



Jasper

National Park of Canada

Annual Report

2015





Reporting on Implementation



Work on the Rocky River Bridges will ensure motorist safety and smooth circulation on Highway 16.

This annual report summarizes Parks Canada's accomplishments in Jasper National Park from October 2014 to September 2015. It complements an annual public forum that provides Canadians with an opportunity to provide their feedback on progress in the implementation of the *Jasper National Park Management Plan*. Annual reports from previous years can be found on-line at: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/plan.aspx>

For the reader's convenience, the report is organized by the headings in the management plan.

Welcoming Visitors to Mountains of Opportunity

Federal Infrastructure Initiative

On July 2, 2015, the federal government announced \$210 million in investment in critical infrastructure, and visitor and operational facilities in Jasper National Park. The funding is part of a \$2.6 billion infrastructure investment program for national parks, national historic sites and historic waterways and presents a tremendous opportunity to address the effects of deferred maintenance and repair work in this park.

Projects earmarked for the money include:

- Paving and other work (e.g. guardrail replacement, slope stabilization) on Highways 16, 93, 93A and the Miette Hot Springs Road;
- Rehabilitation of nine major highway bridges;
- Road sign replacement along major highways and parkways;
- A major recapitalization of Whistlers Campground;

- Renovation of the heritage Jasper Fire Hall, to facilitate its use for interpretation and events;
- Renewal of the Valley of the Five trail and parking lot;
- Rehabilitation of the Cabin Lake dam; and
- Renewal of the Edith Cavell parking lot and access road.



Ten oTENTiks were installed in Whistlers Campground courtesy of federal infrastructure funding, bringing the total number of oTENTiks to 21.

Également offert en français.



Some projects are currently underway and others will be carried out over the next three to five years. As part of the implementation of this program, work will be required to communicate delays and access changes to visitors and residents, carry out environmental impact analyses and project surveillance, review technical plans and designs, and address other project requirements (e.g. prepare a long-term gravel extraction plan for paving and other roadway maintenance).



Hidden Cove Campground was fully booked this summer.



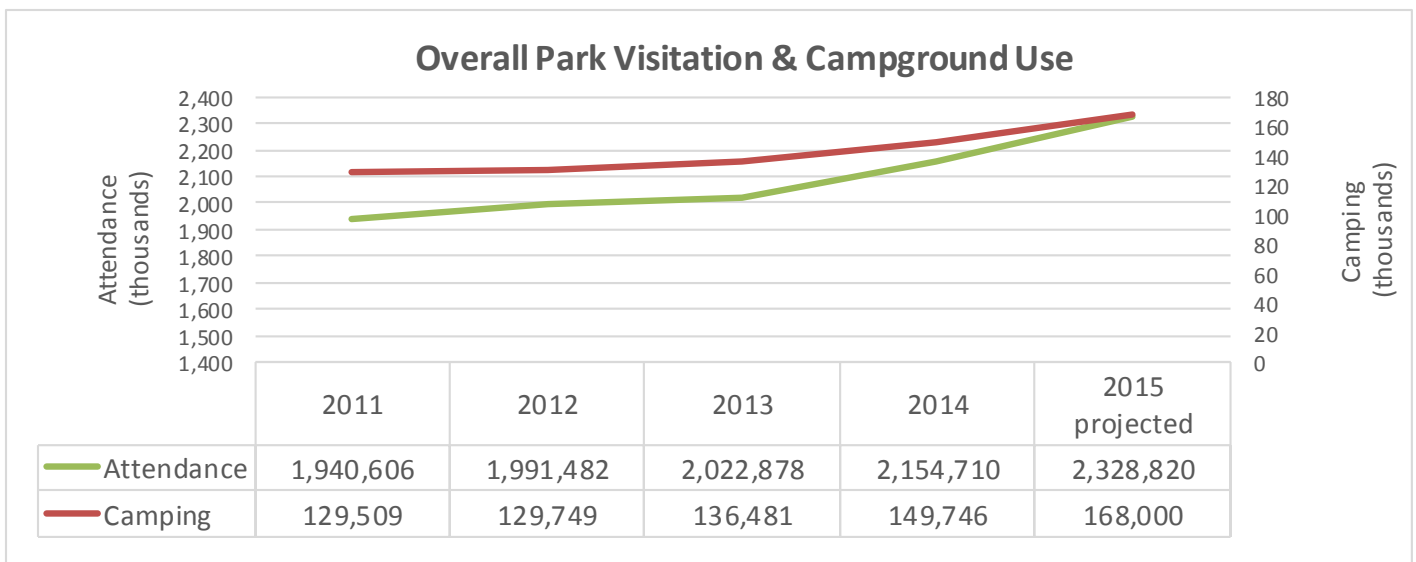
Upgrades to picnicking and special event sites at Pyramid Beach and Island and the Athabasca Day Use Area have been well-received.

Attendance

Park attendance has increased for the sixth year in a row. Strong promotional efforts, a weakening Canadian dollar, and softening regional economy likely all contributed to the strong attendance trend. Camping increased by 20% over 2013. The table below provides numbers for overall park visitation and campground use.

Campgrounds and Day Use Areas

Parks Canada continues to refresh campgrounds and day use areas throughout the park. A new washroom, kitchen shelter, and expanded parking area are just a few of the improvements made to Whirlpool Group Campground in 2015.





Icefields Parkway

Appended to Banff and Jasper National Parks' management plans, the *Icefields Parkway Strategic Concept* (2009) guides Parks Canada's collaboration with stakeholders, commercial operators and partners towards the Parkway's future best.

The Columbia Icefield Centre's Glacier Gallery celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Parkway with an historic photo and poster exhibit; and the opening of a 100-seat theatre, which is now home to the award-winning film, *Through Ice and Time*. Visitors greeted at a new visitor reception area, were offered an Icefields Parkway 'Xplorers' booklet packed with outdoor activities for families to discover.

The 107 km of highway paving completed in 2015, represents the first phase of a multi-year infrastructure renewal plan for the Parkway that is already enhancing visitor experiences.



Parks Canada's information desk at the Icefield Centre re-opened this spring following renovations.

Trails and Backcountry Campgrounds

The efforts of three trail crews, the vegetation restoration crew, and volunteers with the Jasper Trail Alliance resulted in numerous improvements to Jasper's trail network. Notable projects included:

- New food lockers at two campgrounds, bridge re-decking, and new corduroy in the Tonquin Valley;
- Installation of new fencing and safety signage at Athabasca Falls;
- Boardwalk replacement and reconstruction of sections of the Source of the Springs trail at Miette Hot Springs; and
- Rehabilitation of trails within the Whistlers Bench wildlife corridor with the help of ten Alberta Junior Forest Rangers.

A new paddling campground, Hidden Cove, opened this summer. Tucked away on the shores of iconic Maligne Lake, this campground provides a gentle wilderness camping experience with a rustic shelter. Improvements were made to three other introductory wilderness campgrounds: Big Bend, Athabasca Island and Saturday Night Lake.

Experiential Activities and Programs

Several new programs were added to Parks Canada's existing suite of interpretive activities:

- A very popular, lively and knee-stomping Sunday night jam at the Heritage Fire Hall;
- A street theatre program with audience participation; and
- A Trail Cam Safari, a winter program using trail cameras, traditional tracking methods and telemetry.



The Medicine Wheel Program was one of many interpretive programs offered at Jasper's Heritage Fire Hall.



Tour of Alberta

The increasing popularity of road cycling has prompted new product development (e.g. a new road cycling brochure) and three new events.



The Tour of Alberta in progress.

Over the September long weekend, 120 professional cyclists tackled two challenging mountain routes within Jasper National Park. Parks Canada, the Municipality of Jasper, Tourism Jasper and a Local Organizing Committee worked together to pull off a very successful event. Televised coverage of the Tour reached an estimated 45 million viewers in Europe and North America.

Other New Events

Parks Canada reviewed and approved several new events, including June's Gran Fondo and Triathlon and the first outdoor rodeo in over 40 years, hosted by the Jasper Rodeo Association.

Bringing Mountains to People Where They Live

Palisades Stewardship Education Centre

The Palisades Stewardship Education Centre connects youth from across Canada to nature in order to instil conservation ethics through experiential learning. Visitation was up at the Palisades: 1,862 youth participated in education programs, an increase of 35% over last year, and another 777 youth attended the Marmot Learning Centre, up by 38%.

Parks Canada signed an agreement with Ski Marmot Basin and Grande Yellowhead Public School Division to share the costs of renovations needed to move the Marmot Learning Centre to its new home in the Avalanche Control Hut at Marmot Basin.

A new education module, Teachings of the Mountain People, was developed through the changing Relationships Project (see p. 7). The module focuses on Métis traditions and the history of Jasper House and its people, who homesteaded along the Athabasca River.

Urban outreach events included caribou, fire and whitebark pine programming at the Royal Alberta Museum and Telus World of Science in Edmonton and continued participation in outreach at Vancouver's Telus World of Science and the Calgary Zoo.



Social media is extending our reach: this popular image of Maligne Lake from an Instagram user reached 21,330 people and garnered 1,303 Likes, Comments and Shares and 1,139 Post Clicks.



Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site

Maligne Lake Chalet and Guest House National Historic Site

A new National Historic Site, the Maligne Lake Chalet and Guest House, was designated by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in March 2015. Constructed between 1935 and 1942, these buildings are all that remain of well-known outfitter and guide Fred Brewster's camp on the shores of Maligne Lake. They illustrate the prominent role played by outfitters, guides, and railways in the development of tourism in the mountain national parks.



The Maligne Lake Chalet's peeled log construction and exposed log detailing is characteristic of early park architecture.

Ensuring Healthy Ecosystems

Ecological Integrity Monitoring

Ecological integrity monitoring is a key tool in national parks management. In Jasper National Park, we are monitoring three major ecosystems, or "ecological indicators": forests, fresh water and the alpine. For each ecological indicator, we monitor five measures that track key biodiversity and ecological processes (e.g. mammal occupancy, aquatic connectivity).

For example, one measure looks at aquatic invertebrate communities as an indicator of water quality. Thirty different sites are sampled using a methodology developed by Environment Canada. Aquatic invertebrates are collected from each site, along with data on water chemistry and physical stream parameters.

We report on our monitoring results in the State of the Park Assessment every 10 years. This assessment informs park management planning activities. The next assessment is planned for 2018.



Kick-sampling is used to stir up the rocky stream bottom, so that aquatic invertebrates are carried downstream into a waiting net.



Species at Risk

Restoring Endangered Whitebark Pine

Disease-resistant whitebark pine are being sought by park biologists and summer students. After surveying thousands of trees for the introduced disease “blister rust”, staff climbed 31 resistant trees to collect the seeds that will be planted to become the foundation for the population of this keystone alpine tree.

Woodland Caribou Conservation

The Tonquin herd had a minimum of 31 caribou in 2014. Considered just large enough to be self-sustaining, on-going conservation efforts are essential to support recovery of this herd. The other two south Jasper herds remain critically small with at least 3 caribou in the Maligne and 10 in the Brazeau. It is important to protect these small herds to maintain genetic diversity and support potential future augmentation.

One of the five threats to caribou is the risk of packed trails helping wolves reach important winter habitat. To reduce this risk, access into these areas is prohibited from November 1st until late winter. As of winter 2014–2015, protection measures are in place for the winter ranges of all four Jasper caribou herds.



Ten grizzly bears have been caught and collared since May in the south half of Jasper National Park.

Grizzly and Black Bear Population Estimates

In 2014, Parks Canada collaborated with fRI Research to collect DNA from bear hair. The DNA enabled us to calculate population estimates of 54 grizzly bears and 129 black bears in Jasper National Park south of Highway 16. This is the first estimate for grizzlies in south Jasper and the first estimate ever for Jasper’s black bears.

Parks Canada is currently working with fRI Research to collect data on grizzly bear habitat use, movements, denning behaviour and health. Using Jasper National Park as a control area, fRI Research will examine the effect of landscape change outside of the park on collared bears. Parks Canada will use the grizzly bear data for land use planning and to help manage human-wildlife conflict.



Spurred on by the excitement of finding a summer roost in one of the buildings at the Palisades Stewardship Education Centre, staff installed a live bat-cam to teach students about the secret lives of bats. Parks Canada is actively monitoring several bat species, including the endangered little brown myotis and northern myotis.



The landscape at Medicine Lake has changed dramatically following the Excelsior Fire.

Fire and Vegetation Management

Mountain Pine Beetle

The mountain pine beetle is an indigenous forest insect found throughout western North America. Large outbreaks, attributed to global climate change and fire suppression, have resulted in the loss of millions of hectares of pine forests in western Canada and the United States.

Just over 21,500 hectares of Jasper National Park's pine forests have now been colonized by mountain pine beetle. This is a significant increase over the 6,250 hectares mapped in 2014, and the 122 hectares mapped in 2013.

Parks Canada is working with the Government of Alberta, the Canadian Forest Service and the Municipality of Jasper to manage mountain pine beetle in the park. A plan outlining the measures to be taken to control the spread of mountain pine beetle is under development. Key goals are to maintain ecological integrity, contain infestations and minimize the spread of mountain pine beetle onto lands east of the park, ensure the safety of visitors and residents of Jasper, and educate visitors about the reasons for the increased presence of mountain pine beetle.

Wildfire Management

A lightning strike came to life as the Excelsior Wildfire on July 9, 2015 in the Maligne Valley, approximately 15 km southeast of the Town of Jasper. At its peak, there were 120 people, including an Incident Management Team, working to extinguish the fire. The final fire size was 966 hectares (almost 10 km²). Parks Canada responded to nine other wildfires in the park over the summer.

Fire Restoration

This spring, Parks Canada successfully completed the Vine Creek prescribed fire, by burning the remaining 500 hectares of the 725 hectare unit. The burn will create a strategic break for wildfire and mountain pine beetle, encourage whitebark pine colonization, and restore Douglas fir savannah.

Parks Canada also burned 111 hectares of the Jackladder Complex, 15 km north of the Municipality of Jasper, to restore the open, valley bottom grasslands that were historically present.



Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

Parks Canada continued to work closely with Indigenous communities with historic ties to Jasper National Park through events such as National Aboriginal Day, hosted this year by the Métis Nation of British Columbia, and the new Mountains and Moccasins presentation series, a unique summer series of First Nations and Métis performances and traditional teachings.

Jasper Indigenous Cultural Area

The Jasper Indigenous Cultural Area, located on the Maligne River, welcomed close to 700 people this summer for seven different cultural events. Tipi frames, willow lodges and ribbon trees now dot the landscape—evidence of the increasing reconnection and interest in carrying out traditional practices in Jasper National Park. Work continues to ensure the facilities and services at the site meet the needs of the users, thereby encouraging greater use.

Changing Relationships: People of the Upper Athabasca Valley Project

The Changing Relationships Project is part of a national initiative to relate and celebrate Métis heritage in Canada's national parks and national historic sites.



More First Nations and Métis groups and organizations are using the Jasper Indigenous Cultural Area.

Locally, the project focuses on the historic contributions and stories of families who homesteaded in the Upper Athabasca Valley in the years leading up to the park's creation.

In addition to the educational module described on page 4 (*Teachings of the Mountain People*), interpretive panels which tell the homesteaders' story in English, French and Cree were installed at the historic homestead locations. Parks Canada staff also worked with 12 youth from the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation to carry out a 7 hectare prescribed fire at the Ewan Moberly homestead.

Fostering Open Management and Innovation



The Caribou Ambassadors program is now in its fourth year. Several local businesses took part in the training offered this year.

Working with Partners

Parks Canada continues to work actively with many different organizations and individuals to advance conservation, visitor experience and outreach objectives. Examples include:

- Worked with a variety of partners, most notably the Jasper Partnership Initiative, to support signature events such as the Dark Sky Festival, Jasper in January and Canada Day.



- Renewed a 5-year Partnering Agreement with Grande Yellowhead Public School Division to create innovative education programs at the Palisades through 2019.
- Renewed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Friends of Jasper National Park and a partnering agreement with the Jasper Trail Alliance. In addition to delivering events and interpretive programs, the Friends have started a major trail project at the summit of Whistlers Mountain, in partnership with Parks Canada and the Jasper SkyTram.
- Worked with Travel Alberta and Tourism Jasper to develop and launch the SHIFT program, providing local and regional participants with experiential travel training.
- Offered Learn to Camp for the fifth year in a row in partnership with: Catholic Social Services; Brewster Travel Canada; Mountain Equipment Coop; Friends of Jasper National Park; Scouts Canada; Alberta Parks; Elk Island and Banff national parks; Monika Schaeffer and 5 Learn to Camp alumni.



Learn to Camp introduced 50 New Canadians from ten different countries to the great Canadian tradition of camping.

- Coordinated groups and individuals on a variety of Park Steward projects, from invasive weed removal to assisting with Learn to Camp.
- Successfully piloted an international volunteer program with Go International and Banff National Park.

Managing Growth and Development

Community Development

The largest project completed in the community of Jasper this year was interior renovations to the Super A Grocery Store.

The completion of the Servus Credit Union building added 111 m² to the Developed Commercial Floor Area. The neighbouring commercial property at 306 Connaught Drive is currently in the process of redevelopment and will likely need an additional 132 m² of Commercial Floor Area (to be allocated in 2016, once the project is complete).

Although no residential developments were completed in 2014, several residential redevelopments began in 2015 and will be completed next year.

| Commercial Floor Area (CFA) Cap 2001 | 9,290 (m ²) | 100% |
|--|-------------------------|------|
| Developed CFA | 4,499 | 48% |
| CFA Not Developed, but Allocated | 132 | 1% |
| C1/C2/C3/C4 CFA available for Allocation | 4,418 | 47% |
| S Block CFA available for Allocation | 372 | 4% |



A new paddleboard concession at Lake Edith and Annette is just one example of a new business venture reviewed and approved by Parks Canada in 2015.

Marmot Basin Ski Area

The first Long Range Plan for Marmot Basin Ski Area was approved by the Minister of the Environment in June 2015. This significant milestone is the result of several years of cooperative planning by Parks Canada and Ski Marmot Basin. The following projects, all of which will take place within the developed footprint of the ski area, are outlined in the Long Range Plan:

- Expanded snowmaking, supported by a new mid-mountain reservoir;
- Enhanced parking and transportation access;
- Upgrading the Caribou Chalet; and
- Glading on the upper slopes of the mountain in areas that were previously gladed.

New Recreational Activity Guidelines

Parks Canada released detailed guidelines for five recreational activities in Jasper National Park in April 2015:

- Aerial parks (e.g. high ropes courses);
- Mountain biking;
- Traction kiting;
- Community gardens; and
- Paragliding and hang gliding.

The approved guidelines are available on-line at: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/plan.aspx>

Environmental Stewardship Program

The Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada jointly fund the Environmental Stewardship Program in recognition of a common interest in promoting environmental sustainability and stewardship in Jasper. For full environmental stewardship annual reports visit: <http://jasper-alberta.com/2206/Annual-Reports>

Beverage Container Recycling

A grant from the Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation contributed to the purchase of 32 new waste and recycling bins for the Jasper's central business district and 8 larger bins for busy day use areas including Maligne Canyon, Lake Annette and Lake Edith.



New recycling bin at the Maligne Canyon Day Use Area; bin colour and labels help visitors to separate refundable beverage containers from other waste.

We hope you have found this year's Annual Report informative. For more information on anything you have read, please contact:

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