation, on the management of Banff National Park in the years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Banff National Park



## 2.0 Significance of Banff National Park

Prior to European contact and long before Banff was established as a national park, the lands and waters of the area were highly significant to numerous Indigenous communities from both sides of the Continental Divide for millennia. Many Indigenous peoples, including the Blackfoot (the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Stoney Nakoda (the Bearspaw, Wesley, Chiniki), the Ktunaxa, the Secwépemc, the Tsuut'ina, and the Cree, used the area for ceremony, travel, trade and harvest.

As Europeans began to explore the West, Indigenous peoples played an invaluable role as their guides and suppliers. For instance, it was a Stoney Nakoda guide, Edwin Hunter, who first showed explorer Tom Wilson the “Lake of the Little Fishes” as the Stoney people referred to it, or Lake Louise as it is known today. As the fur trade grew and Europeans expanded their presence in the West, the Métis people also came to be in the area.

Like many of Canada’s earliest national parks, Banff was established in a time when Indigenous peoples were separated from their traditional lands and waters through government policy and law. In Banff National Park, hunting by Indigenous peoples was prohibited starting in 1890. Enforcement of this prohibition, combined with other Government of Canada policies such as those restricting the ability of Indigenous peoples to leave reserves, precluded them from travelling through the park, or from trading, harvesting and practicing their traditions within its boundaries.

Modern-day Banff lies in the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8 Nations (thus encompassing all of Alberta’s 43 First Nations), is within the identified “Homeland” of the Métis people; and also lies within the traditionally used lands and waters of numerous other Indigenous peoples. The lands within the park remain very important to these groups as an integral part of their past, present and future. The lands within Banff have been and still are the subject of land and title claims by various nations, including by the Siksika and Stoney Nakoda First Nations. For example, the Siksika First Nation’s claim concerning a historical 26.5 square mile timber limit in the Castle Mountain area of Banff (known to the Siksika as the Mîstukskoowa Area) was settled between the Siksika Nation and Canada in 2016. As a result, this area remains as part of the park with special considerations for the Siksika Nation for ceremonial, educational and other purposes.

Banff National Park was established around the Sulphur Mountain Hot Springs in 1885, as part of a young nation’s efforts to connect the country by rail. Thus Canada’s national park system was born and the stage was set for the then-emerging global idea of land conservation and protecting heritage places for the long-term benefit, education and enjoyment of all.

With two major mountain ranges (the Main Ranges and the Front Ranges) and numerous subranges characterized by cirques, arêtes, hanging valleys, moraines, and U-shaped valleys, Banff is recognized around the world for its compelling landscapes. It also contains one of the longest and most complete sequences of sedimentary rocks in the world, including the Burgess Shale, one of the world’s most important fossil sites. For these reasons, Banff is one of seven parks comprising the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site as designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

*Renowned for their scenic splendor, the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks are comprised of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho National Parks and Mount Robson, Mount Assiniboine and Hamber Provincial Parks. Together, they exemplify the outstanding physical features of the Rocky Mountain Biogeographical Province. Classic illustrations of glacial geological processes—including icefields, remnant valley glaciers, canyons and exceptional examples of erosion and deposition—are found throughout the area. The Burgess Shale Cambrian and nearby Precambrian sites contain important information about the Earth’s evolution.*

—Statement of Significance  
Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks  
World Heritage Site

Known for its beauty, wildlife diversity, and dramatic wilderness, the park has long been an inspiration to explorers, artists and writers who continue to add to a rich body of work that embodies the spirit of the mountains and people's sense of connection with mountain landscapes. It remains a centre of mountain culture and outdoor adventure where Canadians build relationships with nature, adventure and one another.

Banff contains the headwaters of the Bow, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan rivers (the water sources for millions of people living downstream) and provides important habitat for 56 species of mammals, 300 species of birds, and more than 800 species of plants. With this exceptionally rich natural setting, it is no surprise that the park is renowned for its long history of wildlife research and conservation, its innovations in the applied science of ecological restoration, and the practice of protected area management.

Attracting more than four million visitors annually (2019–2020), Banff contributes significantly to the local, regional and national economy, and to the social well-being of its many visitors. It provides unparalleled opportunities to see, experience and learn about the importance of intact, functioning ecosystems, as well as natural and cultural heritage, including the history that helped shape the nation. Specific features that make Banff unique include:

- its cultural and spiritual significance to Indigenous peoples from both sides of the Continental Divide;
- Western Canada's southernmost roadless wilderness areas large enough for multi-day travel;
- landscape features (Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Peyto Lake and Vermilion Lakes, thermal hot springs, mounts Rundle and Temple) that are symbols of Canada;
- Canada's northern limit for alpine larch, limber pine, westslope cutthroat trout and other important species;
- eight national historic sites and one designated Canadian Heritage River—the North Saskatchewan;
- with Yoho and Glacier National Parks, Banff was the birthplace of Canada's mountaineering and alpine skiing heritage;
- wild populations of bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, wolves, mountain goats, elk, mule deer, golden eagles, the American dipper and other Rocky Mountain wildlife;
- the hydrological apex of North America (the Columbia Icefield) where water drains into three oceans, and where one can easily see the evolution of glaciers over time;
- Castleguard Cave, one of Canada's longest caves at 20 kilometres in length, extending under the Columbia Icefield;
- the spectacular Bow Valley and Icefields parkways; and
- the community of Banff, with its unique-in-the-world governance regime and remarkable array of visitor services, museums, galleries, heritage buildings, and the world-renowned Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

### 3.0 Planning Context

The tradition of welcoming visitors from around the world has been a part of Banff National Park's identity and operation since its inception. Shortly after the creation of the original 26-square-kilometre Hot Springs Reserve in 1885, the Canadian government and the Canadian Pacific Railway began working to develop the hot springs as a tourist destination to increase traffic on the railway. In support of the burgeoning tourist industry, the community of Banff was established in 1886 as a transportation and service centre for visitors.

Over the next 135 years, Banff National Park continued to develop infrastructure, programs and services for visitors. Today, of all national parks in Canada, it has the greatest amount of roofed accommodation. It also has 1,500 kilometres of official trails, 320 kilometres of roads, 13 frontcountry campgrounds offering over 2,400 sites, 51 backcountry campgrounds, dozens of picnic areas and viewpoints, three ski areas, a golf course, and two well-known communities providing a wide range of services for Banff's residents and visitors.

To ensure that infrastructure development and use do not compromise the park's ecological integrity or the other qualities that draw people to it, the amount of allowable commercial development and the boundaries of the communities and ski areas has been limited through both policy and legislation. Commercial development space in the communities of Lake Louise and Banff has been entirely allocated. Once this allocation has been fully constructed, commercial development will be restricted to redevelopment of existing facilities and structures. Similarly, growth and development limits for ski areas have been prescribed in the approved site guidelines for each resort. Any new development as well as ongoing use must happen in a way that conforms with these measures as well as with resort-specific ecological management parameters. As of 2021, none of the ski areas have constructed their maximum allowable development.

Banff's 2018 *State of the Park Assessment* provided a "report card" on certain key indicators relating to the park's ecological integrity, its visitor experience and educational efforts, its built assets and its relationships with Indigenous communities. The assessment also describes how these indicators have changed over the last decade. The *State of the Park Assessment* identified the need to improve and protect habitat quality and movement corridors for both land-based and aquatic species. These systems have been negatively affected by the loss of connectivity through decades of human use and development, and in the case of aquatic communities, through stocking of non-native fish species.

While wildlife mortality from vehicle strikes on the Trans-Canada Highway has been somewhat mitigated through Banff's renowned system of crossing structures and fencing, and collaborative work with CP Rail on mitigating wildlife mortality train strikes continues, there is still much work to be done. Proposals for twinning the rail line for passenger rail between Calgary and the community of Banff, and for expansion of the rail sidings in the park may, if they come to fruition during the life of this plan, augment these challenges.

Progress on restoring aquatic connectivity has been made in recent years through initiatives such as the partial removal of the 40 Mile Creek Dam, ongoing work toward restoration of Cascade Creek and several other waterbodies during twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway, and removal of non-native fish from a number of locations in the park. It is important to note that improving aquatic habitat quality and connectivity is a more broadly pressing issue, as research shows that biodiversity loss of aquatic species is occurring at an even faster rate than terrestrial species.

Another important conservation challenge identified in the *State of the Park Assessment* is the need to improve the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems. Fire suppression throughout most of the 20th century has created a forest that is less diverse than expected in both age and species composition. This older, more uniform forest is vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire, insects and disease. Climate change may also affect forest ecosystems in various ways, including: alterations in the fire regime, changes in species composition and distribution, and a shift toward more open forest types over time. Returning fire to the landscape is important for forest ecosystem restoration and resilience to climate change.

Other key areas for attention from the *State of the Park Assessment* are the need for improved management of the park's cultural resources (including archaeological sites, heritage buildings, and objects), and for increased maintenance of other Parks Canada built assets. While the Federal Infrastructure program afforded the opportunity to make significant progress on the latter over the last five years, there is still much work to be done.

Park visitation has grown 30 percent over the last decade, and Banff now welcomes more than four million people annually, primarily during the summer and ski seasons. Trends indicate that during peak periods, visitors are arriving earlier in the day, and visiting more in fall and spring than was noted when the previous park management plan was written. When surveyed, visitors consistently rate their satisfaction as high and would recommend the park as a destination to others. Recognized as one of National Geographic Traveler magazine's "Best of the World" destinations, Banff's visitation now accounts for 26 percent of all visits to Canada's national parks.

While it is a source of pride for Parks Canada and Canadians, Banff's high visitation is also one of the park's greatest challenges and the subject of rising public concern. While the park as a whole is becoming busier in all seasons, the most significant visitation increases are in spring and fall, with daytime visitors taking in key attractions accessible by vehicle. For many years, Parks Canada's services (e.g. reservation and transit systems, communication programs, online information) and on-the-ground active management of visitors and wildlife have mitigated the effects of rising visitation on the park's resources and the visitor experience; however, as noted in the *State of the Park Assessment*, some park infrastructure and facilities in key locations are now at or near capacity more frequently, and for longer periods. A fundamental challenge for the next decade will be finding safe, effective, and sustainable approaches to shaping visitor expectations, managing further increases in visitation, and minimizing congestion-related delays while sustaining the ecological and heritage values intrinsic to Banff and the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

In addition to increasing in number, Banff's visitors are becoming increasingly diverse. To ensure the park is welcoming, fully inclusive and relevant to changing visitor expectations and social profiles, future park services and programs will need to be based on a thorough understanding of the significance of the place, patterns of visitor use, the carrying capacity of specific locations, the desired visitor experience, and the impact on ecological values. They must also take into consideration people's diverse abilities, motivations and interests in visiting the park, and Parks Canada's mandate to foster appreciation and enjoyment of these special places.

All of the challenges above may be exacerbated by other large-scale factors such as climate warming and random natural events such as fire. Canadians have come to expect that Parks Canada should model sustainability in every aspect of its operations, infrastructure, and management, meeting or exceeding that of other protected areas. Developing and implementing a broad suite of policies to address the park's sustainability will be key to assuring the park's future ability to deliver on its mandate.

Another key goal for Parks Canada is to advance the Government of Canada's commitment toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, through meaningful, on-the-ground action and activities. At the time the park was established, the historical conservation ethic resulted in severing the connections of Indigenous communities to their ancestral homelands; this in turn has meant that colonial thinking and values have shaped park management and conservation. Parks Canada is working to set a different approach for the future, one in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems are both valued and applied to park management.

Current relationships between Parks Canada and Indigenous communities with cultural connections to the area vary widely, with most in their nascent stage. Cultural practices in the park by some groups have been undertaken for decades, while others are only recently contemplating or undertaking such activities. Some inroads have been made in recent years, but there is still much work to be done to ensure Indigenous peoples feel appreciated, meaningfully included, and able to practice their culture on the land. There are also substantial opportunities for others to see and experience the rich and vibrant contribution that Indigenous peoples can make to the park.

## 4.0 Development of the Management Plan

This plan was developed concurrently with the management plans for Jasper, Kootenay, Yoho, Waterton Lakes, Mount Revelstoke and Glacier national parks, as these places share many of the same challenges, opportunities, stakeholders and visitors. This synchronized approach allowed for a landscape-level coordination of approaches to protecting resources, managing visitor use and other key aspects of Parks Canada's work.

Banff National Park is privileged to have a large, diverse group of keenly interested Indigenous communities, park users, business operators, volunteers, residents, staff, academics, and others who wish to contribute to park planning, decision-making, long-term sustainability, and cultural continuity. Their views were sought during two phases of the public and Indigenous engagement program. Phase one of the program focused on scoping the draft plan's vision, guiding values and principles, and special areas for attention. Through meetings, surveys and other sources, over 4,500 comments were received, ranging from a few words to multi-page submissions. Along with

- the lessons, successes and direction of previous management plans;
- Parks Canada's legislative obligations including but not limited to the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations, *Species at Risk Act* and the *Accessible Canada Act*;
- Parks Canada's relevant policy framework including but not limited to *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, *Ski Area Management Guidelines*, *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodation and Hostels*, and the *Management Bulletin for Recreational Activities and Special Event Assessments*;
- the *State of the Park Assessment* (Parks Canada 2018) presenting the current condition of key indicators;
- Parks Canada and Government of Canada priorities and direction;
- relevant research and trends; and
- changes in the local and regional environment, technology, and best practices;

The feedback received was considered in developing a draft management plan.

In phase two of the engagement program, the draft management plan was presented to Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the general public for further review and comment. Hundreds of oral comments and over 2,100 written submissions were received in response. This feedback was used to further refine the direction and language of the final plan.

## 5.0 Vision

*Banff National Park reveals the majesty and timelessness of the Rocky Mountains and embodies the intrinsic value of natural landscapes: a place where nature comes first and where people can experience, learn about and be moved by it on its own terms. Setting a global example for other protected areas, the park plays an important role in maintaining regional biodiversity and addressing climate change. It is a place where there is respectful space for a diversity of people, perspectives, knowledge and cultures, and where park objectives are achieved through innovative, tried-and-true approaches.*

With ecological integrity as the guidepost, experiences in Banff are firmly rooted in its distinct landscape, ecosystems, history and cultures. The park's natural rhythm, its waters and wildlife, the art and literature it inspires, and the traditions of wilderness adventure, conservation leadership and learning that evolved here are valued and celebrated by people from around the world. Indigenous peoples, as the original inhabitants and stewards of the lands and waters of Banff, have a meaningful role in its presentation, management and decisions. Their history, their contemporary experiences and their contributions are

shared with park visitors with integrity and accuracy. Ongoing Indigenous presence is a core part of the park's richness and sense of place.

Whether people enjoy the park virtually or in person, they are inspired by its unique blend of nature, culture, and adventure. Visitor infrastructure, facilities, programs, services and equipment are planned, designed and implemented with a spectrum of visitor characteristics in mind including age, ability, ethnic and cultural background, gender identity and expression, and economic status. A complement of services to facilitate their exploration of the park is centralized in the village of Lake Louise and the town of Banff. Both communities are thoughtfully planned and sustainably managed.

Consequently, people find the park welcoming and inclusive. They enjoy authentic experiences that reflect Banff's unique history and landscape, in ways that are safe and respectful of the park's ecology and character, and as a result, visitors are inspired to become part of the shared enterprise of sustaining and preserving all that is valued about Banff, the national parks system, and the environment as a whole.

Visitor experiences are supported with safe facilities and infrastructure that are compatible with the national park setting without dominating it, and by an integrated, efficient system of trails and transportation choices that encourage them to explore the park in a sustainable fashion. They can conveniently plan and book their activities, transportation, accommodation and parking through an integrated online portal before leaving their homes.

The park is managed in an inclusive, open fashion, never losing sight of the fact that it is intended as a legacy for all Canadians. Above all else, Banff National Park is a place of wonder and connection, where the richness and importance of the place are appreciated and respected.

## 6.0 Key Strategies

Key strategies outline the broad approaches that will be used to manage Banff National Park, consistent with the mandate of Parks Canada and its inclusion as part of the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. They describe how the park's main challenges and opportunities will be addressed over the ten-year span of the plan. The accompanying objectives describe the desired outcomes of each strategy's successful implementation, while the targets identify tangible steps that demonstrate measurable progress toward achieving those objectives. Where a time frame is not mentioned in the target, it should be considered an ongoing activity deliverable within the span of this plan. Barring the unexpected, the commitments in the plan are feasible within the scope of the park's funding and human resources.

Key strategies are not isolated from one another; they must be considered as a whole in order to understand the cumulative effect geared toward achieving the vision of the park and the Parks Canada mandate. It is also important to note that while the key strategies below represent Parks Canada's best plan for moving forward, park management takes place in a dynamic environment where there are always uncertainties, natural variability, new technologies, and new information and outcomes to be considered. Consequently, Parks Canada uses an adaptive management approach where, after careful monitoring of on-the-ground indicators, strategies may be adjusted to improve decision-making and management effectiveness.

### **Key Strategy 1: Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage**

The protection of natural and cultural resources and park landscapes is core to the purpose of the park's existence, and maintaining and restoring ecological integrity is the first priority in park management. Parks Canada's approach to conserving these important aspects will be guided by an understanding of and respect for the significance of the place and its natural and cultural values. Knowing that uncertainties exist, Parks Canada's ecosystem management, conservation and restoration initiatives will be built on the

best available science and Indigenous knowledge in support of a precautionary, adaptive approach that provides for evolution of management policies and practices based on the monitoring of outcomes.

Cultural resources are often the least well-understood of all the park's resources. They may include tangible heritage such as built places, landscapes, objects, songs, and art, or intangible heritage associated with past and present human use such as stories, customs, beliefs, traditions, knowledge, and language. Their preservation and protection are important as they represent our collective, yet diverse experiences and values, and they shape who we are today. Parks Canada's efforts in this plan will focus on identifying the park's cultural resources and understanding their significance from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, caring for them respectfully, and presenting them in a way that is culturally sensitive, accessible and gives them meaning in the contemporary world.

To date, there remains a clear gap regarding respectful recognition and weaving together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems for the purpose of better understanding and managing natural and cultural resources. As the protocols and interest of Indigenous knowledge holders allows, Parks Canada will seek input and advice on new restoration and conservation projects and current resource management challenges.

The park's natural resources are generally more familiar and better understood. These resources include aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, natural vegetation communities and habitats. For the park's ecological integrity to be maintained, it is important to ensure not only the natural diversity of these resources, but also the ongoing presence of their natural processes, composition and abundance.

The functioning of Banff's aquatic and riparian areas is critical to the park's overall ecosystem integrity and to the well-being of downstream natural and human communities. One of the greatest impacts to freshwater connectivity in the park stems from hydro-electric dam infrastructure and operations on both the Cascade and the Spray rivers where native fish species-at-risk have been and are being displaced. Restoring and protecting riparian and aquatic areas, and specifically addressing flows in the Spray and Cascade rivers is a priority for the park.

Similarly, native vegetation communities have a large role to play in the park's ecological integrity. Besides their ecological benefits, forests, alpine meadows and riparian areas also have great cultural, aesthetic and spiritual importance. Maintaining natural vegetation to preserve dynamic plant communities, their patterns and abundance is a key goal for Parks Canada. This will occur by allowing natural processes to safely occur, as well as taking additional management action through prescribed fires, non-native plant management, re-routing trails or other actions to protect sensitive or at-risk vegetation species such as whitebark pine and limber pine.

Grizzly bears, mountain goats, wolves, cougars and wolverines are sensitive and important species for Banff National Park and the region. To a significant degree, their long-term sustainability relies on managing impacts related to human use such as disturbance and displacement. In the interests of seeing stable or improving populations of these species, Parks Canada's management efforts will concentrate on improving public awareness and minimizing human-wildlife conflict, improving habitat quality, security, and connectivity where possible, and minimizing road and rail mortality.

A variety of activities will continue to be employed, including:

- working with CP Rail on mitigating the effects of the railway and on efficient sharing of information in emergency management and/or incident response situations;
- collaborating with land managers in neighbouring areas on shared challenges and initiatives;
- assessing opportunities to decommission and relocate trails and other facilities out of high-quality habitat to settings that offer improved recreational experiences but lower habitat value;
- actively managing human disturbance in corridors and critical habitat so that current levels of use by wary and sensitive species are maintained or improved;
- educating visitors on safe enjoyment and responsible behaviours around wildlife, reconfiguring or relocating facilities; and
- managing access and/or group size. Access management will be used only to the degree necessary to effectively protect resources.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that the park's natural and cultural resources are protected for future generations. The security and long-term sustainability of sensitive land-based and aquatic species is critical for regional and landscape-level conservation. Key efforts and initiatives from the previous management plan will continue, such as restoring the connectivity, function and natural biota of streams and lakes, using prescribed fire, forest thinning, and other measures aimed at ensuring a natural vegetation mosaic, and enabling wildlife to safely use important habitat areas and movement corridors.

This strategy is closely connected to strategies pertaining to climate change, regional connectivity, and stewardship, as well as outreach and communication activities that help park visitors, residents, and businesses understand the benefits of conservation and how to adapt their actions to support Parks Canada's efforts. It is also linked with strategies and activities that will improve visitor experience and the inclusion of Indigenous groups and their knowledge systems in the management of park resources.

**Objective 1.1:** The park's significance as a cultural landscape is better understood and its cultural resources are identified, preserved and protected in ways that respect their diverse origins, as well as their past and present significance.

#### Targets

- As the protocols and interests of Indigenous knowledge holders allows, an updated inventory of cultural sites and objects in the park that are important to Indigenous peoples, and a Cultural Resource Management Plan describing improved protocols and practices for the management of these sites and objects is completed in a way that respects the significance, origins and ownership of the material.
- By 2030, an updated inventory of cultural resources in Banff National Park is integrated with the park's other comprehensive resource data bases (GIS systems). In collaboration with Indigenous communities and stakeholders, a plan is developed describing the most respectful care and long-term treatment for these resources.
- By 2030, Parks Canada's understanding of the variety of cultural resources in Banff National Park, including tangible and intangible resources and cultural practices, is enhanced through collaborative research and projects with Indigenous communities and other organizations.
- By 2030, the condition ratings of Banff's Federal Heritage Buildings rated as good will increase from 22 percent to 50 percent, and building conservation maintenance plans will be completed for all 22 buildings.
- The approved management plans or statements for five national historic sites that Parks Canada manages directly in Banff National Park are implemented to ensure protection and presentation of these important resources. These sites include: the Cave and Basin National Historic Site, the Banff Park Museum National Historic Site, the Sulphur Mountain Cosmic Ray Station National Historic Site, Howse Pass National Historic Site, and Kicking Horse Pass National Historic Site, the latter resting in both Banff and Yoho national parks.
- Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin, declared a national historic site in 1992 for its construction in the rustic design tradition and its association with outdoor recreation in the national parks, has been negatively impacted by the effects of climate change. Slope erosion and glacial recession have caused structural damage to the hut despite extensive stabilization efforts and interventions made to preserve the structure. Consequently, Parks Canada has made the difficult decision to dismantle and substantially remove the Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin from its current location. In consultation with Indigenous groups, the Alpine Club of Canada, stakeholders and the public, Parks Canada will identify options for continuing to commemorate the story of the Abbot Pass Hut and its importance to the history of architecture and mountaineering in Canada.
- By 2026, a Cultural Resource Values Statement that identifies human history themes and cultural resources is completed, in collaboration with Indigenous groups and others.
- Key aspects of Banff's human history, cultural resources and its national historic sites are linked to the broader landscape, park management challenges, and modern visitor experiences, using a range of innovative and engaging learning opportunities to keep these stories alive and relevant.

**Objective 1.2:** With consideration for the landscape-level context and the need to adapt our management approach in response to climate change, more of the park’s aquatic ecosystems reflect water quality and levels at benchmark standards, support native species at self-sustaining population levels, and provide for effective species connectivity.

#### Targets

- By 2030, there are stable or improving measures for freshwater ecosystems.
- By 2027, the park’s wetlands are mapped, including clear identification of high-priority areas where amphibian occupancy may be affected. Remediation plans are in place for high-priority areas.
- By 2030, in coordination with the province of Alberta, Parks Canada will work with TransAlta to restore and maintain flows in the Spray and Cascade rivers such that they can support and maintain a native fish population.
- By 2030, at least four high-priority waterbodies (stream segments or lakes) in the park are restored to a condition that will support native fish and other aquatic life.
- In collaboration with the Province of Alberta and adjacent mountain national parks, the introduction of non-native species into the park’s aquatic ecosystems from all watercraft, gear, and recreation is prevented.
- By 2030, the water quality in all reaches of the Bow River is maintained or improved, so as to meet or exceed upstream reference conditions at the monitoring locations downstream of Lake Louise and where the river flows out of the park, and the highest water quality is maintained in all other rivers originating in the park.
- By 2030, important values—such as nesting and rearing habitat for waterfowl—are maintained or restored in the Bow River and its associated riparian areas, and the likelihood of transmission of non-native invasive species is reduced through careful management of activities. All outlying facility wastewater effluent treatment and management systems consistently meet or exceed applicable provincial standards of practice or higher federal standards. Where wastewater effluent is discharged to surface waters, all communities and outlying facilities consistently meet or exceed Parks Canada Mountain National Parks targets for treatment system end-of-pipe parameters as follows:

| Parameter  | Parks Canada Targets      |
|--|---------------------------|
| Total Phosphorus (mg/L)                                    | <0.15                     |
| Fecal Coliforms (CFU/100 mL)                               | <20 (end-of-pipe)         |
| Solids, total suspended (mg/L)                             | <10                       |
| 5-Day Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD <sub>5</sub> ) (mg/L) | <10 (summer) <20 (winter) |
| Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> – N) (mg/L)                       | <1 (summer) <5 (winter)   |
| Chlorine (Alberta standard)                                | 0.10 mg/L                 |

Where the treated effluent is discharged to ground or to receiving waterbodies where there is insufficient dilution, site-specific evaluations are required and applied to address human health or ecological risk factors.

- Groundwater and wastewater treatment systems are effectively managed through a groundwater monitoring network in nodes of high human use where groundwater resources may be limited such as Lake Louise and Johnston Canyon.

**Objective 1.3:** The ability of key species to thrive in Banff National Park improves.

Targets

- By 2030, the effectiveness of wildlife corridors in the park will be maintained or improved from ratings in the 2018 *State of the Park Assessment* with a focus on the Industrial Compound-Fenlands, Fairview, Whitehorn, Norquay-Cascade, Sulphur Mountain, Tunnel Mountain Bench, and Golf Course corridors, through habitat-management and/or people-management approaches.
- By 2030, priority informal trails (i.e. user-created trails that are not authorized or maintained by Parks Canada) in the area defined as the “Lands Adjacent to the town of Banff” are reduced from 2019 levels by 20 percent.
- Subject to the interests and capacities of the partner organizations, Parks Canada works with partners to coordinate efforts to promote wildlife co-existence at a regional level.
- By 2024, human-wildlife conflict within the park is reduced from 2019 (as a percentage of total visitation) through implementation of an updated, park-specific human-wildlife safety management plan that considers current visitor use patterns and monitoring data. The plan describes proactive activities to reduce risk (including public communication/education), criteria for intervention, the scope of possible actions and the internal protocols (including public communication) for each action.
- By 2023, the long-term feasibility of bison reintroduction to Banff National Park is determined through evaluation of the five-year Plains Bison Reintroduction Pilot Project as described in the re-introduction plan.
- Within the life of this plan, in collaboration with external researchers, Parks Canada will refine the Grizzly Bear Habitat Security Model to better consider habitat suitability/importance for a range of sensitive or wary species in addition to grizzly bears, with consideration for season, the types/levels of disturbance, and connectivity between habitat patches. By 2030, habitat security for important species is maintained or improved.
- Parks Canada continues to work with Canadian Pacific Railway to reduce wildlife mortality and other environmental impacts associated with the rail line.

**Objective 1.4:** The ecological integrity of park vegetation communities is improved through targeted restoration actions.

Targets

- By 2030, invasive vegetation species diversity, extent and distribution is decreased from 2019 values in wilderness areas and sensitive habitats where introduction or proliferation of non-native vegetation would have significant impacts on ecological integrity.
- By 2030, the diversity and extent of priority invasive vegetation species in Zones IV and V does not increase from 2019 values.
- Landscape reclamation/restoration plans are prepared and implemented for new construction projects and priority historically disturbed sites in the park.
- By 2025, a restoration plan is developed and approved for the Castle Junction Tradewaste Site.
- By 2030, improved ecological integrity is supported through prescribed fire and wildfire, with 50 percent of the annual expected burned area achieved (1,400 hectares per year based on long-term fire cycles), and Indigenous groups having the opportunity to be engaged in and contribute to fire management actions.

**Objective 1.5:** The status of local species-at-risk populations is improved through park management, conservation and education measures.

#### Targets

- Recovery measures described in the *Multi-Species Action Plan for Banff National Park of Canada* (Parks Canada 2017) are implemented. Recovery measures for woodland caribou are coordinated with the work of other mountain parks, in particular Jasper National Park, as part of *Parks Canada's Conservation Strategy for Southern Mountain Caribou* (Parks Canada 2011).
- Through targeted communications and educational programs, stakeholders and visitors have the tools and information needed to understand and support conservation of species at risk.

#### Key Strategy 2: True-To-Place Experiences

National parks provide exceptional opportunities for Canadians to develop a sense of connection to their natural and cultural heritage. The opportunity to be immersed in nature, history and diverse cultures while surrounded by true wilderness and mountain landscapes is truly distinctive. Maintaining the authenticity and quality of this experience while ensuring that visitors understand its uniqueness is central to Parks Canada's mandate. Visitor opportunities will be characterized by ecological sustainability, recognition of diverse visitor motivations and expectations, and compatibility with the place. Activities and communications will be designed to advance understanding and stewardship of natural and cultural resources, encouraging all to share the responsibility of conserving these special places for future generations.

National park experiences are intended to capture the real places, activities and stories that define Canada; in short, they stem from and are genuinely rooted in authenticity and location. Authentic experiences have more meaning for most visitors and can foster their sense of attachment to and appreciation for the value of national parks. This is critical for respectful park use and for long-term support of Parks Canada's efforts where relatively undisturbed natural environments form the primary attraction or setting.

An authentic experience in Banff is one that clearly arises out of the park's distinctive landscape and views, its special cultural and natural features, and the specific human history of the area. It is designed to share something unique to Banff and invite active engagement with the park's core ideas and themes. It cannot be transferred elsewhere without losing meaning. Similarly, visitor experiences found in other locations and settings might not be authentic in Banff National Park.

An authentic experience where visitors can hear about Indigenous culture from Indigenous voices is one that acknowledges the histories, cultures and spiritual beliefs of Indigenous groups by presenting them openly, with integrity and truth.

For many people, Banff's undeveloped natural landscapes, where native vegetation and wildlife are present, are integral to the park's identity. They are important not only because of their ecological benefits, but because of their social, recreational and spiritual value. By virtue of the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations, 97 percent of the park is designated as wilderness. This encompasses those areas of the park that are largely or entirely in a natural state, with limited infrastructure, where motorized access is not permitted and human presence is moderate or light. Offering visitors the opportunity to enjoy these areas is essential to achieving Parks Canada's mandate, and to fulfilling the intended legacy of national parks to Canadians.

Quality visitor opportunities should actively accommodate and include people of different social identities and abilities. They should also be authentic, safe and not imperil the visual, natural and cultural aspects of the park that draw people to it. Visitor experience objectives and allowable uses will be based on site-specific resource conditions necessary to preserve the ecological and cultural integrity of the park's resources, on patterns and levels of visitor use, and on the potential risks to people in an emergency. This requires a detailed understanding of the demographics of Banff's current and future visitors, their patterns of park use and expectations, and the physical capacity, condition and use characteristics of the associated facilities and infrastructure, and any known or potential safety issues.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure memorable visitor experiences that reflect and respect both the place and the environment. It is strongly linked to strategies for outreach and communication activities that help park visitors and residents understand the special context of a national park visit and to plan their trip accordingly, as well as strategies for managing development and protecting natural and cultural resources.

**Objective 2.1:** Banff's visitor experiences are rooted in its distinctive culture and nature, and supported by revitalized and well-maintained core components that include camping sites, trails and scenic roads.

#### Targets

- Indigenous histories, cultures and presence in the park are represented with truth and integrity and shared through Indigenous voices.
- Authenticity is a priority criterion for Parks Canada when reviewing and determining whether to support applications/proposals for businesses, new visitor activities, facilities, and events.
- The capacity of others to accurately and effectively present Banff-specific stories and information is increased through collaborative work with guiding organizations, business operators and other partners.
- In collaboration with other mountain parks, the commercial guiding licensing process is reviewed and refined to maintain or improve the quality of guiding services, establish consistent standards for all guides, ensure fair and equitable opportunities to obtain business licenses, and provide a fair return to Canadians.
- Special events that provide opportunities for people to respectfully enjoy and learn about the natural and cultural features of the park, which can be implemented safely, meet high standards for low energy use, waste and carbon emissions, and are compatible with other ongoing visitor uses, park operations and protection, are permitted.
- By 2025, a 20-year Visitor Asset Sustainability Plan is completed detailing the strategies, resources and actions necessary to optimize asset performance, climate change resiliency and sustainability for the park's key facilities and supporting infrastructure, and prioritizing for action those where there are safety, ecological or cultural resource concerns.

**Objective 2.2:** Through site-specific visitor use management planning, Banff's visitor experiences foster appreciation and safe enjoyment of the park without harming the park's resources or impairing natural processes.

#### Targets

- The foundation for managing visitor use is supported by the compilation of site-specific data which describes:
  - the characteristics of the area's visitors, their motivations and patterns of use;
  - the physical capacity, condition and characteristics of visitor facilities and infrastructure;
  - the current ecological conditions and objectives for the area; and
  - any known or potential issues related to visitor experience, safety, sensitive resources or resource protection.
- Using the data above, site-specific visitor use management planning occurs for high-priority areas (i.e. those areas identified through the data collection above where visitor experience/safety and/or cultural or natural resource protection issues are identified). This planning process includes identifying:
  - desired visitor experience objectives and ecological conditions for a specific site/area;
  - potential compatible types and levels of visitor use;
  - required infrastructure and services, monitoring indicators and thresholds; and
  - strategies to achieve or maintain the desired conditions.
- Stakeholders are engaged in the development of these plans and when completed, there is timely communication about visitor use of the site to manage expectations and support trip planning.

**Objective 2.3:** Visitor experiences in Banff’s wilderness (Zone II) areas are sustainable, within site-specific physical limits, and do not impair ecological integrity.

#### Targets

- Outdoor recreation activities within the capacity of the park ecosystem which require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities are supported. Development of commercial roofed accommodation in this zone is not permitted with the possible exception of new huts at or above treeline in cases where there are demonstrable, persistent public safety risks over and above what is normally expected in that context, and that can be addressed with good user preparation. They must be of the smallest size needed to address the identified safety risks, and subject to a determination that there will be no adverse environmental impacts.
- The size of groups using wilderness (Zone II) areas overnight is limited to a maximum of ten people, with exceptions provided only where there is an existing land use or other agreement in place expressly allowing for larger groups. Parks Canada collaborates with organizations offering existing large group camps to evolve their group sizes to align with wilderness character and site-specific environmental objectives by 2027.
- Motorized conveyances (i.e. snowmobiles, ATVs, and pedal-assist or throttle-controlled e-bikes) are not permitted.
- Commercial and private horse use occurs only in designated areas, and is managed to prevent environmental impacts, and where such impacts have already occurred, to allow impacted resources to recover.
- The intensity and patterns of wilderness use is monitored to evaluate effects on habitat security and wilderness character, particularly in those areas seeing high levels of day use such as Sunshine Meadows, Skoki, Egypt Lake–Redearth Creek, and areas adjacent to the Icefields Parkway.
- Trails and facilities in wilderness areas (Zone II) are reviewed against Parks Canada standards, and priority areas requiring management attention are identified.
- By 2025, the Bryant and Egypt Lake shelters are replaced consistent with the location and Parks Canada standards for such facilities.

#### Key Strategy 3: Strengthening Indigenous Relations

The Government of Canada has committed to deepen and strengthen relationships with Indigenous peoples. Accordingly, many places administered by Parks Canada are managed through cooperative management bodies or advisory relationships with local Indigenous communities. These structures recognize the important and ongoing roles and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples as stewards of heritage places. With approaches founded in renewed relationships, respect and cooperation, the mountain national parks will continue to recognize Indigenous connections and work with Indigenous peoples to advance priorities of mutual interest.

Long before Banff National Park was established, Indigenous peoples were the original residents and stewards of the land and waters in the area, which were used for sustenance, ceremony, travel and trade. They have a deep, longstanding connection with the area and have expressed a clear interest in supporting its conservation and protection by weaving Indigenous cultures, histories, stewardship principles and methods grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems into park management.

Established in 2018, the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle has been an important means for Parks Canada to better understand Indigenous perspectives and priorities for their future relationship with Parks Canada and their desired role in the park. This interest-based group—comprised of the Bearspaw, Chiniki and Wesley First Nations, the Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani First Nations, the Tsuut’ina First Nation and the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3—meets four times each year and works together according to the terms of reference developed by the group. As per their terms of reference, there is potential for the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle to expand its membership in future at the discretion of the group. The objectives and targets in this strategy were developed with the sage advice and input of the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle.

The goal of this strategy is to affirm the important and ongoing role of the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle, and with its guidance, ensure that there is an open, welcoming environment for Indigenous peoples with connections to the park—an environment that respects the integrity of Indigenous knowledge systems, and engages those systems in collaborative, meaningful ways. This strategy also seeks to: restore the connection of Indigenous peoples to their traditional territory and cultural practices, support them in sharing and preserving their cultures, and facilitate their participation in the economic benefits associated with this special place. The objectives and targets below are intended for implementation throughout the life of this plan, as the priorities and interests of Indigenous partners allow. Parks Canada will also consult and collaborate with individual nations on other projects according to legal obligations and agreements that may be in place, or as new opportunities arise.

Parks Canada's work with Indigenous communities in Banff National Park also supports broader Government of Canada initiatives, such as implementation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations and actions outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The aims of this strategy are linked to key strategies for protection of natural and cultural resources and true-to-place experiences.

**Objective 3.1:** With the guidance of and in collaboration with the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle, Banff National Park is a respectful, inclusive and safe place for Indigenous peoples.

Thinking seven generations into the future, the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle will guide Parks Canada and others in upholding the accurate history and integrity of the Indigenous presence in Banff by:

- directly advising and making recommendations to the park Superintendents on cultural values and awareness, resource conservation, Indigenous inclusion in the life and work of the park, authenticity and other matters of mutual interest;
- acting as a conduit between the member nations and Parks Canada, local government and other organizations;
- sharing information regarding Indigenous history, practices and values within the park as protocols allow;
- describing meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the life and management of the park;
- facilitating the connection to and use of the land by member nations, particularly youth; and
- offering expertise and observations.

#### Targets

- Parks Canada supports the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle work as described in the terms of reference developed and ratified by the group, where representatives identify protocols and priorities for their ongoing work together.
- Parks Canada reports back annually to the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle on implementation of its recommendations.

**Objective 3.2:** The lands and waters that comprise modern-day Banff National Park are managed in ways that respect the cultural and spiritual significance of the place to Indigenous peoples.

#### Targets

- With the support and guidance of Indigenous groups with connections to the park, Parks Canada better understands, acknowledges and includes their perspectives on the histories and importance of the area, and how the park and its resources should be protected and managed in future.
- The historical presence and contemporary importance of Indigenous peoples in the area is consistently recognized by delivering the land acknowledgement vetted by the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle at the start of all formal Parks Canada public programs and events.

- As the protocols and interest of Indigenous groups allows, the inventory of cultural sites and objects in the park that are important to Indigenous peoples is updated, and the protocols and practices for their management are improved. As part of this collaborative effort, the role for Indigenous groups in the ongoing care and management of these resources is defined, and the feasibility of cultural internships that provide opportunities for Indigenous youth to learn about these sites and objects with mentoring from Elders is explored and implemented where possible.
- Indigenous representation in park advisory groups concerned with resource protection and land use is encouraged and welcomed.

**Objective 3.3:** A shared future characterized by sustained mutual respect, understanding and commitment is established through:

- creating opportunities for interaction between Parks Canada staff and Indigenous peoples;
- ensuring Parks Canada staff understand the context of reconciliation, and the history and perspectives of Indigenous groups with an interest in Banff;
- facilitating access and use of the park by Indigenous groups with historical connections it, consistent with the *Canada National Parks Act*; and
- identifying ways to engage Indigenous youth in Banff National Park.

#### Targets

- Indigenous groups and Parks Canada work together on projects of mutual interest.
- Parks Canada staff in Banff participate in cultural awareness and other appropriate training led by Indigenous peoples to increase awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories, perspectives and priorities, and to otherwise prepare them for engaging positively with Indigenous groups, the public and stakeholders regarding reconciliation.
- To ensure their access to and use of the park's lands and waters according to their cultural and spiritual practices, Parks Canada's Indigenous Peoples Open Doors Program is fully implemented with Indigenous groups with traditional connections to the park. Policies are refined to facilitate use of the park for cultural and spiritual practices by these groups.
- Parks Canada facilitates conversations and information exchange between Indigenous groups and Banff businesses, other organizations and residents.
- As the interest and priorities of Indigenous groups allow, at least one co-developed in-park program is implemented to foster the connections of Indigenous youth with the park landscape and their heritage.
- As the interest and priorities of Indigenous groups allow, at least one co-developed program/event/initiative for Indigenous youth in their home communities is implemented, aimed at increasing awareness of Banff National Park and Parks Canada, identifying barriers to access, and encouraging park visits.
- As the interest and priorities of Indigenous groups allow, and supported by networks of key contacts in local and regional Indigenous organizations, a co-developed Indigenous hiring program with an emphasis on youth is implemented.
- All park managers are aware of and apply contracting and procurement policies and practices aimed at maximizing the participation of Indigenous peoples in economic opportunities with Parks Canada in Banff.

#### Key Strategy 4: Connecting with Canadians

It is important to Parks Canada that Canadians understand Banff National Park's special features, its challenges and opportunities, its role in the regional ecosystem and in the history and culture of the many people who were part of the landscape before and since the park came into existence. It is Parks Canada's hope that as people come to understand these aspects of the park, they will come to value and support national parks into the future, and be inspired to engage in conservation and stewardship activities wherever they may live.

To this end, Parks Canada will demonstrate leadership in conservation and education, operational practices, management effectiveness monitoring, and engaging others in the life and work of the park. This will be supported by inclusive opportunities for Canadians and others to follow and meaningfully participate in the programs, planning, challenges and key decisions of the park, not only when they are visiting but from their home communities as well. Inclusion, accessibility, clear objectives, respect for participant time, needs and contribution, and timely communications will be key factors in this regard. The goal of this strategy is to build a constituency of knowledgeable, enthusiastic park supporters, particularly among young adults, youth and newcomers to Canada, and to enable them to learn about, engage in, and contribute to the park's conservation efforts and decisions. It is connected to and supports strategies concerning protection of natural and cultural resources, addressing climate change and sustainable operations.

**Objective 4.1:** A constituency of knowledgeable, enthusiastic park supporters is established through the broad, consistent sharing of information, research and monitoring results with Canadians and others around the world.

#### Targets

- In collaboration with local or regional organizations, Parks Canada builds public understanding of the key scientific questions, conditions, research, and conservation activities in Banff National Park, particularly among young adults, youth and new Canadians.
- In collaboration with the tourism industry, trip planning and visitor behaviour is influenced positively through promotional efforts focusing on respectful use of the park and authentic national park experiences.
- Parks Canada's global leadership in the development of protected area policy and science is demonstrated by hosting at least one international delegation every three years, contributing to the development of national policy or best management practices, and publishing peer-reviewed papers or reports.
- The stories featured by Parks Canada in personal and non-personal media consider and reflect the full diversity of the park's cultural histories and perspectives.
- All large-scale development projects and key Parks Canada projects such as natural area restoration, historic building conservation, salvage or research archaeology and trail relocation include a proactive public education component that is implemented concurrently with the project.
- By 2027, interpretive and outreach plans are updated to reflect the human history themes and Cultural Resource Values Statement for the park.
- Banff National Park information is effectively shared with Canadians through new and existing technologies, social and electronic media, in-person activities, and partner organizations.

**Objective 4.2:** Canadians have meaningful opportunities for engagement in key park management activities.

#### Targets

- Park stakeholders are engaged in park management through the Lake Louise Advisory Board and the Banff National Park Management Plan Round Table, as described in their respective terms of reference.
- By 2023, two new cultural resource volunteer engagement programs are developed, with one targeted specifically at young adults and another at youth. In collaboration with Indigenous groups, educational institutions, Parks Canada Campus Clubs, etc., one or more of these new programs is accompanied by an outreach strategy so participants and others may stay connected with the park from their own communities.
- By 2030, participation in the park's volunteer program is increased by 20 percent from 2019 levels.
- Indigenous groups and others are consistently notified and appropriately offered the opportunity to express their views on the development of park regulations and community plans, the formulation and review of management plans, and proposals for large-scale development in advance of any decisions being made.

## Key Strategy 5: Managing Development

Ecological integrity will be the first priority in park management, including in managing development or redevelopment. Parks Canada's approach will be transparent and consistent, and will continue to respect limits, zoning and declared wilderness designations. Any development considered must demonstrably support the vision and objectives of each park as described in its Park Management Plan. Development will facilitate greater awareness and connection to natural and cultural spaces, and aim to protect the qualities that make these places distinctive for future generations.

Some development is essential to allow visitors to explore, experience and learn about the national park. When thoughtfully designed and located, development can directly reinforce connection to the natural, cultural and human history of the park, and encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of mountain landscapes. It can also help protect the natural environment from the degradation that sometimes accompanies high human use.

Development must be compatible with and generate a net benefit to the achievement of the park's mandate. It must support accessibility and inclusion, as well as the park's ecological, cultural, visitor safety and experience objectives. It must not, however, compromise the scenic splendor for which the park has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, nor the distinctive natural, cultural and wilderness qualities that draw people to Banff.

Over many decades, stakeholders have consistently affirmed the importance of limiting commercial development in the park. Accordingly, through policy and legislation, Parks Canada has put in place a framework that limits the amount of commercial development that may occur within each community, at ski areas, and at outlying commercial accommodations. Adherence to these legal limits and respect for the policy framework will continue to be a cornerstone for Parks Canada's approach in managing future development. Redevelopment of existing commercial facilities to the maximum allowed under the lease or licence of occupation and consistent with applicable policy may be considered subject to environmental considerations.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that the park's distinctive scenic viewsapes, wilderness expanse, and ecological integrity are protected and preserved intact for the future, while allowing for development that considers the needs of visitors, and is accessible and inclusive. It links to and is supported by other key strategies and actions related to authenticity and quality experiences that are genuinely true-to-place.

**Objective 5.1:** Land use and development respects Parks Canada's policy framework and is consistent with applicable legislation.

### Targets

- Development or redevelopment in the park communities is within legislated community boundaries. Commercial development—which includes but is not limited to development for the primary purpose of providing or supporting, in whole or in part, the purchase, rental or sale of goods, services, overnight accommodation, and other commodities—conforms to the approved Community Plan, does not exceed the maximum permitted floor area and is within the commercial zones described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.
- All development outside of the park communities conforms with: applicable federal statutes including the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations, the *National Parks of Canada Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*, applicable provincial statutes and codes, site-specific land use agreements, and relevant Parks Canada policy. For outlying commercial accommodation and hostels, relevant policy includes but is not limited to the *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountain National Parks*. For ski areas, it includes but is not limited to Parks Canada's *Ski Area Management Guidelines*, the approved resort-specific site guidelines and long-range plans. Approved long-range plans typically contain detailed descriptions for development and growth within the prescribed limits established in site guidelines. On this basis, it is anticipated that projects described in these documents will be advanced and considered for development.

- Outside park communities, no new lands are alienated for commercial development through lease, licence of occupation or other agreement, except for needed water, wastewater, or power infrastructure that is ancillary to (i.e. secondary, subordinate to, and in support of) the primary existing and approved use of an adjacent lease.
- The developed footprint at the park level is maintained or reduced from 2021 levels (note that the “developed area” for ski areas is defined and mapped as part of their approved site guidelines and considered in the park’s current developed footprint, even though specific development projects within that footprint may not be completed for some time).

**Objective 5.2:** Barriers to park users and staff with disabilities are identified, prevented and removed.

Targets

- According to the standards developed by the Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization under the *Accessible Canada Act*, a remediation plan for Parks Canada facilities and services is in place, with identified priorities and timeframes.
- Parks Canada works with local individuals, organizations and experts to ensure accessibility is considered in all stages of developing or upgrading public facilities, services or programs.

**Objective 5.3:** New development or redevelopment is consistent with and supports the purpose, importance and character of the park, does not interfere with or dominate park features, has no significant adverse impacts on park resources, and where possible, contributes positively to the surrounding environment and addressing climate change impacts.

Target

- By 2023, the process documentation and application forms for development proposals clearly communicate that proposals for new developments or substantial redevelopments (as determined by Parks Canada) will be evaluated based on the degree to which the proposal:
  - is congruent with the park as a protected area, and reflects and supports the park’s distinctive character, and ecological and cultural values;
  - minimizes its carbon footprint through efficient use of energy, water and sustainable materials in construction;
  - includes pollution- and waste-reduction measures, and use of renewable energy;
  - incorporates design for retention and onsite absorption of storm water;
  - uses siting to create buffers for sensitive species while supporting permeability and habitat security for wildlife; and
  - includes landscaping with native, non-flammable vegetation that is not attractive to wildlife.

**Objective 5.4:** The process for reviewing and considering large-scale development or redevelopment proposals is open and transparent, and one in which Indigenous groups and the public can access information and express views before decisions are made.

Targets

- In advance of any final decisions being made, Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public are consistently notified of and offered the opportunity to comment on projects outside the community of Banff:
  - that are “designated projects” under the *Impact Assessment Act*, and/or
  - that require a Detailed Impact Assessment as per Parks Canada policy, and/or
  - where the project may be perceived as having impacts on: Constitutionally-protected rights, the ability of Parks Canada to achieve its mandate at a local and regional level, or as having significant adverse environmental effects.
- For projects inside the community of Banff, public notification of development proposals is consistent with the approved municipal bylaws respecting development permit applications and any requirements of the *Impact Assessment Act*.

**Objective 5.5:** Parks Canada leads in sustainable development and operational practices.

Targets

- In accordance with the *Mountain Parks Aggregate Management Strategy* (2019), aggregate resources required for development or redevelopment and/or ongoing road maintenance are obtained from outside the park, or when that is not feasible, aggregate may be obtained from within the park using the considerations outlined in the strategy. Before any gravel is extracted from park lands, a full life-cycle plan will be developed including active pit reclamation, restoration, environmental considerations, and identifying financial resources. This will be reflected in an environmental assessment and funding for the extraction activity.
- By 2024, a decommissioning plan is in place to address Parks Canada assets that are no longer required. It includes a remediation, reclamation or restoration strategy for soil and vegetation where feasible, and cultural resource and species habitat evaluations as required.
- By 2024, an approved spill management protocol is completed and implemented to protect groundwater, watercourses and terrestrial resources from polluting substances.
- Parks Canada collaborates with federal, provincial, municipal and local partners to identify sustainability and climate adaptation best practices for construction projects.
- Parks Canada implements green procurement practices according to Agency guidelines and commitments.

**Key Strategy 6: Regional Connectivity and Landscapes**

The mountain national parks will strive to contribute to landscape-scale conservation in Canada by being ecologically and socially connected across boundaries. Many aspects of park management such as ecological restoration, emergency preparedness, climate change mitigation and adaptation, wildlife corridors, and tourism function over a broad region within and beyond park borders. Parks Canada will aim to maintain and expand regional collaboration to better monitor, understand and address these and other landscape-level issues.

The biodiversity and cultural relevance of protected areas does not stand in isolation; it is intimately connected to the surrounding landscapes. Collaborative planning and action at the landscape scale can maximize the quality of existing habitat and effectiveness of corridors, increase the quantity of habitat through protected area establishment or other management actions, minimize the impacts of specific land use, and help increase resilience to climate change by linking landscapes and allowing ecological processes to take place across previously fragmented areas. It can also foster coordinated or enhanced visitor opportunities and disseminate the benefits of tourism on a broader scale.

The land adjacent to Banff National Park is designated for multiple uses, including agriculture, resource extraction, tourism and recreation. Consideration of this regional context is critical to developing an early, shared understanding of priorities, to identifying opportunities for coordination and consistent public communications, and to understanding the potential impacts and synergies of management actions.

Coordinating regional land management strategies with Indigenous groups and neighbouring jurisdictions is a priority. This includes actively seeking, encouraging and participating in the development of regional resource management, tourism, transportation and tourism/recreational plans.

The goal of this strategy is to improve management of the park's natural and cultural resources and services to its visitors by sharing best land-management practices and tools, and by coordinating, collaborating, monitoring and planning at the landscape level in Alberta and British Columbia. It is strongly linked to and supports other strategies relating to quality visitor experiences, visitor communication and education, and resource conservation, and will help ensure collaborative protection and presentation of the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

**Objective 6.1:** Land management, protection of natural and cultural resources and the provision of visitor experiences is coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries.

#### Targets

- Parks Canada's contribution to addressing landscape-level challenges and opportunities increases through collaboration and strategic participation in pan-boundary/interagency groups where the focus is on issues and regional initiatives concerned with: joint prescribed fire planning and fuel management, coordinated response to human-wildlife conflict, recovery of species-at-risk, watershed management, control of invasive species, tourism and visitor management, climate change, human-wildlife co-existence and bison conservation.
- Over the life of this plan, Parks Canada collaborates with neighbouring jurisdictions and organizations such as the Government of Alberta and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative to improve or maintain the effectiveness of priority terrestrial and aquatic corridors extending beyond the eastern park boundaries to provincial lands.
- Through specific data-sharing agreements, publications, and the Open Government Portal, Parks Canada shares ecological monitoring data and peer-reviewed research with organizations/adjacent jurisdictions.

#### Key Strategy 7: Climate Change

The mountain national parks were established to protect and represent specific features of Canada's natural heritage. They include some of Canada's most significant landscapes and natural and cultural resources, which are already affected by climate change. As such, these parks offer excellent opportunities to contribute to an understanding of climate change and its impacts over time. Parks Canada is committed to protecting park ecosystems for future generations by demonstrating leadership in sustainable operations and adaptive management in response to climate change impacts. The mountain national parks will continue to collaborate with others on climate change research, monitoring and education.

It is clear that the future cumulative impacts of climate warming on Banff's natural and cultural resources, visitation patterns and levels of use could be substantial. These effects may also be felt outside of the park's boundaries. To ensure that Banff National Park continues to successfully deliver on its commitments to Canadians, climate change considerations must be reflected in and across all of Parks Canada's core activities.

The goal of this strategy is to apply a climate change lens to Parks Canada's work in Banff by:

- integrating climate change thinking and action into existing management approaches and operations;
- increasing the capacity of park specialists and managers to achieve Parks Canada's mandate in the context of a warming climate; and
- supporting Government of Canada/Parks Canada commitments with regard to halting biodiversity loss and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

It is closely linked to and supports other key strategies for resource protection, true-to-place experiences, managing development, and moving people sustainably.

**Objective 7.1:** Climate change impacts on park resources, operations, assets and visitation are better understood and adapted to.

#### Targets

- By 2024, the climate change attributes (e.g. reduced snow/frozen ground, shorter winter seasons, extreme weather events, changes in water flows, etc.) that are most important to the park's resource protection, infrastructure maintenance and design, and to park visitation levels, activities and experience, are identified for use in carrying out risk assessments.
- By 2023, the carbon sequestration capacity of the park is identified.

- By 2025, to inform place-based management, a climate change risk assessment for Banff National Park is completed, with the aim of categorizing the risk rating (severity) for the park's natural and cultural resources, built assets, visitor experience, and operations and services. Protection priorities are identified.
- Parks Canada collaborates with Indigenous groups, internal and external experts, and others to share knowledge, criteria and best practices with respect to climate change effects, mitigation and adaptation, and to facilitate the development of predictive models;
- Changes in temperature, precipitation/snowpack, river flow regimes, alpine extent (including deglaciation), use of alpine areas by wildlife, and visitor patterns of use, safety and experience are monitored.
- As opportunities arise, Parks Canada supports or otherwise collaborates on research related to climate change impacts in Banff on natural or cultural resources or visitation.
- By the end of 2024, a baseline inventory of greenhouse gas emissions for Parks Canada's vehicle fleet and facilities in the park is completed.

**Objective 7.2:** Climate change considerations are integrated into planning, operations and decision-making in Banff National Park.

#### Targets

- By 2024, guiding principles for effective decision-making in a climate warming context are developed. These principles, along with park-specific climate change impacts and risk assessments are considered in setting project priorities and in developing annual Parks Canada work plans and budgets;
- By 2024, key managers and staff have a basic understanding of climate change adaptation and mitigation, Parks Canada's *Climate Change Adaptation Framework*, and green procurement. Further, staff involved in the project review, design, construction, maintenance or operation of facilities will have training in the Parks Canada *Asset Sustainability and Resiliency Standard* when it becomes available.
- By 2024, emergency preparedness plans are in place for each community, for all outlying commercial accommodations, and for other areas with high daytime use such as Moraine Lake and Lake Minnewanka. The Business Continuity Plan for Banff National Park is up to date, and the necessary emergency mutual aid agreements are in place.
- Parks Canada participates in transboundary activities to coordinate efforts to protect biodiversity and address climate warming.

**Objective 7.3:** Parks Canada's operational carbon footprint in Banff is reduced.

#### Target

- By 2024, a climate change action plan for Banff National Park is completed, and describes the timeframes and tactics for achieving:
  - development and implementation of a "green worksite" policy to include construction waste management and office/job site recycling;
  - 100 percent of annual grid electricity consumption is sourced from renewable energy generated onsite or from clean energy sources;
  - park contributions to Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by transitioning 75 percent of light-duty administrative fleet vehicles to zero-emission vehicles or hybrids;
  - non-hazardous operational waste is reduced by 25 percent from 2021 levels; and
  - other Parks Canada Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy targets are met as applicable.
  - the plan is reviewed and updated at five year intervals or more frequently if required.

**Objective 7.4:** Park staff, the public and stakeholders understand more about climate change, sustainability, and how they can take action.

#### Targets

- By 2023, a targeted education and outreach plan for promoting public and stakeholder awareness and positive action on climate change is completed and implemented. The plan focuses on communicating the role of natural places as benchmarks for how climate is impacting the natural world, the status of climate change in Banff, and the importance of making environmentally sensitive choices both while in the park and elsewhere.
- Research on climate change impacts in Banff is shared with the public and partners.
- By 2024, waste reduction practices are incorporated into educational programming for park staff, business operators, and contractors, who are made aware of their roles and responsibilities to reduce waste. Periodic training is provided to all park personnel about recycling policies in the park.

#### Key Strategy 8: Moving People Sustainably

For a healthy environment and quality visitor experiences in the future, Banff National Park needs to address the rising traffic levels and congestion in the park.

As is the case throughout much of North America, roads in the park are becoming busier. About 8.3 million vehicles travel into the park each year, with approximately half of these carrying park visitors and the other half travelling through to other destinations. In total, vehicle traffic in the park has increased by 30 percent over the last ten years, with some locations such as Lake Louise Drive showing increases of up to 70 percent. It is not surprising then, that at certain times, the park's transportation-related infrastructure such as parking and pull-offs are stretched to capacity.

Addressing traffic and congestion in a national park setting is a complex challenge. Through-traffic can be expected to increase steadily as a result of factors outside of Parks Canada's control. Further, many park users strongly value the freedom to explore according to their own schedules, typically stop in multiple in-park destinations during any one visit, and frequently travel through the park to destinations beyond it. Additionally, building new transportation-related infrastructure such as roads and parking to meet rising demand generally requires use of undeveloped park lands, which may mean permanent loss of the ecosystem services and wildlife habitat that would otherwise be provided by those lands, and potential loss of cultural resources and/or places of cultural significance. Further, research has shown that additional road and parking capacity can be quickly taken up, and can even encourage more personal car use, leading to more traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

It is clear that planning for people moving about within the park must be done hand-in-hand with planning for visitor use, and with the constraints and opportunities that drive it, with resource protection as a cornerstone. It must also be done with a long-term view to our warming climate through incorporating concepts such as opportunities for self-propelled transportation, incentives for non-fossil fuel dependent transport, and use of recycled or permeable materials for path or road construction. Further, a plan for moving people must fit with the park's character, objectives, and values, and reflect consideration for the diversity of park visitors and how they use the park. It will also consider existing infrastructure capacity, visitor experience, ecological objectives, and potential visitor conflicts and safety issues. Recognizing that planning for such a system requires a high level of interdisciplinary expertise, Parks Canada has convened an expert panel to provide advice and recommendations.

Without pre-supposing the work of the expert panel, such a people-moving system may reveal that one single approach or tool will not work to address this complex challenge. While still including mass transit as a component, a people-moving system for Banff must be nimble. The system may use a variety of approaches including but not limited to:

- multi-modal on-demand components including micro-transit;
- maximizing use of current transport-related infrastructure;
- integrated trip and transportation reservations;
- incentives for high occupancy or zero-emission modes of transport and disincentives for use of private gasoline/diesel powered vehicles;
- parking space management; or
- timed limits to length of stay in peak periods.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that park visitors and residents are able to move about the park comfortably, efficiently, and sustainably, while optimizing visitor access and experiences where feasible. Once implemented, the people-moving system in Banff would be an example of how big-picture thinking, comprehensive planning and “green” transport can help secure an environmentally and economically sustainable future for the park, and solidify Parks Canada’s reputation as a leader in environmental protection and a provider of heritage experiences. This goal is strongly connected to and supported by other strategies and actions related to reducing impacts of climate change on park resources, and true-to-place visitor experience.

**Objective 8.1:** Travel to and within the park will be enhanced, sustainable and integrated into the visitor experience.

#### Targets

- By 2024, a comprehensive people-movement plan for the park is developed that sets ten-year goals, objectives and measurable targets, and considers local, regional, municipal and private transportation offers, existing pathways and trails, key attractions, and current and projected levels and patterns of visitor use. As reliability, frequency and affordability are known factors in promoting public uptake of mass transit, the plan clearly addresses these factors in its approach.
- Based on the plan above, in collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders, a communications strategy focused on encouraging a shift to sustainable modes of exploring the park is implemented.
- By 2024, a park-wide program aimed at making more efficient and effective use of existing parking infrastructure during peak periods is implemented.
- By 2030, potential avenues to allow visitors to book green transportation to and within the park are available online through a single portal. The potential for linking this to other in-park experiences and accommodation is also identified.
- By 2030, safe bike parking is available at key park attractions outside the communities, and public transit will support taking bikes on board.
- By 2030, electric vehicle charging stations are available at key locations in the park where access to the electrical grid exists.
- By 2030, expressions of interest by businesses for small- and medium-scale sustainable or self-propelled transportation solutions to be piloted in the park are solicited.
- The work of municipalities, the Improvement District, regional businesses, the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission, and others is supported by Parks Canada to the degree possible, as they develop transportation systems for the Bow Valley to reduce traffic congestion within and outside of park communities, and enhance access to trailheads, campgrounds, parkways and day-use areas.

## Key Strategy 9: Park Communities

As centres for visitor services, communities in the mountain national parks play an essential role in delivering Parks Canada's mandate. There will be continued respect for spatial and development limits, and national park communities will provide services and facilities that directly support broader park objectives and are characterised by environmentally sustainable practices.

National park communities exist primarily as service centres for park visitors. They are also tasked with offering comfortable living communities for eligible residents of the park. They must fulfill these roles while maintaining a community character that is consistent with and reflects the national park. In order to preserve this character and to ensure protection of surrounding lands, each community's boundaries and its maximum commercial floor space are specified in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.

During their time in Banff, an estimated 80 percent of the park's four million visitors stop in the community of Banff or Lake Louise or both. For many, a visit to one of the communities and the lands adjacent to them might be their entire experience, while for others it is a jumping-off point to greater park adventures. The communities offer a venue for showcasing all aspects of the park's natural and cultural heritage through enhanced educational opportunities, and well-informed staff and residents. They also provide the opportunity to introduce new visitors to respectful and appreciative national park use, and safe enjoyment of the outdoors.

While residents of the community of Banff elect a mayor and council who are responsible for the management and operation of the community within certain bounds, the Lake Louise community is administered directly by Parks Canada with assistance and feedback from a community advisory board.

Housing for eligible residents is a challenge in both communities. While it is not anticipated that all of the housing requirements will be addressed within the two communities, providing affordable housing for eligible residents—supported by sustainable land use and transportation planning—will continue to be a priority.

Parks Canada will continue to ensure that persons occupying residences within the communities meet the eligible resident requirements as described in the lease and *National Park of Canada Lease and Licence of Occupation Regulations*, by requiring an affidavit or solemn declaration and, if needed, other documentation from lessees before consenting to lease transactions, and by investigating all complaints.

Each park community is guided by a community plan, which must be consistent with the park management plan and applicable legislation. The community plans for the village of Lake Louise and the town of Banff were approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament in 2003 and 2008 respectively. Both plans require updating.

The goal of this strategy is that visitors feel welcomed to the park, and their experiences are enhanced by thoughtfully planned communities that offer a range of services, facilities and opportunities while maintaining a community character that respects the national park context and this management plan, and is consistent with the limits to growth described in the *Canada National Parks Act*. It is strongly linked to and supports other strategies relating to quality visitor experiences, visitor communication and education, and environmental protection.

**Objective 9.1:** The village of Lake Louise and the town of Banff remain as sustainable visitor centres and places for welcoming, orienting, and staging visitors' exploration of the park while providing comfortable living environments for eligible residents.

#### Targets

- An interpretive plan for the Lake Louise community is implemented, aimed at fostering knowledge of the ecology and human history of the park, and appreciation and respect for the national park environment.
- Commercial development is limited to the commercial zones and the total amounts as described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*.
- The wayfinding and trail network connecting the broader park environment with the communities of Banff and Lake Louise is improved to ensure it supports easy exploration of the national park. As part of this effort and where feasible, associated programs and services such as communications, interpretation and trail amenities are considered.
- Wildfire risk reduction work around the communities of Banff and Lake Louise is implemented, and existing projects are maintained so as to reduce the risk to the communities while considering the potential impacts on wildlife habitat security and connectivity. In addition, wildfire risk within the Bow Valley will be reduced by conducting new research and continuing to implement landscape-scale fuel thinning projects and prescribed fires.
- Based on the interests and priorities of Indigenous groups, Parks Canada encourages and supports discussions between Indigenous representatives and community businesses to ensure authentic representation of Indigenous cultures and histories, and to facilitate participation of Indigenous peoples in the social, cultural and economic life of the park communities.
- Within five years of approval of this plan, an updated community plan for the communities of Banff and Lake Louise is tabled in Parliament. The community plans are consistent with this management plan; reflect principles of No Net Negative Environmental Impact, environmental stewardship and heritage conservation; and adhere to any guidelines established by the Minister for activities within the community. They must describe:
  - the purposes and objectives of the community;
  - the lands comprising the community and its commercial zones, and the maximum permitted commercial floor area in those commercial zones as described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*;
  - the strategy for commercial growth management;
  - the highest and best use of community lands while preserving the intent and character of residential, public service, environmental protection and public park lands in the community;
  - the strategy for preservation, protection, and commemoration of heritage resources;
  - the approach to becoming a model community in respect of environmental management, sustainable development and tourism with a goal of no net negative environmental impact; and
  - a description of the overall approach, monitoring criteria and reporting schedule for the community's obligation to ensure no-net-negative environmental impact.

## 7.0 Management Areas

Area management focuses on certain areas of the national park that have complex management challenges such as those with important natural and/or cultural values combined with high visitation, substantial public interest, and significant physical (built) infrastructure. These areas often require careful consideration and actions to protect natural ecosystems and maintain ecological integrity while fostering high-quality experiences. In the case of Banff National Park, the areas that have been identified as requiring this level of attention are the town of Banff, the Lake Louise area, and the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir area.

## 7.1 Town of Banff

The community of Banff was formally incorporated as an Alberta municipality in 1990; it strives to be a global environmental leader and model of sustainable tourism. As a national park community, its policies, programs and practices should continue to demonstrate commitment to exemplary environmental stewardship, and to encouraging visitors to appreciate the natural and cultural heritage, beauty and grandeur of one of the world's most significant protected areas.

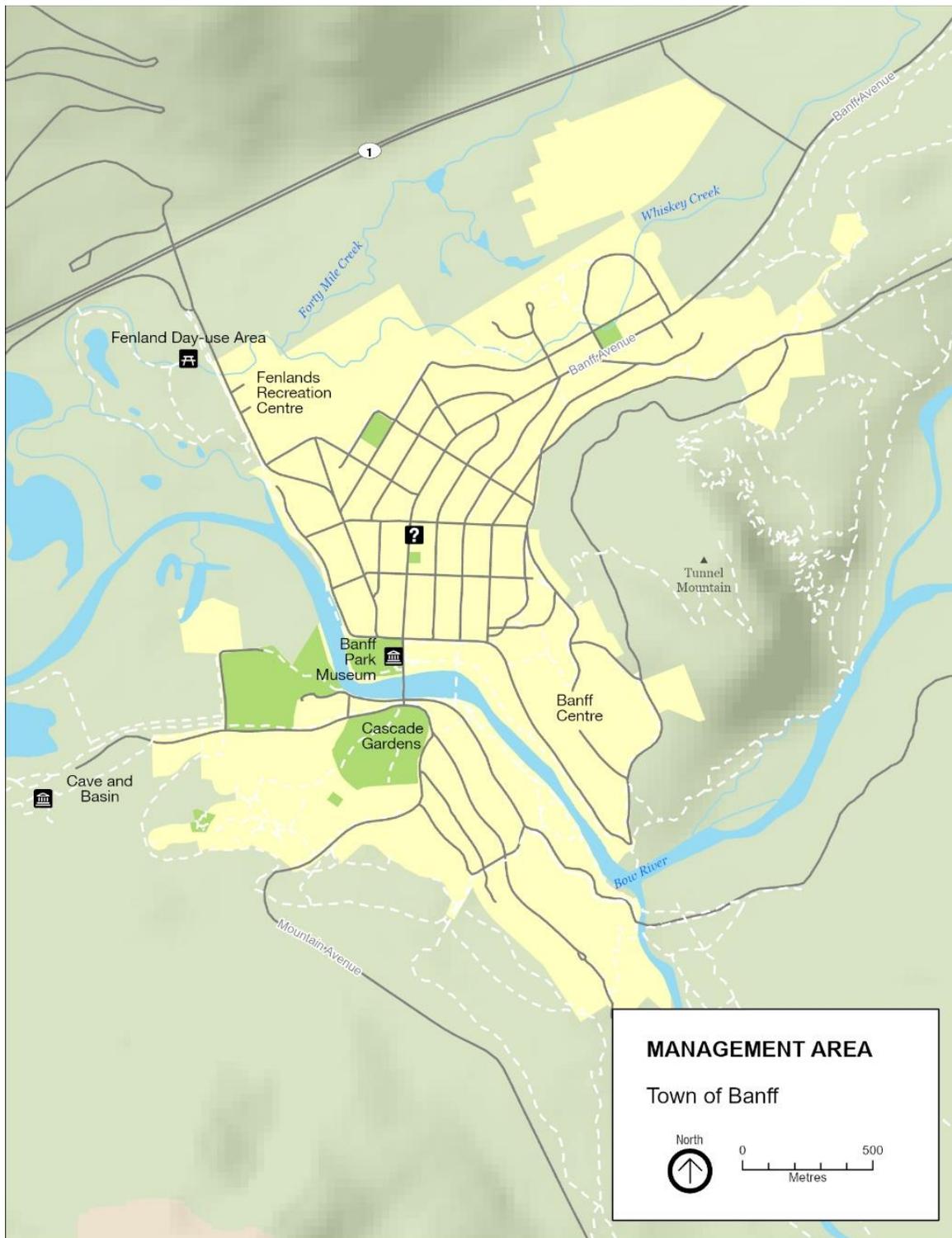
The town has a unique governance framework which is linked to Parks Canada's legislative and policy framework—in particular the *Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan*, the *Canada National Parks Act* (S.C. 2000, c. 32), and environmental laws and policies.

*The Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement Consolidated* (with amendments up to and including May 21, 1998) between the Province of Alberta and Canada describes the purposes and objectives of the town as follows:

- to maintain the townsite as part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site;
- to serve, as its primary function, as a centre for visitors to the park and to provide such visitors with accommodation and other goods and services;
- to provide the widest possible range of interpretive and orientation services to park visitors;
- to maintain a community character that is consistent with and reflects the surrounding environment; and
- to provide a comfortable living community for those persons who need to reside in the townsite in order to achieve its primary function.

The *Incorporation Agreement* also describes the rights, obligations, powers, duties and functions of the municipal government, while reserving ownership of the land, authority for environmental matters (including mitigations required for development) and approval of land use bylaws for the Minister responsible for Parks Canada. It requires that the town's bylaws and the decisions of Banff Town Council and Administration be consistent with the park management plan and any other applicable legislation, including those which establish the town's boundaries and limit the amount of allowable commercial development (*Canada National Parks Act 2000*).

Map 3: Town of Banff



The maximum commercial floor area permitted in the community under Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act* is 361,390 square metres. This was based on development that already existed in the commercial districts of the town as of June 1998, or that Parks Canada had approved prior to that date, plus an additional 32,516 square metres (350,000 square feet) of commercial floor space.

This amount of commercial space has now been fully allocated. Once it has all been constructed, any future development will necessarily be in the form of redevelopment. While development and redevelopment are at the discretion of the municipal government, Parks Canada maintains an interest in ensuring that any development or other activities that take place meet environmental standards, are consistent with this management plan, and within the limits described in law.

It is intended that commercial development in the town be limited to the commercial zones as described in Schedule 4 of the *Canada National Parks Act*; however, it is important to note that there has been commercial use in other areas of the town that pre-dates this zoning. In most cases, these commercial uses are ancillary to the principal use of the site and occur on residentially-zoned lands (e.g. bed and breakfast homes or inns, and home-based businesses) and occasionally on lands zoned as public service (e.g. information centers and museums may have gift shops as an accessory use). It is anticipated that these existing uses will continue but will require careful management over time.

Over the next decade, areas of attention for the Town of Banff include:

- implementing efforts to address the impacts of climate change;
- the ongoing promotion and development of more active and sustainable transportation choices including public transit service between Calgary and the Bow Valley (including Canmore, Banff and Lake Louise);
- reducing traffic congestion;
- promoting active transportation;
- emergency preparedness;
- achieving housing for eligible residents whose needs are not currently being met through the market; and
- ensuring Banff remains a vibrant, culturally rich place to visit, live, and work for generations to come.

**Objective 7.1.1:** The town achieves its objectives as described in the *Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement*, in a manner that is sustainable and conforms with applicable national park policy and legislation.

Targets

- Development in the townsite:
  - does not interfere with viewscales for pedestrians in the downtown core from Banff Avenue, Bear Street, Buffalo Street, Beaver Street, Bow Avenue and the Bow River pathway. These viewscales include: the view along Banff Avenue and Muskrat Street to Cascade Mountain, the view of Mount Rundle from Buffalo Street and Central Park, and the view of Mount Bourgeau from the Bow River pathway and the Banff Avenue Bridge;
  - adheres to FireSmart principles; and
  - respects natural processes to the highest degree possible. This includes but is not limited to remaining highly permeable to wildlife, and minimizing light pollution and the spread of non-native vegetation.
- To ensure the available space and character of residential land use districts is maximized for use as housing by eligible residents:
  - where commercial use (e.g. a bed and breakfast inn, eating and drinking establishment or service station) is the principal use of a site in a residential land use district, any increases in the gross floor area are prohibited, as is relocation, assignment or transfer of these commercial uses to another parcel not located in a commercial land use district;
  - a maximum number of home occupation businesses that will be permitted (including bed and breakfast homes and bed and breakfast inns) in residential land use districts is established by the municipal government; and
  - bed and breakfast inns that were not in operation and continuously licensed by Parks Canada for a period of not less than five consecutive years prior to January 2, 1990, are not permitted, nor are those that have had a cessation of 12 months or more in their operation and/or licensing.

- The community reflects its national park setting and blends with the surrounding landscape by ensuring the net amount of land designated as Public Parkland (PP) and Environmental Protection (PE) does not decrease from that existing as of December 31, 2021, and by not allowing further commercial development in these areas.
- Land uses within the Public Service (PS) District are limited to non-commercial uses of an institutional, government, educational or community service nature required to meet the needs of eligible residents. Commercial uses may not occur in this area except as they may be ancillary to (i.e. subordinate or incidental to, and in support of) the primary institutional, government, educational or community service use of the building or site. Non-conforming land uses in this district that existed as of June 1998 are grandfathered.
- The municipal government ensures that the impacts of known, ongoing project and operational activities within the town are understood and any required environmental management and mitigation strategies are identified by submitting the following documents to Parks Canada for approval:
  - a pre-approved routine impact assessment for applicable routine activities inside the community and those areas proximal to it where the municipal government has responsibilities, due in 2023;
  - an impact assessment for the *Town of Banff Water Permit* for the community's potable water supply and wastewater disposal, due in 2023; and
  - an analysis and assessment of storm water systems to guide future storm water management policies to inform the storm water management plan, due in 2025.
- Parks Canada completes the assembly of lands on the east side of the 200 block of Banff Avenue in the town for national park purposes, specifically for the development of facilities that enhance the connection of visitors in downtown Banff to the rest of the national park, and that foster understanding of the ecology and human history of the area and support for conservation. Future redevelopment of these lands respects the location in the civic heart of the town, incorporates high standards for urban design, landscape architecture, and environmental sustainability, and reflects the town's strong mountain aesthetic and architectural guidelines. This also extends to the public spaces associated with the development. In the near term, Parks Canada and the Town of Banff work together to foster a more dynamic and integrated open space within the downtown core.

## 7.2 The Lake Louise Area

The Lake Louise area encompasses 22,500 hectares in the core of Banff National Park. It is bounded by the Banff-Yoho boundary in the west, and Boulder Pass in the east, and encompasses upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, the village of Lake Louise, and the Lake Louise Ski Area. The area is bisected by the Upper Bow River, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the four-lane Trans-Canada Highway, and several secondary roads. The turquoise alpine lakes situated beneath peaks of the Continental Divide provide majestic and iconic views that attract millions of global visitors every year. It is one of the most popular destinations in the mountain parks, with visitation of approximately 3.25 million in 2018<sup>2</sup>.

There are approximately 72 kilometres of trails on the west side of the Bow River, and 18 kilometres of trails on the east side. During the summer, most visitors do not venture far from the lakeside viewing areas and lakeshore trails, or the sight-seeing areas at the Lake Louise Ski Area gondola. A smaller percentage of visitors explore one of the day-use trails to Lake Agnes, Plain of Six Glaciers, or Consolation Lakes. Some seek a deeper immersion in nature by exploring longer wilderness trails or pursuing alpine climbing. Winter recreational opportunities include ice skating, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, backcountry ski touring, ice climbing, and downhill skiing at the Lake Louise Ski Area.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on traffic counter data and an estimated 2.4 persons per vehicle.

Lake Louise is also an important area for wildlife. Two wildlife corridors traverse the valley parallel to the river. The Fairview corridor on the southwest side lies between the village of Lake Louise and upper Lake Louise, and the Whitehorn corridor on the northeast side is bounded by the Trans-Canada Highway fence and the forested mid-slope of Whitehorn Mountain. These corridors provide important movement pathways for wary wildlife in an area otherwise constrained by infrastructure and steep mountain terrain. They also provide core habitat for resident animals that may not travel far beyond the area. The Lake Louise area is also part of a core reproductive range for grizzly bears. Maintaining secure habitat for bears and reducing potential for human-wildlife conflict are key objectives.

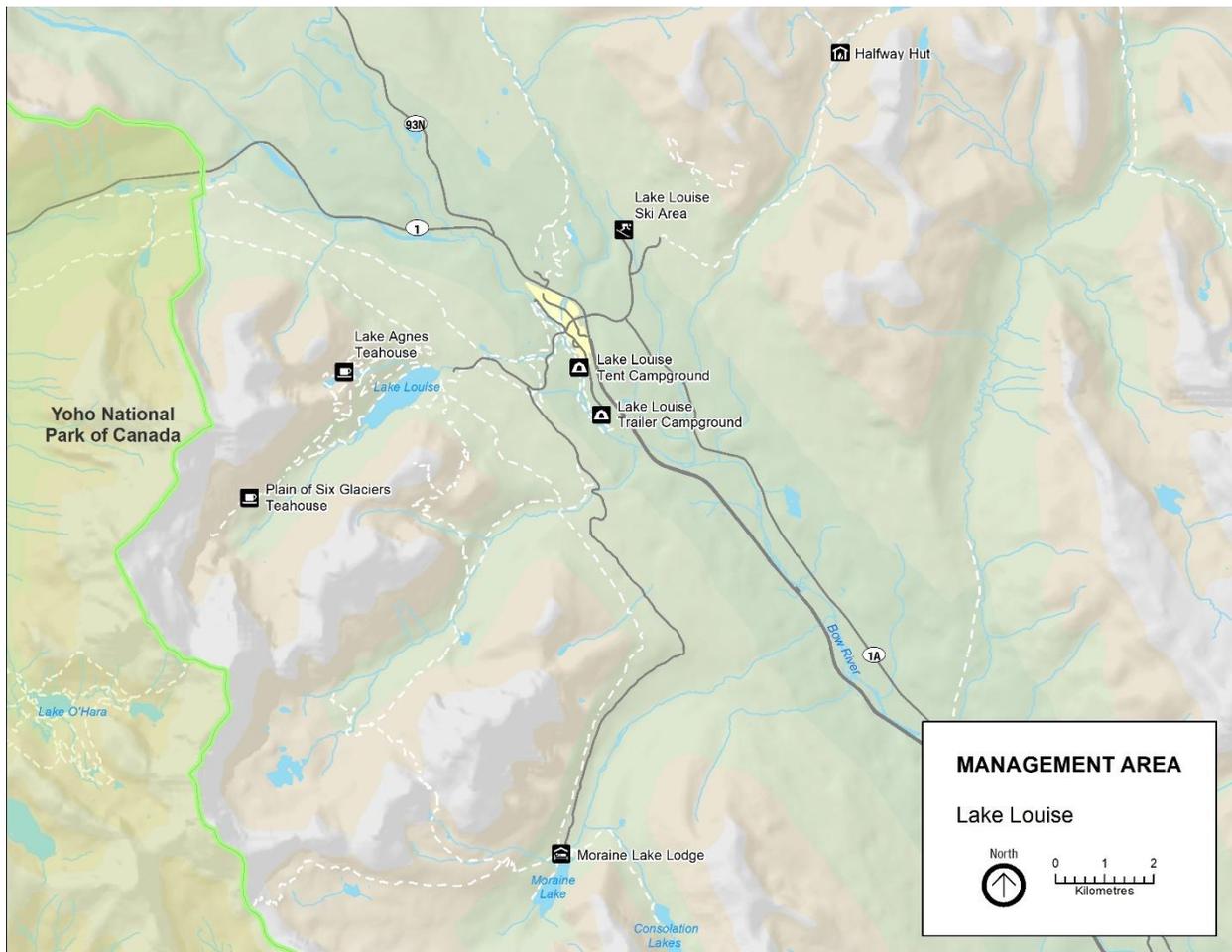
High visitor volumes during the snow-free seasons have created a number of management challenges in the Lake Louise area. Vehicle traffic frequently exceeds the capacity of parking and roadway infrastructure. Parking lots at Lake Louise and Moraine Lake are often full by sunrise while roadways are congested with vehicles that create backups which can extend to the Trans-Canada Highway. Infrastructure to accommodate visitors' needs, such as washrooms, picnic sites and rest areas, is often overcrowded. As a result, visitor experience may suffer and environmental impacts that include wildlife disturbance, reduced wildlife corridor function, and vegetation damage may result.

Parks Canada has taken many actions to improve ecological integrity and visitor experience in Lake Louise. Measures to reduce human-wildlife conflict have been implemented, including "group of four" hiking restrictions, improved sightlines on hiking trails, and temporary area closures when needed. Visitor facilities including washrooms, visitor reception centres, and interpretive signage have been upgraded. A shuttle system has been implemented to improve visitor experience and reduce traffic congestion. Integration with the regional public transit system is being improved.

Continuing work to maintain and restore ecological integrity will focus on improving habitat connectivity, reducing human-wildlife conflict and enhancing habitat diversity to benefit wildlife and reduce wildfire risk. Efforts to improve visitor experience will focus on developing an integrated public transportation system, enhancing communications, and improving accessibility and inclusivity of visitor facilities and services. The Lake Louise area will continue to be busy, but transportation systems, visitor facilities and management strategies will be designed to accommodate a sustainable volume of people while ensuring that wildlife can continue to use and move through the area. Visitors will be well-informed before they arrive so they can plan accordingly and be prepared.

Parks Canada will develop a Lake Louise Area Strategy based on the following objectives and take an adaptive approach as knowledge improves or conditions change. A sustainable transit system with one or more centrally located staging areas and an intercept parking lot will be key to delivering this strategy. The system will be designed to maximize use of local infrastructure, support high quality visitor experiences, and allow safe access to and egress from the main visitor-use areas.

Map 4: Lake Louise Area



**Objective 7.2.1:** Maintain and restore ecological integrity and ensure wildlife can safely use and move through the Whitehorn and Fairview wildlife corridors.

#### Targets

- Low traffic volumes are maintained during sensitive periods on Lake Louise Drive and Whitehorn Road to allow wildlife movement.
- Trails between Lake Louise Village and upper Lake Louise are evaluated and reconfigured where prospects exist to improve corridor effectiveness while maintaining appropriate visitor opportunities.
- An evaluation of the Fairview picnic site is completed that considers alternate uses for this location that support visitor experience and ecological objectives for the area.
- Wildlife crossing structures are developed where necessary to maintain connectivity.
- Forest thinning designed to reduce wildfire risk and enhance wildlife habitat is implemented on 375 hectares in the Fairview and Whitehorn corridors.
- Measures to reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflict are implemented, including the maintenance of appropriate sightlines on trails, removal of non-native wildlife attractants and enhancement of wildlife habitat away from areas of high human use.
- Off-track vegetation management adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Railway is conducted to reduce wildlife attractants, improve sightlines and open escape pathways for wildlife.

**Objective 7.2.2:** Visitor experience throughout the Lake Louise area is improved through development of an integrated public transportation system, and the provision of accessible, inclusive facilities and services.

#### Targets

- A strategic plan for a fully functioning, sustainable public transportation system in Lake Louise, guided by emergency preparedness and response considerations, is developed as a component of the park's broader sustainable people-moving system.
- The feasibility of relocating the Lake Louise and Moraine Lake Shuttle Park and Ride to the Lake Louise Ski Area is investigated.
- Visitor facilities in the village and at Lake Louise and Moraine Lake—including washrooms, day-use areas, walkways and viewing areas—are enhanced to improve accessibility for visitors with a broad spectrum of social identities and abilities, and to accommodate peak demand.
- Pre-trip communication enables visitors to plan their experiences and arrive with appropriate expectations for their Lake Louise destinations.

### 7.3 Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area

The Lake Minnewanka Reservoir area is one of the park's best known areas. It encompasses the Minnewanka Loop Road, Johnson Lake Reservoir, Two Jack Lake and Lake Minnewanka Reservoir to the western shore of the lake. The area contains a number of day-use areas including Cascade Ponds and Upper Bankhead, Two Jack Main and Lakeside campgrounds, backcountry campgrounds along the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir shoreline, and day-hiking trails. It also contains a number of cultural and industrial resources including Sheep Point, Lower Bankhead, Anthracite and the 1912 dam and Minnewanka Landing underwater sites.

Motorized access, alpine scenery, cultural features and a large variety of recreational opportunities have made the Minnewanka area one of the most sought-after accessible, edge-of-wilderness experiences in Banff National Park. Residents and park visitors can engage in hiking, on/off road biking, camping, swimming, picnicking, scuba diving, cross-country skiing, paddling, motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, wildlife viewing, ice skating, snow-shoeing, sightseeing and commercial scenic tours. Day-use areas and picnic shelters at Cascade Ponds, Johnson Lake Reservoir, Two Jack Lake and Lake Minnewanka Reservoir are the busiest in the park, and the Two Jack Lakeside and Two Jack Main campgrounds are fully occupied throughout the summer season. The area also provides access to the northern front ranges of the Rocky Mountains, which in turn offers extensive and unparalleled multi-day wilderness hiking, camping and horseback riding.

It is estimated that roughly one quarter of the park's annual visitation—about 1 million people—visit the Lake Minnewanka area. While there are some interpretative products at various locations in the area, there are missed opportunities to convey additional information about its value and importance. Similarly, while wayfinding and orientation signage has improved considerably, there is still room for improvement, particularly around Lake Minnewanka itself.

The high number of visitor facilities in a relatively small area are not well linked by trails. As a result, despite the introduction of public transit to the area in recent years, most users tend to arrive at and move around the area by personal vehicle. Traffic volumes have increased about 50 percent over the last ten years, with 75 percent occurring between May and the end of September.

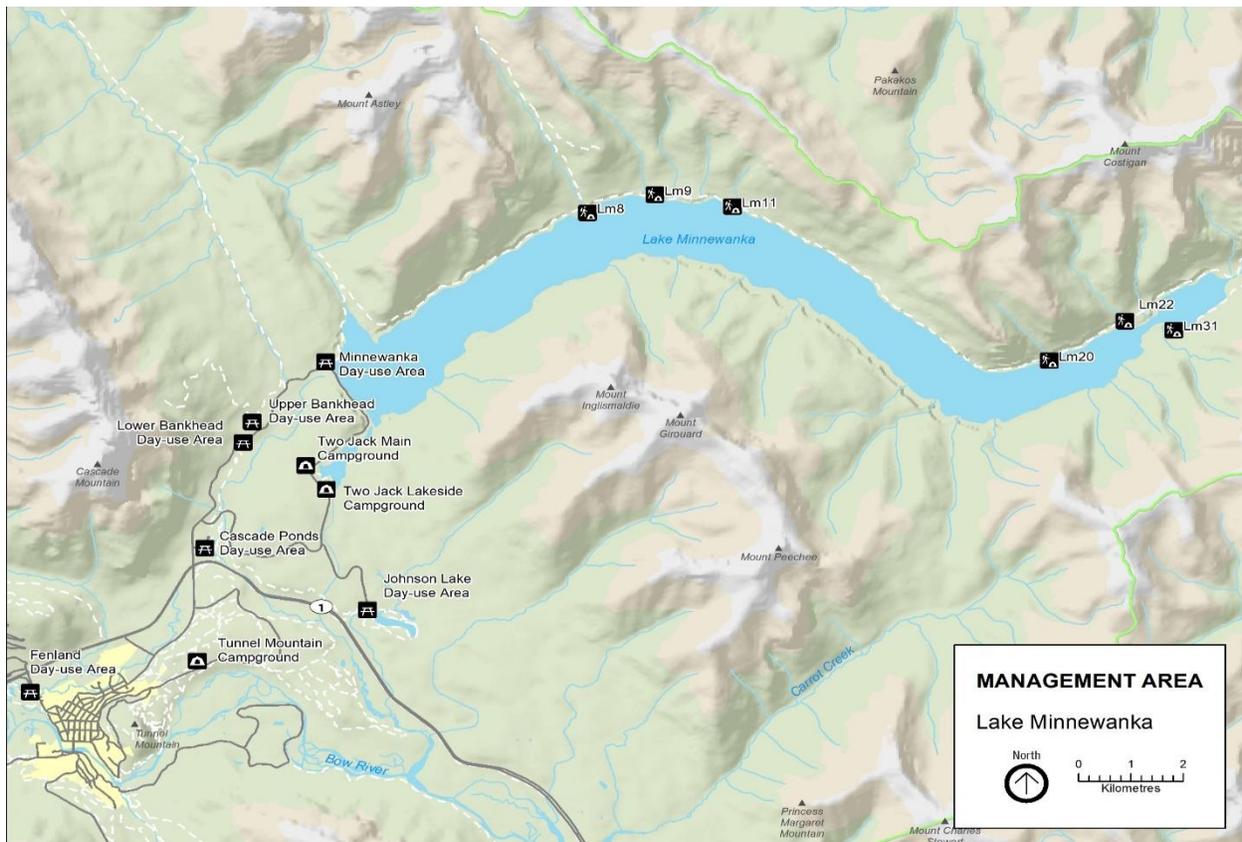
The area has experienced intensive human influence over the last century as a result of coal mining, hydro-electric development, gravel extraction, road building and the creation of recreational facilities. It contains a portion of the park's montane ecoregion, which provides significant wildlife habitat and also contains the Norquay-Cascade and the Two Jack wildlife corridors. A number of environmentally important features exist in the area, as well as several significant cultural sites, including abandoned mines at Bankhead and Anthracite and submerged archaeological resources at Lake Minnewanka. The biggest ecological concern in the area is the potential for the introduction of invasive aquatic species into

one of the lakes or streams through recreational use, and ensuring water flows in the Cascade will support and maintain a native fish population.

High levels of congestion on Minnewanka Loop Road and in the main parking areas at Minnewanka, Johnson and Two Jack Lakes have been noted, as have user conflicts between motorized vehicles and cyclists, and between hikers and mountain bikers. During the winter months, the western portion of the Minnewanka road is closed to allow wildlife to move undisturbed around the Norquay-Cascade corridor. The impacts of increasing and evolving winter activities in the area such as winter mountain biking and kite skiing, alone or in combination with other existing activities and visitation levels, are not well understood.

Parks Canada's goal is that the Lake Minnewanka area will continue to welcome visitors and residents seeking high-quality, authentic national park recreational experiences accessible by vehicle or self-propelled transport within a stunning, natural landscape. The area will be a key attraction for people to enjoy water-based recreation, learn about the park's human and cultural history, and engage in a range of other activities that reflect and are sympathetic to the area's proximity to wilderness and support its site-specific ecological goals and limitations. Linked to visitor services in the town of Banff via convenient mass transit and a trail system, the Lake Minnewanka area will continue to provide recreational opportunities. It will fill the role of a day-use area, and consequently, no further overnight visitor accommodation may be developed. Redevelopment of existing facilities may occur within the parameters described in this plan, other applicable policy and law.

Map 5: Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area



**Objective 7.3.1:** Developed in collaboration with stakeholders and Indigenous groups, the Lake Minnewanka area is managed according to an area plan that is consistent with the above goal and which aligns with site-specific ecological management parameters and supports safe access and egress for park users. The plan also considers:

- current and predicted levels, patterns and types of visitor use;
- infrastructure (trail, road, parking and other facility) capacities;
- visitor expectations and desired type of visitor experience;
- current and potential points of congestion and user conflicts;
- opportunities for expanding, linking and improving interpretation/information on natural and cultural heritage features;
- opportunities to better manage consumption of resources (water and electricity), to reduce and manage waste, and use of innovative approaches and green technology;
- opportunities to link recreational opportunities while supporting self-propelled transport with a multi-use trail extending between Lake Minnewanka, Two Jack Lakeside and Two Jack Main campgrounds, Johnson Lake, Cascade Ponds and the community of Banff;
- management of people in the event of an emergency;
- potential development or redevelopment proposals;
- cumulative and/or trans-boundary impacts and implications, if any; and
- managing water-based activities and access in the context of the potential for the introduction of invasive species.

Subject to environmental review of the plan, some reconfiguration of facilities and services within the area may be considered if it serves to address environmental and public safety issues, while improving visitor experience.

### Targets

- By the end of 2022, alone or with partners, a description of the patterns, types and demographics of visitor use, as well as infrastructure capacities in the area, is developed.
- By 2024, a Lake Minnewanka Area Plan and Strategic Environmental Assessment (as per the *Parks Canada Directive on Impact Assessment, 2019*) is completed for public and Indigenous review and comment.
- Parks Canada collaborates with TransAlta to ensure the latest regulated river science, including environmental flows analysis, is applied to their operations to ensure a suitable and sustainable flow regime to maintain connectivity and ecosystem health into the future, and to provide resilience in the face of the pressures anticipated from climate warming. This is reviewed every five years.

## 8.0 Zoning and Declared Wilderness Area

### 8.1 Zoning

Parks Canada's national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in national parks and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water, based on the ability to support those uses. The zoning system has five categories:

- Zone I – Special Preservation;
- Zone II – Wilderness;
- Zone III – Natural Environment;
- Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation; and
- Zone V – Park Services.

#### **Zone I – Special Preservation**

Zone I areas include features that merit special care and attention because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access is not permitted. The Zone I areas in Banff National Park include the Clearwater-Siffleur area, the Castleguard Cave System and Meadows, the Cave and Basin Marsh area, and the Christensen Archaeological Site. These comprise approximately 10 percent of the park. There are no changes for Zone I areas proposed in this plan.

#### **Zone II – Wilderness**

Zone II areas contain features that are good representations of a natural region to be conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration for these areas, which offer visitors the opportunity to experience, first-hand, the park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities which depend upon the park's intact ecosystems, and require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. For this reason, motorized access and circulation is not permitted. About 87 percent of the park is Zone II.

There are some changes to Zone II in this management plan, resulting from:

- the formalization of the boundaries for the three park ski areas stemming from leasehold reductions associated with approval of each resort's site guidelines. These areas are added to Zone II and include 133.1 hectares from the Mount Norquay Ski Resort, 61 hectares from the Sunshine Village Ski Resort, and 1025 hectares from the Lake Louise Ski Area;
- conversion of the West Bowl area (194 hectares) at the Lake Louise Ski Area from Zone II to Zone III;
- conversion of the Hidden Bowl area (180 hectares) at the Lake Louise Ski Area from Zone II to Zone IV;

- a mapping error to remove a small section of the Water Tower trail (approximately 0.3 kilometres) from Zone II. This will result in an 8.2-hectare reduction to this zone with a commensurate addition of that amount to Zone III;
- mapping corrections to remove portions of the Tramline and Bow River Loop trails from Zone II and place them in Zone III, resulting in an increase of 28 hectares to Zone III, and a corresponding decrease in Zone II area (but no change in the Declared Wilderness Area); and
- small mapping corrections to more clearly show consistent buffers for leaseholds and developed areas outside the main Trans-Canada Highway corridor.

Those changes associated with ski areas are consistent with Parks Canada's longstanding policy for ski area management, and each was subject to separate impact assessment and public review. The changes above result in a net increase to Zone II in the park of approximately 808 hectares. The exact amount is to be confirmed upon completion of surveys.

### **Zone III – Natural Environment**

Zone III areas provide opportunities for visitors to experience the park's natural and cultural heritage through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services, and facilities of a rustic nature. While motorized access may be allowed, it will be controlled. Access routes and land associated with backcountry commercial lodges are in Zone III, which comprises slightly less than 1 percent of the park. As mentioned above, the feature known as the West Bowl at the Lake Louise Ski Area, along with several small areas required for avalanche control operations (79 hectares) on the periphery of the ski area, and some smaller areas to reflect mapping corrections for certain trails, have been designated as Zone III areas under this management plan.

### **Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation**

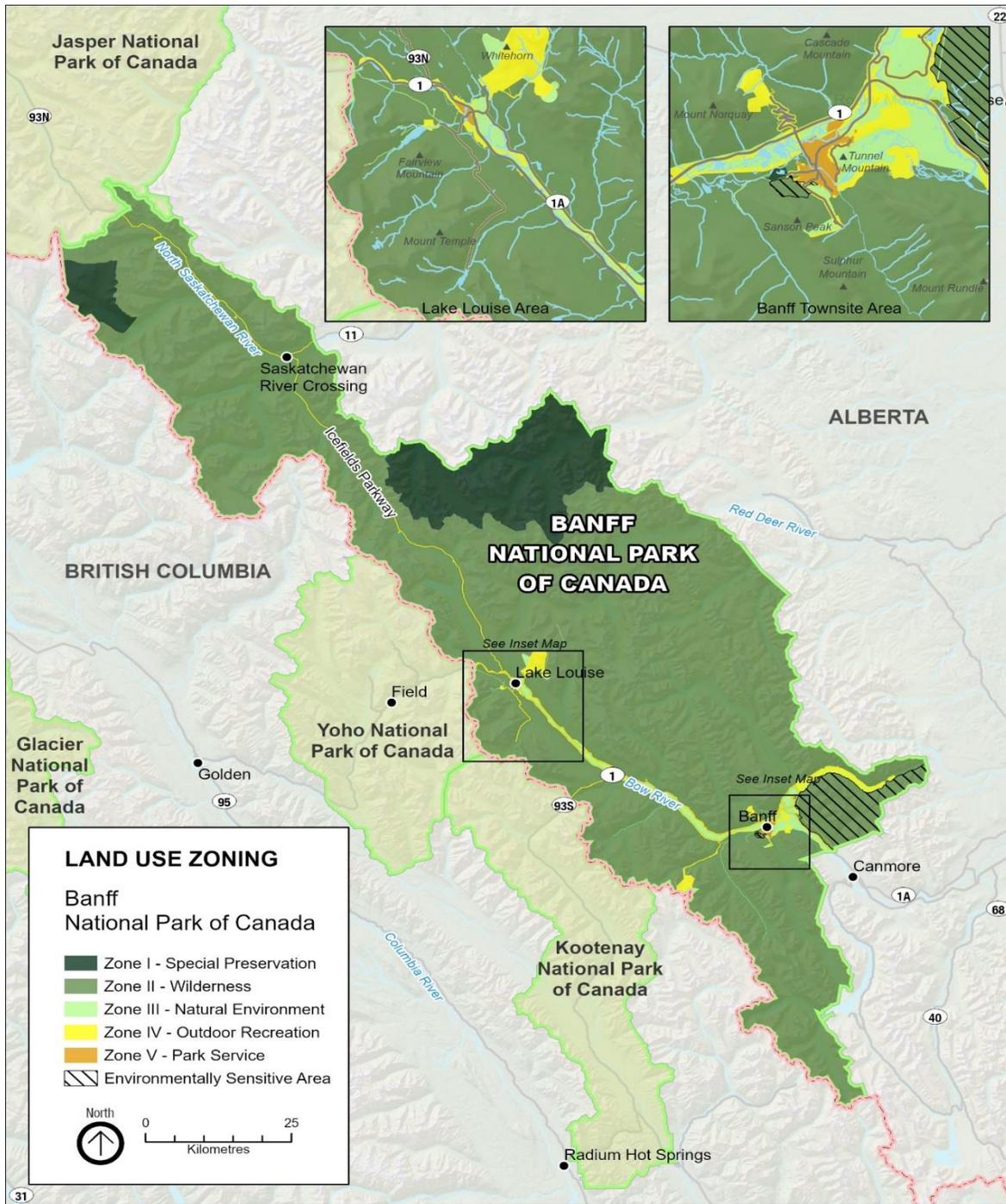
Zone IV areas are limited areas capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage values, and related essential services and facilities in ways with the smallest possible impact on the ecological integrity of the park, and whose defining feature is direct access by motor vehicle. Park management plans may define provisions for limiting private motorized access and circulation. In Banff, this zone includes the Trans-Canada Highway corridor and railway, day-use areas, ski areas, and Lake Minnewanka. With this management plan, approximately 1,298 hectares were removed from Zone IV and moved to Zones II and III in association with reducing the sizes of ski area leases and re-zoning the avalanche control areas at the ski resorts.

As a result of approval of the Lake Louise Ski Area's Long Range Plan and its Detailed Impact Assessment, a feature known as Hidden Bowl has been removed from Zone II and added to Zone IV to permit future commercial ski operations, while a larger area in the Purple and Wolverine Bowls has been converted from Zone IV to Zone II. There are some additional reductions to Zone IV areas in this management plan associated with reducing the boundaries of the ski areas and converting those areas to Zone II, and addressing relatively small buffering inconsistencies from the previous plans as noted earlier in this section. Zone IV comprises about 2 percent of the park.

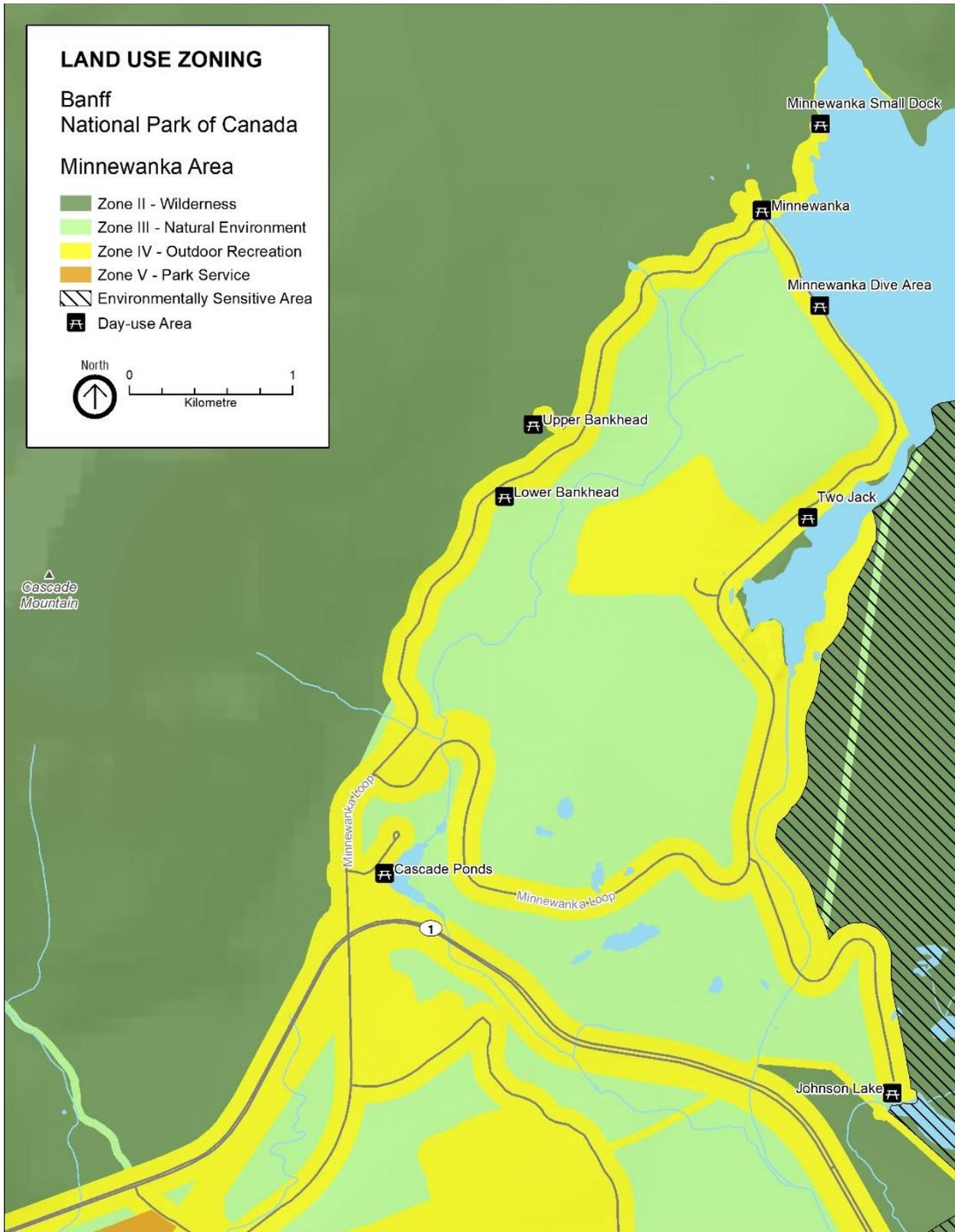
### **Zone V – Park Services**

Zone V areas are those where visitor services and support facilities are concentrated. In the case of Banff National Park, these areas include the communities of Banff and Lake Louise. This plan does not contain any changes to Zone V, which comprises about 0.07 percent of the park.

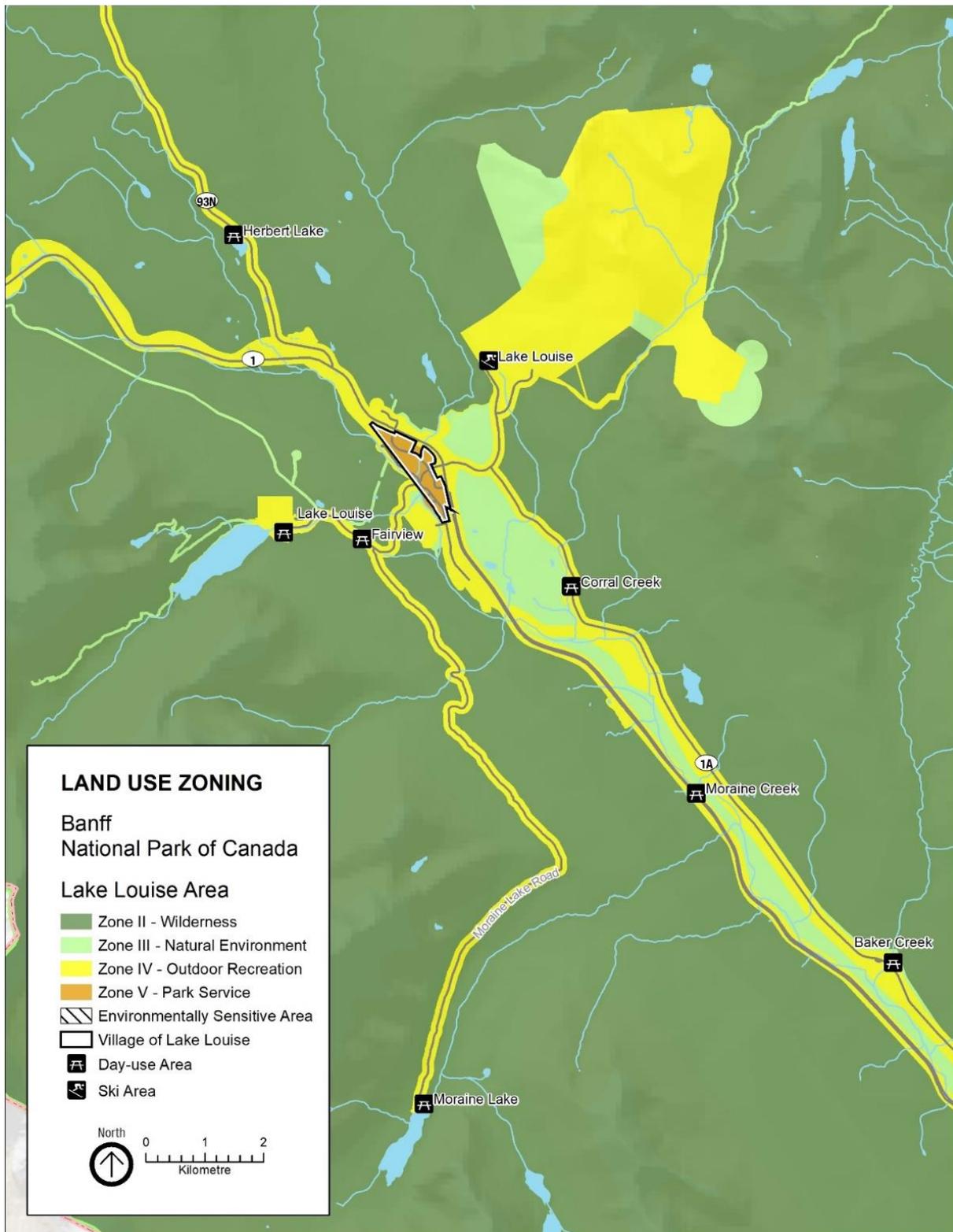
Map 6: Zoning in Banff National Park



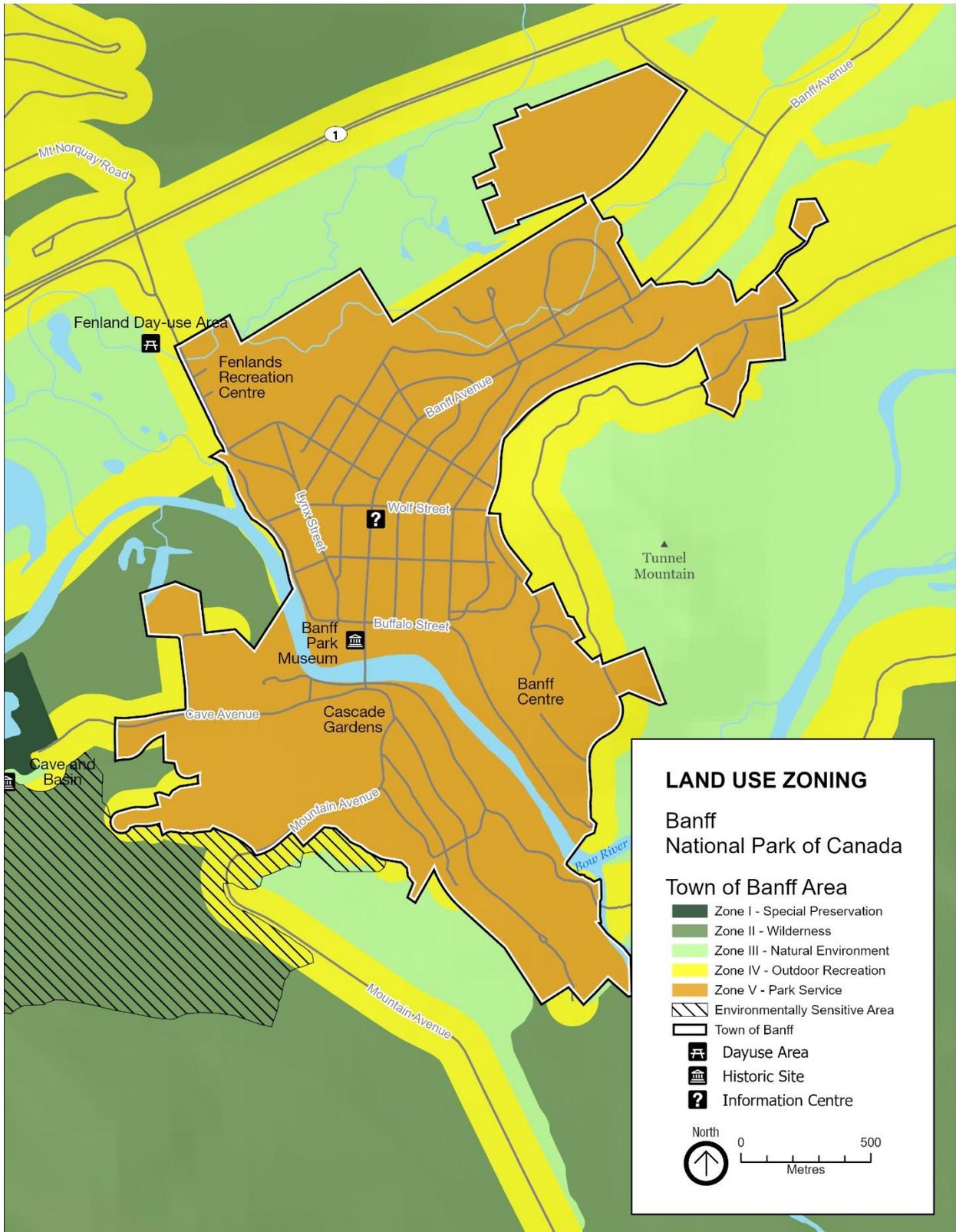
Map 7: Zoning in the Lake Minnewanka Reservoir Area



Map 8: Zoning in the Lake Louise Area



Map 9: Zoning in the Town of Banff Area



## Environmentally Sensitive Sites

This designation applies to areas with significant and sensitive features that require special protection measures.

**Vermilion Lakes Wetlands** – The Vermilion Lakes Wetlands was first identified and delineated in 1986 (*Special Resources of Banff National Park*, Achuff, Pengelly, White) as one of Banff’s “natural areas of significance”. It is bounded on the north by the Trans-Canada Highway, from the industrial compound access road west to the Bow River bridge. It includes a diversity of vegetation and many rare and significant plant species, as well as important habitat for a variety of birds, mammals, and aquatic species. The area also contains many special features: lakes, ponds, springs, rare birds, fish species-at-risk, moose winter range, elk calving areas and ungulate mineral licks. The alluvial landforms on the north and east shores of the lakes and adjacent wetlands are rich in significant archaeological resources from at least 10,700 years ago. A limited and imperiled resource globally, these wetlands support high levels of biodiversity and provide a multitude of ecosystem services including water conservation and flood mitigation—all of which contribute to climate change resilience.

**Middle Springs** – The upper and lower Middle Springs remain the only relatively undisturbed springs on Sulphur Mountain. The warm mineral waters create a unique habitat for rare plants and invertebrates. This area’s importance is increased due to its location in an important wildlife movement corridor along the lower slopes of Sulphur Mountain.

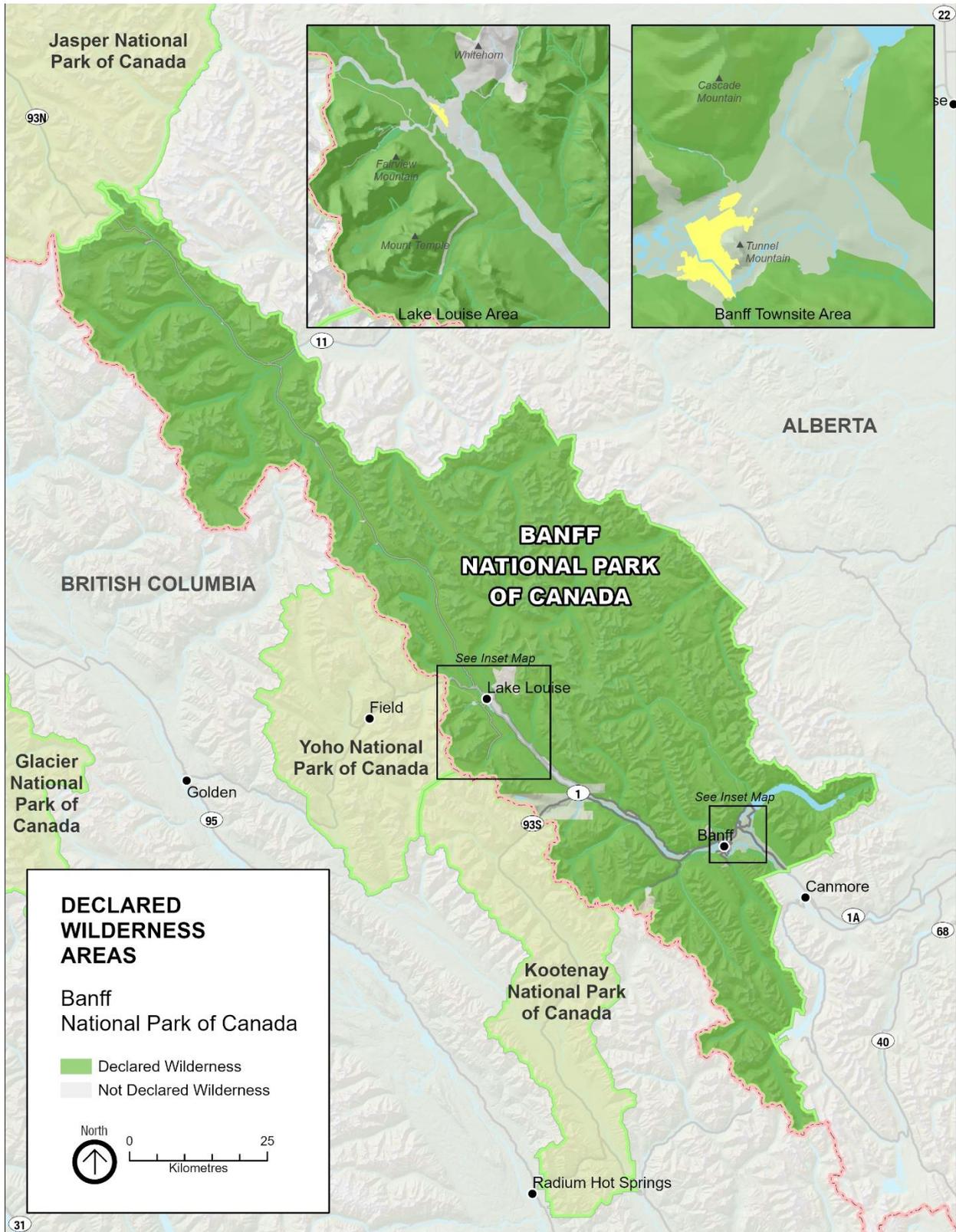
**Fairholme-Carrot Creek Benchlands** – The Fairholme Range area from the East Gate to Johnson Lake is the largest remaining intact block of secure montane wildlife habitat in the park. Human use of this area, particularly during the summer, can displace wildlife and diminish habitat security. Off-road bicycling is not permitted, and trails are not maintained in this area. Human use is restricted by means of educational measures and a voluntary access closure.

### 8.2 Declared Wilderness Area

Under the *Canada National Parks Act* (Article 14) and the *National Parks of Canada Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*, any area of a park that exists in a natural state or that is capable of returning to a natural state may be declared as wilderness. The intent of legally designating a portion of the national park as wilderness is to maintain its wilderness character in perpetuity. Only activities that are unlikely to impair the wilderness character of the area may be authorized within the declared wilderness area of Banff National Park.

In Banff, legally “Declared Wilderness” areas largely mirror the Zones I and II areas, with the result that approximately 97 percent of the park is declared wilderness. With this plan, there will be an addition to Declared Wilderness associated with the confirmation of the boundaries for all three ski areas and the concomitant re-zoning of those areas from Zone IV to Zone II. The exact amount will be confirmed once the official administrative plans are completed by the Surveyor General of Canada.

Map 10: Banff National Park Declared Wilderness



## 9.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

All national park management plans are assessed through a strategic environmental assessment to understand the potential for cumulative effects. This understanding contributes to evidence-based decision-making that supports ecological integrity being maintained or restored over the life of the plan. The strategic environmental assessment of the management plan for Banff National Park considered the potential impacts of climate change, local and regional activities around the park, expected increase in visitation and proposals within the management plan. The strategic environmental assessment assessed the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including hydrological function, aquatic communities, forest vegetation, alpine habitat, whitebark pine, carnivores, and mountain goats.

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and on cultural resources. The *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency requires that a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) be completed for all plans and policies deemed to have important positive or negative environmental effects and which are submitted to the federal Cabinet or to a Minister for approval.

A strategic environmental assessment was undertaken on this management plan, and the management direction contained therein has been adjusted to respond to its findings. The assessment considered all of the Rocky Mountain Parks administered by Parks Canada, in the context of the potential cumulative impacts on the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site.

The management plan will result in many positive impacts on the environment, including collaborative initiatives to preserve habitat security and connectivity across the regional landscape, and strategies to lessen the impacts of visitors on park ecosystems.

Ongoing monitoring, active management and restoration programs within the park will be used to mitigate potential cumulative effects on aquatic communities, whitebark pine, hydrological function, and others. For example, the presence of a major transportation corridor through the park has had negative impacts on hydrological function and increases the risk of aquatic invasive species establishment. Future planned restoration activities to increase connectivity concurrent to highway upgrades, and communication strategies to reduce the likelihood of aquatic invasive species establishment, will be effective in restoring this connectivity while reducing the impacts of future cumulative effects.

Forest vegetation, carnivores and mountain goats are particularly vulnerable to cumulative effects. Years of fire suppression have had detrimental impact on forest communities, the effects of which may be further exacerbated by climate change. Through wildfire management and implementation of prescribed burns, Banff will restore fire as a key process for maintaining the ecological integrity of forests. Monitoring has shown large-mammal presence on the landscape is at desired levels, and grizzly bear habitat is generally secure in Banff. Cumulative effects of a major transportation corridor, two townsites, three ski hills, and increased visitation may impact carnivores over the next ten years. The management plan identifies several targets under Key Strategies 1 (Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage), 2 (True-to-Place Experiences), 5 (Managing Development), 6 (Regional Connectivity and Landscapes) and 9 (Park Communities) to maintain and improve habitat security and connectivity. This includes working with partners to reduce mortalities, committing to maintaining or reducing the developed footprint in the park, improving winter wildlife connectivity in key corridors, and managing the intensity of human use in priority areas. There is uncertainty on the status of mountain goats in Banff, and both visitation and climate change have the potential to impact this species. Continued monitoring of both goats and visitor-use patterns within the park and establishment of regional partnerships to support landscape-level conservation will increase our knowledge and the resiliency of goats to climate change stressors.

Banff National Park is part of the UNESCO Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. The world heritage values for which it was designated were evaluated to ensure the management plan adequately protects them.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public have been consulted on the draft management plan and summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. This feedback has been considered and incorporated as appropriate.

The SEA was conducted in accordance with The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010) and facilitated an evaluation of how the management plan contributed to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Individual projects undertaken to implement management plan objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Impact Assessment Act* or successor legislation. The management plan supports a number of Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals:

- Greening government;
- Sustainably managed lands and forests;
- Healthy wildlife populations;
- Connecting Canadians with nature; and
- Safe and healthy communities.

Many positive environmental effects are expected and there are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the Banff National Park management plan.