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Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Statement

2020



Approval

Approved by:



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Parks Canada*

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Date

Introduction and Overview

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

The Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin was designated a national historic site in 1992. The cabin was designated because it provides a good representation of the Rustic Design Tradition, and because it is associated with outdoor recreation in the national parks. The cabin was erected in 1922 on a high col between Mount Victoria and Mt Lefroy, on the Continental Divide, which forms the boundary between Banff and Yoho national parks. The cabin was built as a refuge for mountaineers by the Canadian Pacific Railway, at a time when the company employed Swiss guides to lead tourists into the high peaks around Lake Louise. The cabin was built on the Swiss model, with a foundation and walls constructed from locally-quarried stone. It was the first high alpine, roofed accommodation for climbers in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Ownership of the cabin was transferred to Parks Canada in 1968, and in 1985 the Alpine Club of Canada assumed responsibility for the operation of the cabin under a Licence of Occupation issued by Parks Canada. This licence is set to expire on March 31, 2020.

Today the cabin stands as an enduring reminder of the early days of mountaineering and alpine tourism in the Canadian Rockies. Glacial recession and climate change has led to the recent loss of permanent snow coverage on the northeast side of Abbot Pass, yet the cabin and its surrounding rugged landscape retain a strong sense of place evocative of the early era of climbing in the Canadian Rockies. The site is accessible from Lake Louise in Banff National Park, via a difficult mountaineering route that includes a traverse of the Lower Victoria Glacier, or from Lake Oesa in Yoho National Park via a steep rock scramble. It retains its primary role as a shelter for mountaineers pursuing objectives in the peaks of the Continental Divide, but is also visited increasingly by day hikers scrambling to the pass from the Lake O'Hara area.

Management Approach

Parks Canada will continue to manage the Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin in partnership with the Alpine Club of Canada, as a high alpine climber's cabin in a dramatic wilderness setting. The operation of the cabin and general maintenance responsibilities will continue to be managed by the Alpine Club of Canada under a Licence of Occupation. Parks Canada will assess risks to the cabin related to natural landscape dynamics, and is implementing slope stabilisation measures to help protect the structure. Key messages about the site and its history will continue to be communicated to visitors in the cabin, and to others through media at Lake Louise and Lake O'Hara, and through digital media opportunities.

Management Objectives

Collaboration With Others: Working together, Parks Canada and the Alpine Club of Canada continue regular maintenance and monitoring and facilitate continued use of the cabin as a mountaineering refuge.

Resource Conservation: Environmental risks and hazards are understood and mitigated where feasible to protect the integrity of the historic building.

Public Understanding and Appreciation: The historic significance and heritage character of the cabin are communicated to on-site and off-site visitors through interpretive signage, digital media and social media.

Links: [Abbot Pass National Historic Site](#), [Yoho National Park](#)

For more information, please contact: Yoho National Park, P.O. Box 99, Field, B.C., V0A 1G0

Cover image: Amy Krause / Parks Canada