



Backgrounder:

Marmot Basin Ski Area Planning Process

The Marmot Basin ski area is located in Jasper National Park, 21 km south of the community of Jasper. The ski area is owned and operated by Rocky Mountain Skiing Incorporated, on land leased from the Government of Canada. Marmot Basin was established in 1964 and as a major contributor to the economic well-being of the community in winter, has played an increasingly important role in the park's winter tourism offer over the last 49 years.

As part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, Jasper National Park is an important international symbol of Canada and our national park system. Jasper, like all national parks, is dedicated to protecting and presenting Canada's natural and cultural heritage for the benefit, education and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Marmot Basin's previous long range plan was prepared in 1981 and is long out of date. Significant changes have occurred since then, in our knowledge of ecological integrity, the nature of skiing, the status of sensitive wildlife species, and in Parks Canada's land use planning and environmental assessment processes.

Parks Canada's Ski Area Management Guidelines

Parks Canada's policies concerning ski areas were updated in 2006 to guide the development of new Long-Range Plans. The *Ski Area Management Guidelines* (published online at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/plan/plan11.aspx>) reflect the full scope of Parks Canada's mandate and address the concerns of communities, ski areas, tourism associations and environmental groups.

Implementation of the *Ski Area Management Guidelines* contributes to managing the development and use of ski areas in ways that respect the national park setting and facilitate improvements to ecological integrity, while providing ski area operators with opportunities to respond to changing trends in the ski marketplace. The *Ski Area Management Guidelines* provide the policy direction for developing site-specific guidelines and long range planning processes within clear policy boundaries.

Basic Approach

Parks Canada's *Ski Area Management Guidelines* outline the broad approach that will be taken to manage the mountain national park ski areas:

- Parks Canada's fundamental responsibilities are protecting heritage resources, facilitating opportunities for public education and memorable visitor experiences. As part of this integrated mandate, the *Canada National Parks Act* requires that the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity will be the first priority when



considering all aspects of the management of parks. These responsibilities will form the foundation for decisions.

- Parks Canada's primary goal for the management of ski areas is to achieve long term land use certainty for ski area operators, the Canadian public and Parks Canada, that:
 - ensures ecological integrity will be maintained or restored;
 - contributes to facilitating memorable national park visitor experiences and educational opportunities; and
 - provides ski area operators with clear parameters for business planning in support of an economically healthy operation.
- Growth Limits and parameters to guide development and operations have been established for communities and outlying commercial accommodation to ensure ecological integrity and reinforce their location in a national park. Ski areas will be treated in a similar manner.

The Ski Area Planning Process

Parks Canada's ski area planning process requires collaboration between Parks Canada and the ski area, engagement with Aboriginal groups and the Canadian public, as well as application of requirements for federal lands under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (2012). Parks Canada has adopted, under the *Ski Area Management Guidelines*, a six step planning process:

- Step One: The ski area submits to Parks Canada a *Vision Statement* that outlines the concepts and initiatives that the ski area would like to pursue in the planning process.
- Step Two: Parks Canada prepares, with input from the ski area, *Site Guidelines* that outline permanent growth limits and provide site-specific direction for development and use consistent with the *Ski Area Management Guidelines*.
- Step Three: The ski area prepares a *Long-Range Plan* and associated *Detailed Impact Analysis* describing the group of project proposals, consistent with the *Site Guidelines* direction, that the ski area wishes to advance in a five to 15 year timeframe. Members of the public and interested Aboriginal communities have opportunities to be informed and to participate.
- Step Four: Parks Canada carefully considers all feedback from the public and Aboriginal people. The Park Superintendent makes a determination regarding the Detailed Environmental Impact Analysis, and submits the *Long Range Plan* to the Minister of the Environment for decision.
- Step Five: The ski area advances individual projects contained in an approved *Long-Range Plan* through Parks Canada's development review process to obtain permits for implementation.
- Step Six: The ski area implements follow-up and monitoring programs that are set out in the *Long Range Plan*.



Marmot Basin Site Guidelines

Following a comprehensive public engagement process, site-specific guidelines consistent with the *Ski Area Management Guidelines* were approved by Parks Canada in 2008 (the *Marmot Basin Ski Area Site Guidelines for Development and Use* are published online at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/plan/plan8.aspx>)

Marmot Basin's *Site Guidelines* establish permanent growth limits for the ski area, and prescriptive measures for managing wildlife, vegetation, water and soils, visitor experience, and public education. The *Site Guidelines* provide clarity about the type and nature of potential developments and use changes that will be considered, should specific proposals be advanced through long-range plans, and should specific conditions be met. Decisions on projects and changes in use will be made through long-range plans and related environmental impact analysis.

Environmental considerations and a precautionary approach have shaped the *Site Guidelines*. Parks Canada undertook a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to examine the implications of the guidelines and help decision-makers understand their potential consequences (see summary at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/plan/plan8/k.aspx>).

Ongoing implementation of these policies through long range plans will achieve Parks Canada's overarching objectives for the ski area to contribute to maintaining and improving the ecological integrity of Jasper National Park, and for contributing to memorable visitor experiences and learning opportunities.

Environmental Impact Analysis

Marmot Basin's long range plan submissions will be accompanied by a detailed environmental impact analysis consistent with requirements for federal lands under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (2012). The purpose, nature, scope, and public participation elements of the process will be similar to previous project assessments conducted by Parks Canada.