

# Guidelines for New Recreational Activities in Jasper National Park

2015

## Background

Millions of visitors have experienced Jasper National Park while taking part in a recreational activity. Providing visitors with opportunities to participate in recreational activities is one way to encourage meaningful and enjoyable visits that contribute to a sense of connection to place.

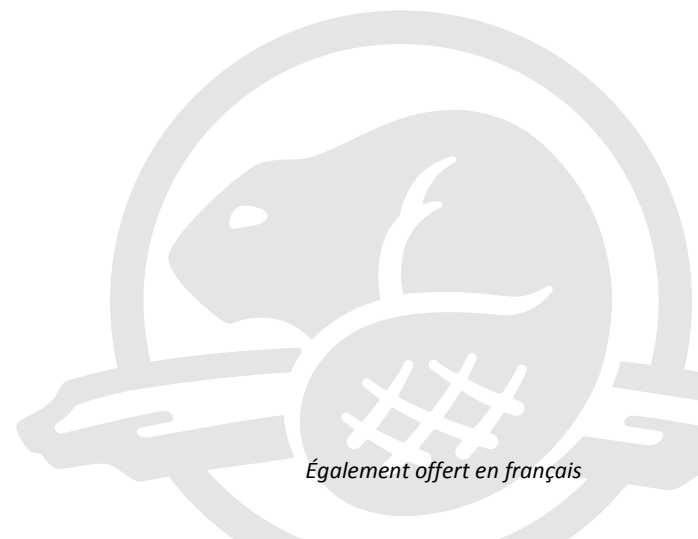
In 2010, Parks Canada concluded national assessments of several new recreational activities to determine whether or not they can occur in Parks Canada's protected heritage places. The activities were selected for assessment based on interest expressed by the public, stakeholders, and individual national parks and national historic sites. National guidelines for the activities were approved by the Minister of the Environment in September 2010. Individual parks and sites may now carry out local assessments of these activities to determine whether or not they may occur in that park or site and the conditions under which they may take place.

Banff and Yoho national parks conducted the first local assessment of a new recreational activity—interpreted, guided via ferrata tours—in November 2010. Based on feedback from that assessment, the mountain national parks (Jasper, Banff, Kootenay, Glacier, and Mt. Revelstoke, Waterton Lakes and Yoho) assessed and developed guidelines on a mountain park-basis for all the nationally-approved activities, instead of carrying out individual local assessments for each activity. The mountain park guidelines built on and refined the national guidelines. They were further tailored to reflect the unique context of Jasper National Park.

Guidelines specific to Jasper National Park were released for public review on November 15, 2011. The review period ended in January 31, 2012. Since then, Parks Canada team members have been working to revise the guidelines. Further discussions have been held with stakeholders and Parks Canada specialists, which have resulted in this final set of guidelines.

## Table of Contents

Background	1
Focus on New Recreational Activities	3
Visitor Experience: The Big Picture	3
Management Plan Direction	5
Park Zoning	5
Strategic Environmental Assessment	6
Aerial Parks	7
Paragliding and Hang Gliding	11
Traction Kiting	16
Mountain Biking	19
Implementation Strategy	23



Également offert en français



## Roles and Responsibilities in Setting Policy Direction for New Recreational Activities

Timeline	2006 to 2010	Fall 2010 to Spring 2011	Spring 2011 to present
Unit Responsible	<p><b>Parks Canada Agency National Office</b> External Relations and Visitor Experience Directorate</p>	<p><b>Mountain National Parks</b> Jasper, Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Waterton Lakes, Glacier and Mount Revelstoke</p>	<p><b>Jasper National Park</b></p>
Policy Developed	<p>Directive for Recreational Activity and Special Events Assessment</p> <p>National Guidelines for Several New Recreational Activities</p>	<p><i>Mountain Parks Guidelines for New Recreational Activities</i></p>	<p><i>Jasper National Park Guidelines for New Recreational Activities</i></p>
Approved by	Minister of Environment	Mountain Parks Superintendents	Jasper National Park Superintendent
Public Involvement	Stakeholder consultations with recreation and environmental organizations and industry representatives about national guidelines for specific activities	Opportunities to comment on draft guidelines provided through public events in Banff and Jasper	Opportunities to comment on draft guidelines provided in Jasper, Edmonton and on-line
Key Decisions	<p>The following activities were approved nationally and can now be considered by individual parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided and interpreted canopy tours, via ferrata tours and aerial adventure parks</li> <li>Non-motorized paragliding and hang gliding</li> <li>Traction kiting</li> <li>Mountain biking</li> <li>Community gardens</li> </ul> <p>The following activities were not approved and may not be considered by individual parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stand-alone zip lines</li> <li>Trails for downhill mountain biking</li> </ul>	<p>The majority of nationally-approved activities could be considered in the mountain national parks (with the addition of a number of new guidelines), except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided, interpreted canopy tours would only be considered in Mt. Revelstoke and Glacier national parks</li> <li>Via ferrata would not be considered in Zone II (declared wilderness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific locations identified for aerial adventure parks and traction kiting</li> <li>Proposals for via ferrata in zones III and IV will be considered</li> <li>Next steps identified for paragliding and hang gliding</li> <li>Guidelines for mountain biking shaped by decisions taken through Three Valley Confluence Trails Project</li> </ul>



## Focus on New Recreational Activities

New recreational activities offer the potential to reach segments of the Canadian population that are priorities for Parks Canada: urban Canadians, youth and new Canadians. Young urban Canadians and new Canadians represent growing segments of the population; they may also be less familiar with national parks and national historic sites than previous generations.

Reaching youth and new Canadians and building support for heritage protection is essential to ensuring the future of our national parks. Participating for the first time in a new activity located in the park provides a window to the many other possibilities the park offers. For many, this window may act as a bridge to developing a life-long connection.

New activities can also provide more opportunities for new and current visitors to experience national parks. However, these activities need to be managed with the same care and attention as existing activities.

## Visitor Experience: The Big Picture

Jasper National Park is home to a multitude of recreational activities. Some, like horseback riding and canoeing, have a long history in the park that pre-dates its establishment. Others are more recent. Mountain biking and ice walks in Maligne Canyon date back to the 1980s; geo-caching has been permitted since 2007. Many of the larger, commercial facilities, such as Marmot Basin Ski Area and Jasper Tramway were established in the 1960s. A number of policies related to existing recreational activities have been reviewed and updated recently and are priorities for implementation.

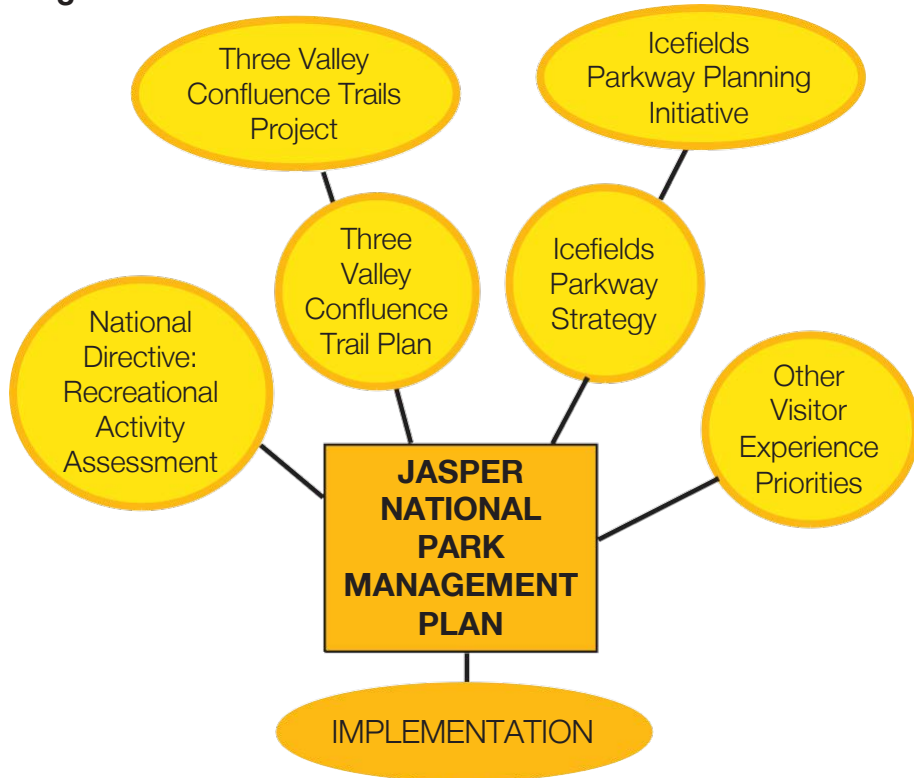
For example, a multi-year planning process for the Three Valley Confluence concluded in 2009 with an approved plan for the multi-use trail network around the Jasper townsite. Trail improvements and adjustments outlined in the plan are being implemented as funding permits.

Parks Canada worked with an Advisory Group to develop the Icefields Parkway Strategy (2009).

Planning focused on enhancing visitor experiences along the roadway and adjacent opportunities, facilities and services. Improvements to the parking lot at the Icefields Centre and the Toe of the Glacier are just a few of the projects that have resulted from this collaborative planning process.

Refreshing existing facilities and renewing existing products will continue to be the focus of the Visitor Experience program in Jasper National Park.

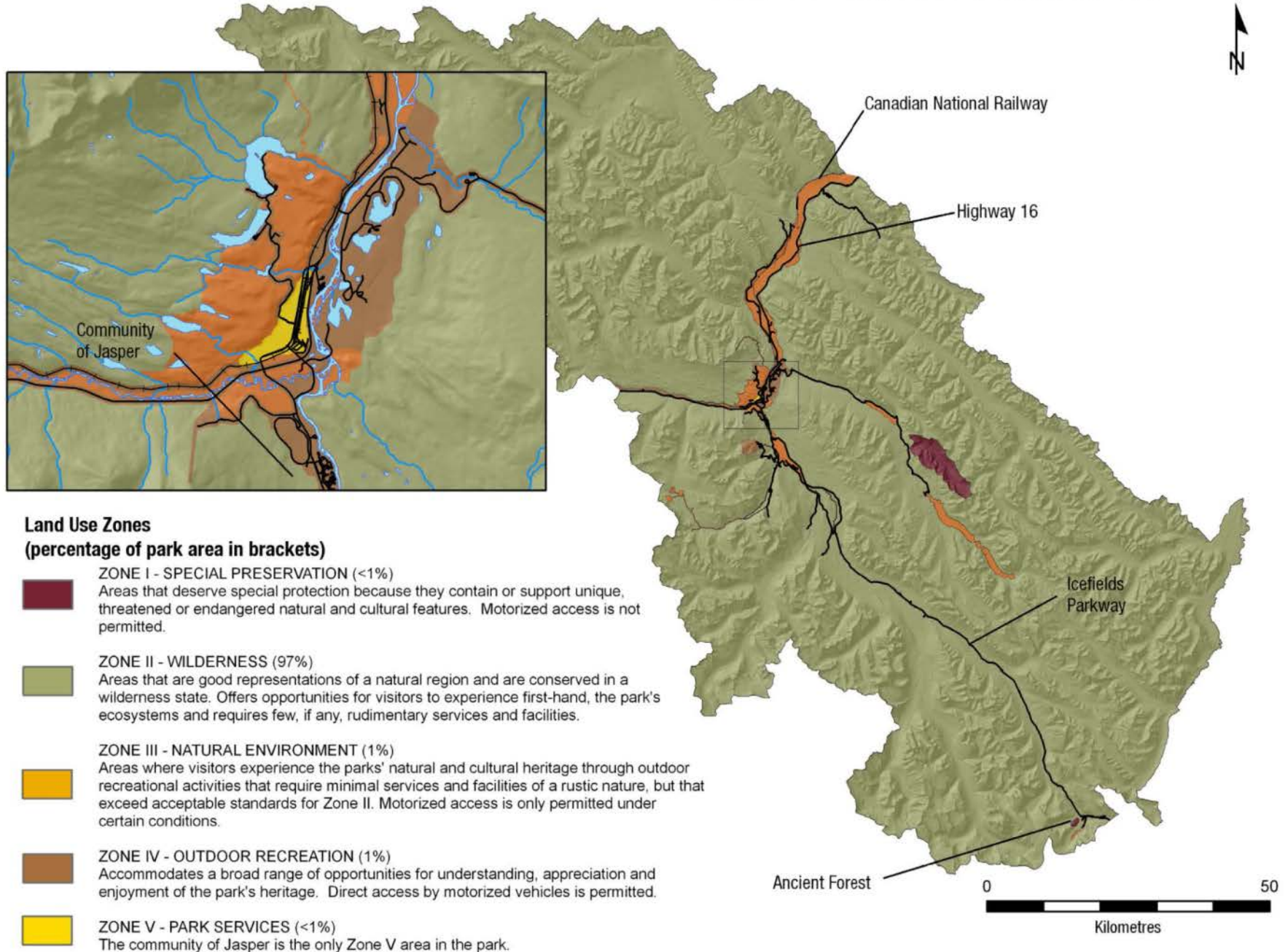
### Relationship between Visitor Experience Priorities and Park Management Plan







## Land Use Zoning for Jasper National Park





## Management Plan Direction

The *Jasper National Park Management Plan* (2010) supports the introduction of new activities and facilities subject to specific criteria, while prioritizing the renewal and refreshing of existing activities and facilities. The plan commits Parks Canada to:

Develop, support, and promote new events and recreational activities that:

1. Promote public understanding and appreciation of Rocky Mountain ecosystems and history, and Parks Canada's mandate.
2. Involve a diverse range of the park's partners and stakeholders in their development and delivery.
3. Support outstanding visitor experiences.
4. Respect the park's character and area concepts.
5. Support relevant ecological and cultural resource protection goals.

Proposals may be evaluated through a structured public review process.

## Park Zoning

During the 2009 review of the management plan, concerns were expressed about the potential effects of new recreational activities and events on the park environment and other visitors. Parks Canada was urged to better define "non-traditional uses" and set clear boundaries in terms of the types of activities and associated development that would be considered. These guidelines respond to this feedback by setting out what activities will be considered where and the conditions under which they may occur.

Some activities may be appropriate in certain areas of the park, but not in others. Zoning is a key tool used to manage development and recreational use of the park. The national parks zoning system contains five zones. A description of each zone and a map depicting their location in Jasper National Park is provided on page four. The provisional guidelines set out the zones in which recreational activities may occur.

Additionally, the management plan divides Jasper National Park into six distinct areas and sets visitor experience, resource protection and education objectives for each area. New activities must be consistent with the area strategies and general management plan direction.

## Summary of locations or zones for new recreational activities in Jasper National Park

Activity	Location or zone where activity can occur	Comments
Aerial Parks	Zones IV and V	
Via Ferrata	Zones III and IV	
Non-Motorized Hang Gliding and Paragliding	Zones II, III and IV for trial period	Activity will be re-evaluated at the end of trial period
Traction Kiting Water-Based (summer) Land-Based (summer) Ice- or Snow-Based (winter)	Jasper Lake recommended Durable surfaces (e.g. pavement, playing fields) in zones III, IV and V Zones II, III, IV and V, except for Mildred Lake	Not permitted on grasslands or alpine meadows Kiters must ensure snow cover is adequate
Mountain Biking Winter Biking Bike Parks	Designated trails in zones II, III and IV Designated trails in zones II, III and IV and Zone III and IV lakes Zone V (Jasper townsite)	



## Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the mountain park guidelines for new recreational activities was conducted in accordance with the *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals*. Strategic environmental assessment is a tool used to ensure that environmental considerations are systematically assessed before policy decisions are made.

The key findings of the strategic environmental assessment are:

1. New recreational activities have the potential to contribute to visitor experience in ways that are consistent with the character of place that is unique or representative of the mountain parks' natural and cultural environments.
2. Site-specific impacts of new activities to vegetation, wildlife and visitor experience resources and values can be dealt with effectively by considering location, design, management and mitigation measures and visitor education.
3. Cumulative impacts of new recreational activities may be largely addressed through the application of management plan area concepts, park zoning systems and the mitigations of the SEA. The key aspects of managing potential impacts to wildlife and visitor experience are reflected in the provisional guidelines.

Further to the second finding of the SEA, site-specific impacts of proposals for aerial adventure parks, bike parks and commercial guiding or instruction in traction kiting and mountain biking will be addressed through the environmental assessment process. Some forms of paragliding and hang gliding (e.g. commercial tandem flying), if permitted in future, would also require environmental assessment.

Environmental considerations related to unstructured activities that do not require any new infrastructure (e.g. unstructured traction kiting, paragliding and hang gliding) were evaluated and further guidance (e.g. best practices, locations) is provided directly in these guidelines.

Monitoring and follow-up requirements will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### **For More Information about these guidelines, please contact:**

Jasper Field Unit  
Superintendent's Office  
(780) 852-6171  
[jnp.superintendent@pc.gc.ca](mailto:jnp.superintendent@pc.gc.ca)



## **Aerial Parks**

Aerial parks belong to a class of guided, interpreted activities that require infrastructure and include via ferrata and canopy tours. They do not currently exist in Jasper National Park.

### **Description**

Elevated paths progress through various obstacles and are equipped with ropes, ladders, suspended bridges, zip lines and via ferrata components. Challenge, adventure and ropes courses belong to this category. Participants use a belay system and move through the course at their own pace.

## **Guidelines for Aerial Parks**

### **1. Consistency with Policy**

Parks Canada may consider aerial park proposals from existing leaseholders or licensees on or adjacent to existing leases or areas under a license of occupation provided that the tours are:

- consistent with the management plan, Outlying Commercial Accommodation guidelines and other relevant policies
- small in scale: sized so that they remain an ancillary service as opposed to the primary attraction at an Outlying Commercial Accommodation or commercial day use operation
- in the case of the Marmot Basin Ski Area, advanced as part of a Long-Range Plan

Tours will only be considered in areas where the activity is consistent with the area management concepts and management plan direction to consider proposals for new facilities required for outdoor recreational activities, subject to:

- the criteria for new recreational activities (p. 24, *Jasper National Park Management Plan*)
- mitigation of any potential site-specific, park-wide or regional impacts, including potential conflicts between user groups
- the use of existing disturbed sites where feasible
- no net increase in landscape disturbance or wildlife displacement at a park scale

Commercial operators may propose playgrounds (small, unsupervised play areas) with characteristics that are similar to an aerial park (e.g. bouldering area, challenge elements close to the ground) under existing environmental assessment and development review policies.

### **2. Zoning / Location**

Aerial parks can be considered in zones IV and V. They will not be considered in Environmentally Sensitive Sites, Zone I, Zone II or Zone III.

New or modified staging areas to support these tours can only occur in zones IV and V.





### **3. Infrastructure / Footprint**

No new roads will be created to support these types of tours.

Tours will make use of existing facilities (e.g. parking, toilets, trails) with sufficient capacity as much as possible.

Where supported by park management plan direction, new or modified staging areas could be considered under license of occupation or other agreement. These would include only basic infrastructure (parking, picnic tables, and toilets). New or existing staging areas requiring modification will be funded, constructed and maintained by operators. Other supporting facilities and operations, such as concession stands and ticketing will be managed off-site in areas already leased or licensed for commercial services.

For proposals that would involve new development adjacent to an existing lease or license of occupation, Parks Canada may work with the proponent, through the development review process, to identify a conservation gain to offset the increase in the development footprint. Potential conservation gains could include rehabilitation of lands to a natural state elsewhere in the park or new interpretive programming.

Zip lines will be considered as minor components of aerial parks as a means to move from one point to another where there is no other feasible alternative means to access the area, and where the area is determined to be critical to the experience.

### **4. Environmental Considerations**

Resource inventories, assessments and monitoring will inform the site selection and ongoing management as necessary. Costs for resource surveys, environmental assessments, ongoing monitoring and active management will be the responsibility of the proponent/operator and will be based on terms of reference provided by Parks Canada.

Seasonal and daily timing of visitor activities will facilitate wildlife life cycle requirements. Site and route selection will be informed by a detailed survey of:

- sensitive vegetation species and communities and associated wildlife habitat values including species at risk, rare and fragile vegetation
- special resources (e.g. fossils, iconic landforms, den sites)
- cultural resources

### **5. Safety and Risk Management**

Commercial operators must obtain appropriate permits and licenses, and adequate liability insurance.

Safety, risk and liability will be considered throughout ongoing management of guided interpreted tours.

The design, construction, operation, expansion, modification and/or maintenance of infrastructure must adhere to industry standards, and national and provincial building codes, where applicable.





Guiding qualifications and requirements include:

- Standard First Aid – St. John's or equivalent including CPR
- safety and technical skills accreditation will be determined in consultation with the third party proposing the aerial park and will meet current industry or guiding association standards (e.g. High Angle Rope Rescues)

## **6. Visitor Learning and Enjoyment**

Education related to park heritage values will be a core component of the experience.

The focus of guided, interpreted tours will be the opportunity to experience and learn about unique mountain national park landscapes (such as dynamic views, cordilleran geology and montane environments). Infrastructure will not be the primary focus of the activity. Infrastructure will be designed to immerse the visitor in the landscape and provide learning opportunities.

Guides must have Interpretive Guides Association training at the Basic level or equivalent to provide heritage interpretation to participants.

Site and route selection will be informed by a detailed survey of existing visitor activity and values (including viewsapes).

## **7. Accessibility / Reaching Target Markets**

Operators will be encouraged to provide affordable opportunities for youth and families to participate.



<b>Other Guided, Interpreted Activities</b>	
<b>Via Ferrata</b>	
Description	Rationale
<p>Via ferrata typically consist of a combination of ladders, rungs, bridges and other structures that take a visitor onto a vertical rock face. Participants wear a harness and remain attached to a cable at all times while making their way along the route. Via ferrata can offer a unique opportunity for visitors who may not be able to develop the experience or skills to engage in mountaineering and rock climbing to experience a vertical environment.</p>	<p>Parks Canada has determined on a mountain-parks-basis that it will consider proposals for guided, interpreted via ferrata in zones III and IV. Via ferrata will not be considered in Zone II, where only basic user facilities (e.g. trails, wilderness campgrounds) are permitted. Although Parks Canada has not yet identified any feasible locations for a via ferrata in zones III or IV in Jasper National Park, if a third party submits a proposal identifying a feasible location or locations, this activity will be further assessed and local guidelines developed.</p>
<b>Canopy Tours</b>	
Description	Rationale
<p>This activity involves elevated walkways or other infrastructure that take visitors off the ground and allow them to explore the forest canopy.</p>	<p>Canopy tours are most appropriate in national park settings where the height and size of the canopy system support unique assemblages of flora and fauna that do not exist and cannot be readily observed elsewhere, and which, in those situations, provide opportunities for unique exploration and learning. There is little potential for canopy tours in Jasper National Park, due to the absence of suitable trees, however aerial parks, which can be built using poles and other structures, offer a similar opportunity and will be considered as detailed in the previous section.</p>
<b>Stand-Alone Zip Lines</b>	
Description	Rationale
<p>This activity involves an extended descent by gravity from one fixed point to another along a cable. Participants wear a harness attached to a pulley or trolley that travels along the cable.</p>	<p>Stand-alone zip lines are not permitted in any national park under the national guidelines for new recreational activities due to the limited opportunity for learning associated with this activity.</p>



### **Non-Motorized Paragliding and Hang Gliding**

Non-motorized paragliding and hang gliding have not been permitted in national parks by regulation for at least 30 years.

#### **Description**

Participants launch from a high point and use a chute or rigid wing to catch rising currents of air. They eventually land at a different location.

Hang glider wings are made of rigid or semi-rigid materials and are heavier and less portable than the chutes used by paragliders. However, paragliders are slower than hang gliders.

## **Guidelines for Hang Gliding and Paragliding**

### **1. Consistency with Policy**

Only non-motorized forms of hang gliding and paragliding will be allowed. No motorized or towed launches will be permitted.

Parks Canada will work with the Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association of Canada (HPAC)<sup>1</sup> in order to identify the management approach to this activity in Jasper National Park. As hang gliding and paragliding are new recreational activities in Jasper National Park, and peer reviewed research on its impacts indicates that they can be more significant for alpine ungulates than existing activities, Parks Canada will be cautious in its approach and initially permit this activity on a two-year trial basis for personal use only (i.e. no commercial or special events permitted). During this time, data collection will provide Parks Canada with information on the nature and frequency of potential impacts associated with these activities.

Parks Canada will work with the Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association of Canada (HPAC) in order to develop best practices for paragliding and hang gliding in Jasper National Park (see Appendix 1). This will include measures to reduce user conflicts and wildlife disturbance.

During the initial two-year pilot, no commercial activities (e.g. tandem flying) or special events will be considered.

Hang gliding and paragliding is not permitted at Marmot Basin under the *Marmot Basin Site Guidelines for Development and Use*.

<sup>1</sup> HPAC has secured the authority from Transport Canada to self-regulate hang gliding and paragliding activities, subject to Canadian Aviation Regulations. HPAC membership ensures that pilots have third-party liability insurance and that they have sufficient skills to fly unsupervised safely. Pilots from outside of Canada can obtain temporary HPAC membership, including liability insurance, based on International Pilot Proficiency Information cards (IPPI).



## 2. Zoning / Location

Hang gliding and paragliding will be permitted throughout Jasper National Park, however take offs, landings or low level flying will not be permitted in the following areas:

- Environmentally Sensitive Sites<sup>2</sup> and Zone I areas
- Zone V (the Jasper townsite)
- Marmot Basin Ski Area
- roadways and associated rights-of-way (e.g. Highway 16, Icefields Parkway)
- within 30 m of any watercourses (e.g. lakes, rivers, creeks) and their banks
- within 1000 m of active raptor nests or mineral licks

Pilots must obtain permission from the lessee or licensee before landing on a leasehold or license of occupation.

Pilots must exercise discretion when landing at Parks Canada facilities, such as picnic areas, campgrounds, and facility parking areas, and should avoid these areas during peak season<sup>3</sup> and other busy times of the year.

Emergency landings will be permitted in accordance with Transport Canada and Parks Canada regulations.

## 3. Infrastructure / Footprint

No new roads will be created to support hang gliding and paragliding.

## 4. Environmental Considerations

Parks Canada is currently developing recovery strategies and action plans for several alpine species-at-risk in the mountain parks. This includes woodland caribou and whitebark pine, both listed as endangered and both afforded the highest level of protection possible in Canada. These guidelines may be amended at a future date to make them compliant with Species-at-Risk requirements.

Take offs, landings and flights will avoid disturbing sensitive wildlife (e.g. nesting birds, mountain goats, woodland caribou).

Pilots will use official trails and routes to access areas for hang gliding and paragliding.

Parks Canada will work with HPAC to manage potential impacts to sensitive species (e.g. goats, caribou).

---

<sup>2</sup> The following Environmentally Sensitive Sites are designated in the *Jasper National Park Management Plan*: Edith Cavell Meadows, Pocahontas Ponds, and Maligne Lake Outlet.

<sup>3</sup> Peak season in Jasper National Park runs from the May long weekend to the September (Labour Day) long weekend.





## **5. Safety and Risk Management**

Hang gliding and paragliding will be practiced according to industry/association standards and rules.

Pilots must be members of HPAC to fly in the park.

Safety, risk and liability will be considered throughout the ongoing management of the activity. Parks Canada will work with HPAC and local flying clubs to identify necessary safety measures.

## **6. Visitor Learning and Enjoyment**

Parks Canada will work with HPAC and local flying clubs to manage communications with pilots.

Parks Canada will work with HPAC to manage potential impacts on other visitors and iconic views.



## **Traction Kiting**

You may already have seen this activity in Jasper National Park. Traction kiting does not require any specialized infrastructure, relying instead on existing access and facilities.

### **Description**

Kite surfers or skiers harness the wind's energy with a large kite to propel themselves across snow, ice, water or land.

Land-based participants stand on a buggy, skateboard or roller skates. Water-based participants use a board similar to a wakeboard or a surfboard.

Traction kiting on frozen surfaces is commonly called kite skiing or snow kiting. Kitters use the power of a kite to glide over snow or ice while strapped to a snowboard, skis or skates.

In open terrain, kitters are able to travel significant distances, particularly over open water or frozen lakes and snowfields.

## **Guidelines for Traction Kiting**

### **1. Consistency with Policy**

Special event proposals will go through normal park approval processes (e.g. business licensing, environmental impact assessment, special events process).

### **2. Zoning / Location**

In Jasper, Jasper Lake is recommended for water-based traction kiting (e.g. kite surfing).

Land based traction kiting (e.g. traction kiting using a buggy or skateboard) can take place on durable surfaces (see Environmental Considerations) in zone III, IV and V areas.

Snow- and ice-based traction kiting can take place in zone II, III, IV and V areas, with the exception of the Mildred Lake (where skating is regularly offered in winter).

Traction kiting cannot take place in Environmentally Sensitive Sites or in zone I areas.

New or modified staging areas to support traction kiting can only occur in zones III, IV and V.



### **3. Infrastructure / Footprint**

No new roads will be created to support traction kiting.

Commercial operations will make use of existing facilities (parking, toilets, trails etc.) with sufficient capacity as much as possible.

Where supported by park management plan direction, new or modified staging areas could be considered for commercial traction kiting operations under license of occupation or other agreement in zones IV and V. These would include only basic infrastructure (parking, picnic tables, and toilets). New or existing staging areas requiring modification will be funded and maintained by the proponent/operator. Other supporting facilities associated with commercial operations, such as concession stands and ticketing, will be managed off-site in areas already leased or licensed for commercial services.

### **4. Environmental Considerations**

Participants will use existing trails and routes to access areas for traction kiting and will respect any existing/new closures or restrictions.

Kiting in any season will be limited to durable surfaces (i.e., snow, ice, water, gravel, parking lots, playing fields in communities), including the consideration of appropriate depth of snow/ice cover. Traction kiting on grasslands and alpine meadows will not be permitted.

Water-based traction kiting will avoid direct disruption to areas known to be important to waterfowl lifecycle requirements. Parks Canada will develop web-based information for users to identify areas and/or time periods to be avoided.

Winter kiting will avoid disturbance to important ungulate wintering and subnivean wildlife habitat, including consideration of adequate snow or ice cover.

In areas that have high amounts of traction kiting, Parks Canada will work with local organizations in order to:

- avoid impact to sensitive species and important resource values
- avoid impact to, or alteration of, cultural resources
- avoid disruption of iconic views

Resource inventories, assessments and monitoring will inform ongoing management as necessary. Costs for resource surveys, environmental assessments, ongoing monitoring and active management of special events or commercial operations will be the responsibility of the proponent/operator and will be based on terms of reference provided by Parks Canada.



## **5. Visitor Safety**

Safety, risk and liability will be considered throughout the ongoing management of the activity.

Traction kiting will be practiced according to industry/association standards and rules.

Commercial operators must obtain appropriate permits and licenses, and adequate liability insurance.

Guiding qualifications and requirements include:

- Wilderness First Aid (40 hours) including CPR
- technical and instruction skills accreditation by the
- International Kiteboarding Organization (IKO), Professional Air Sports Association (PASA) or equivalent organization
- ACMG Certification (Ski or Alpine Guide), for guiding and/or instruction in technical terrain (i.e. glaciated or avalanche terrain)

## **6. Visitor Learning and Enjoyment**

In areas that have high amounts of traction kiting, Parks Canada will work with local organizations in order to manage communications with participants and avoid physically displacing or diminishing the value of other established uses.

Guides/instructors must have Interpretive Guides Association training at the Basic level or equivalent to provide heritage interpretation to participants.





## **Mountain Biking**

Mountain bikes have been a part of Jasper's landscape for thirty years. Emerging aspects of the sport, such as downhill biking, the use of technical trail features and the establishment of bike parks, had never been formally reviewed by Parks Canada.

### **Description**

Cross-country is the main form of mountain biking in Jasper and will be the principal form of mountain biking offered in national parks.

Cross-country riding is off-road cycling using specially adapted bikes, typically on dirt, gravel, or natural surface trails, from wide gravel roads to narrow "single track" paths.

Implementation of the Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan will address the needs of mountain bikers and other recreational users around the Jasper townsite and is a priority for implementation. Parks Canada will continue to focus on designing, creating and managing sustainable multiple-use trails.

## **Guidelines for Mountain Biking**

### **1. Consistency with Policy**

Cross country will be the principal form of mountain biking offered. Parks Canada will not offer downhill-specific trails for mountain biking due to visitor safety concerns and potential wildlife conflict.

Special event proposals will go through normal park approval processes (e.g. business licensing, environmental impact assessment, special events process).

Parks Canada will not consider competitive mountain bike races, but non-competitive mountain bike rallies may be possible. Parks Canada will consider competitive biking events only on existing roads.

Parks Canada will only consider cross-country mountain biking proposals at Marmot Basin Ski Area that are consistent with the *Marmot Basin Site Guidelines for Development and Use*.

### **2. Zoning / Location**

Mountain biking is permitted on trails in zone II, III, IV and V areas that have been designated and identified (e.g. signed) by Parks Canada.

In winter, mountain biking is also permitted on zone III and IV lakes.

Mountain biking is not permitted in Environmentally Sensitive Sites or zone I areas.



### **3. Infrastructure / Footprint**

No new roads will be created to support mountain biking.

Commercial operations will make use of existing facilities (parking, toilets, trails, etc.) for staging purposes.

Other supporting facilities associated with commercial operations, such as concession stands and ticketing, will be managed off-site in areas already leased or licensed for commercial services.

### **4. Environmental Considerations**

Resource inventories, assessments and monitoring will inform trail selection and ongoing management of mountain biking as necessary. Costs for resource surveys, environmental assessments, ongoing monitoring and active management of special events or commercial operations will be the responsibility of the proponent/operator and will be based on terms of reference provided by Parks Canada.

Trail development and improvements will be informed by an analysis of vulnerable species and seasonal habitat use and importance.

Active restoration measures will be employed to prevent erosion and restore vegetation in areas affected by informal trail development activities.

Parks Canada will work with local bike organizations to create an attractive cycling experience and help manage potential impacts associated with cross-country mountain biking, including:

- avoiding impacts to sensitive species and important resource values
- avoiding impact to, or alteration of, cultural resources
- discouraging the development of informal trails and illegal trail building
- fostering respect for existing or new closures or restrictions

### **5. Visitor Safety**

Safety, risk and liability will be considered throughout the ongoing management of the activity.

Mountain biking will be practiced according to industry/association standards and rules.

Commercial operators must obtain appropriate permits and licenses, and adequate liability insurance.

Guiding qualifications and requirements include:

- Wilderness First Aid (40 hours) including CPR
- International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) certification at Level 1 (includes group management training) or equivalent

### **6. Visitor Learning and Enjoyment**

Parks Canada will work with local bike organizations to help reduce potential impacts, such as trail conflict with other users.



Heritage interpretation, educational messaging and etiquette and safety information will be incorporated into the mountain biking offer.

Guides/instructors must have Interpretive Guides Association training at the Basic level or equivalent to provide heritage interpretation to participants.

In addition to the general guidelines, the following specific guidelines apply to bike parks and technical trail features.

## **Bike Parks**

### **1. Zoning / Location**

Parks Canada will consider proposals for bike parks in Zone V. Priority will be given to locations with existing supporting infrastructure and to disturbed sites.

***Bike Parks*** are generally a variety of natural obstacles such as rocks and logs, constructed features such as ladder bridges, pumphtracks and mounds of dirt for jumping over, all arranged in a controlled and defined area.

## **Technical Trail Features (TTFs)**

### **1. Consistency with Policy**

The development or construction of technical trail features (TTFs) may be considered where impacts to sensitive vegetation or soils can be avoided or where technical features may be determined to provide more effective protection.

The development of TTFs or other trail enhancements must be sanctioned by Parks Canada through a formal review and approval process.

### **2. Zoning / Location**

TTFs can be created using existing natural features, enhanced natural features or engineered / human-made structures:

- The use of existing natural features can occur in zones II, III, IV and V.
- The use of enhanced natural features can only occur in zones III, IV and V.
- Engineered or human-made structures can only be used in zones III, IV and V. Higher maintenance, cost and liability must be taken into account when considering their addition to a trail or bike park.

***Technical Trail Features*** are obstacles or design elements on a mountain biking trail that improve trail flow or add difficulty in order to challenge the skill of trail users.

***Natural features*** already exist along a trail. Examples include the use of rock slabs, boulders, rock gardens, and fallen trees.

***Enhanced natural features*** involve moving natural materials such as rocks, logs etc. to create drop-offs, rock gardens, boulder rides, log pyramids and log rides.

### **3. Visitor Safety**

The design, construction, operation and maintenance of TTFs must adhere to applicable industry standards and codes as necessary.

***Engineered or Human-Made TTF*** are constructed structures, including ladder bridges, wooden ramps, teeter-totters, etc.



#### 4. Visitor Learning and Enjoyment

TTFs will be designed in a way that respect the heritage area’s character of place and will appeal to different skill levels.

Technical trail features will be designed to facilitate the convenient passage by all trail users.

<b>Elements of Mountain Biking that will not be considered in Jasper National Park</b>	
<b>Mountain Bike Racing</b>	
Description	Rationale
A competitive event where mountain bikers are timed on a circuit.	Parks Canada will not consider mountain bike races, due to the potential for soil erosion, impacts to vegetation and conflicts with other trail users. This would not preclude non-competitive rally where bikes are used primarily as a mode of transportation and in small numbers.
<b>Downhill Mountain Biking</b>	
Description	Justification
This gravity-assisted discipline involves manoeuvring a sustained descending trail. The terrain for this trail can be steep and often includes jump, drops, rock gardens, and roots. Participants are seeking challenge and speed. Due to the bikes’ heavy frames, it is very difficult to bike uphill. Bikers tend to seek road access for a vehicle shuttle, or locations with a lift or gondola, to bring them to the top of a downhill trail.	Parks Canada will not offer downhill-specific trails for mountain biking due to visitor safety concerns and potential wildlife conflicts.

#### **Community Gardening**

A community garden is a publicly owned parcel of land used by individuals and groups for growing ornamentals or produce for non-commercial use. The community of Jasper has a long tradition of gardening. A community garden already exists in the townsite. The national guidelines apply to Jasper National Park; no further local direction is provided in these guidelines.





## Implementation Strategy

Parks Canada is now able to consider proposals for new recreational activities that are consistent with these guidelines. Funding priorities will be set during annual business planning for the park.

### Aerial Parks

Proponents may submit proposals to Parks Canada for consideration. Proposals that are consistent with these guidelines will enter the Environmental Assessment and Development Review processes.

### Via Ferrata

If Parks Canada receives a proposal from a third party identifying a feasible location or locations for via ferrata in zone III or IV, this activity will be further assessed and local guidelines developed.

### Hang Gliding and Paragliding

Parks Canada will initially permit this activity on a two-year trial basis for personal use only (i.e. no commercial or special events permitted). During this time, monitoring will provide Parks Canada with information on the nature and frequency of potential impacts associated with these activities. At the end of the trial period, the activity will be evaluated and the long-term approach determined. Depending on the outcome of the trial period, Parks Canada may develop guidelines for structured flying, commercial tandem flying and/or special events.

### Traction Kiting

Web-based information will be developed to orient traction kites to the guidelines for this activity.

### Mountain Biking

Parks Canada will continue to implement the priorities of the Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan. Mountain biking is permitted on designated trails the park. Commercial operators and other organizations may submit proposals for commercial guiding and bike parks to Parks Canada for consideration.

## Approval

Approved by:

Alan Fehr  
Acting Superintendent, Jasper National Park of Canada

Date



# Appendix 1: Best Management Practices For Hang Gliding and Paragliding in Jasper National Parks

<b>Name of Best Management Practice</b>	Best Management Practices for Hang Gliding and Paragliding in Jasper National Park
<b>Scope of Application:</b>	<p>This Best Management Practices (BMP) document outlines the environmental management and mitigation measures for non-commercial Hang Gliding and Paragliding activities. Application of this BMP for this activity will be used to fulfill the environmental impact analysis requirements of <i>Parks Canada Interim Directive on Implementation of CEAA 2012</i>.</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <p>The proposed management approach to this activity is outlined in the <i>Guidelines for New Recreational Activities in Jasper National Park</i>. Only non-motorized forms of hang gliding and paragliding will be allowed. No motorized or towed launches will be permitted. Other key guidelines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parks Canada will work with the Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association of Canada (HPAC) in order to develop best practices for paragliding and hang gliding in Jasper National Park. This will include measures to reduce user conflicts and wildlife disturbance. (This document is the result of that work.)</li><li>• Parks Canada will work with HPAC to manage potential impacts to sensitive species (e.g. goats, caribou).</li><li>• No new roads will be created to support hang gliding and paragliding.</li><li>• Safety, risk and liability will be considered throughout the ongoing management of the activity. Parks Canada will work with HPAC to identify necessary safety measures.</li><li>• Parks Canada will work with HPAC to manage potential impacts of the activity on other visitors and iconic viewscapes.</li></ul> <p>Parks Canada is also working with HPAC on the approach to implementing hang gliding and paragliding in Jasper National Park. As this is a new recreational activity and peer reviewed research on its impacts indicate that they can be more significant for alpine ungulates than existing activities, Parks Canada will be cautious in its approach and initially permit this activity on a two-year trial basis for personal use only (i.e. no commercial or special events permitted). During this time, pilots flying in Jasper will collect and report data on their activities to HPAC, who will provide it annually to Parks Canada. The data will provide Parks Canada with information on the nature and</p>



	<p>frequency of flights, will allow Parks Canada to evaluate the potential impacts associated with these activities, and will assist both organizations in providing better information to pilots interested in flying in the park in future.</p> <p>Based on the outcomes of the data collection program, the <i>Guidelines for New Recreational Activities in Jasper National Park</i> and this BMP may be reviewed and amended.</p> <p>Parks Canada is currently developing recovery strategies and action plans for several alpine species-at-risk in the mountain parks. This includes woodland caribou and whitebark pine, both listed as Endangered and both afforded the highest level of protection possible in Canada. The <i>Guidelines</i> and this BMP may be amended at a future date to make them compliant with Species-at-Risk requirements.</p>
--	---

<p><b>Approved geographic area of application:</b></p>	<p>This BMP will be applied within Zones 2, 3, and 4 for the two year trial period (Phase 1) in Jasper National Park of Canada.</p>
<p><b>Exceptions:</b></p>	<p>For the duration of the 2 year trial period, hang gliding and paragliding flights will be permitted to launch and land at undesignated sites throughout Jasper National Park, but will not be permitted to launch or land in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmentally Sensitive Sites and Zone 1 areas: Edith Cavell Meadows, Pocahontas Ponds, Maligne Lake Outlet, Surprise Valley, Ancient Forest, Jasper House</li> <li>• Zone 5 - the Jasper townsite</li> <li>• Marmot Basin Ski Area</li> <li>• Roadways and associated rights-of-way (e.g. Highway 16, Icefields Parkway, Maligne Lake Road)</li> <li>• Within 30 m of any watercourses and their banks</li> <li>• Within 1000 m of active raptor nests and known mineral licks</li> </ul>



## **Effects Assessment and Mitigation**

### **Potential Key Effects:**

#### Soil/Land resources:

- Exposure and erosion of soils
- Change in slopes, landforms, and landscape
- Soil compaction and rutting

#### Flora and Fauna:

- Loss of native plant cover and root systems
- Loss of plant diversity due to trampling
- Introduction of invasive or non-native plant species
- Damage to and/or removal of vegetation in immediate or adjacent areas
- Sensory disturbance causing displacement/habitat avoidance
- Damage to nests/disruption of nesting activity
- Disruption or disturbance of normal wildlife behavior patterns (with special emphasis on species vulnerable to disturbance: raptors, goats, sheep and caribou)
- Direct loss of availability and suitability of habitats

#### Visitor Experience:

- Distracted driving
- Visitor safety hazards
- Potential for conflict or negative visitor experience (e.g. perceptions of conflict with wilderness values and/or appropriate park uses)
- Potential to disturb or damage historic or heritage features



## Mitigation Measures:

In addition to the mitigation measures described below, pilots are expected to comply with all laws and regulations set out in the *Canada National Parks Act*, and with all policies, guidelines, travel restrictions, area closures, and any other directives issued by Parks Canada or others for the purpose of mitigating environmental effects or ensuring visitor safety. On the ground, all pilots are subject to the same rules as other park users.

Pilots are expected to act as stewards, set proper examples, educate other visitors on the importance of keeping areas pristine, and ensuring that “leave-no-trace” ethics apply.

### General

- Hang gliding and paragliding will be practiced according to industry/association standards and rules. It is the pilot's responsibility to know the free flight/vol libre specific rules. Check the Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association of Canada (HPAC) website ([www.hpac.ca](http://www.hpac.ca)) for specific rules, as well as [www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca).
- HPAC membership is required to fly in Jasper National Park. Please maintain this membership or acquire temporary HPAC membership if you are a visitor to Canada. Please carry proof of membership when flying in the park.
- Emergency landings are permitted in accordance with Transport Canada and Parks Canada regulations. Please report emergency landings to Jasper Dispatch (780.852.6155) and to HPAC, as per the established HPAC protocol.
- During the trial period, HPAC and Parks Canada will be gathering data on flights in Jasper National Park. Please carry a GPS unit, record your flight path and the other information requested on p. 5, and provide this information to HPAC.
- Minimize any potential or real conflicts with other users. When in doubt, fly out and away from areas where other users may be.
- Before landing on a leasehold or an area held under a license of occupation, please obtain permission from the lessee or licensee.
- Exercise discretion when landing at Parks Canada facilities, such as picnic areas, campgrounds, and facility parking areas; avoid these areas during peak season and other busy times of the year.
- Limit flights to daylight hours.

### Soils

- Use existing parking, staging areas, and official trails and routes to access areas for hang gliding and paragliding. Respect all area closures or restrictions.
- Avoid trail braiding, establishing new routes or trails, or altering launch and landing sites (e.g. removing woody debris or clearing vegetation). This is particularly important in high-use areas in the alpine and other fragile or sensitive environments.
- Minimize or avoid trail use during periods of high precipitation or when the soil is soft or wet.
- Please contact Jasper Dispatch (780.852.6155) to report soil disturbances or other problems.

### Vegetation

- Use proper activity-based techniques (e.g. avoid dragging equipment or feet through vegetation) to minimize damage to sensitive vegetation such as alpine meadows, grasslands and riparian wetland areas.
- Make every reasonable effort to avoid introducing invasive weeds to new areas. Packs, flying gear, footwear and clothing should be checked and cleaned of seeds, burs and other plant parts prior to flying. Please bag seeds or burs and dispose of them in the garbage.
- Learn to identify invasive, non-native plants and report infestations (see <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/mtn/feuveg-fireveg/veg-veg/envahisseurs-invasives.aspx> for more information).



### **Wildlife**

- Avoid disturbing sensitive wildlife during take offs, landings and flights (e.g. nesting birds, mountain goats, woodland caribou).
- If wildlife is observed, fly away from the area immediately, especially during the spring season when many birds and mammals are especially sensitive to disruption. If in doubt, fly out and leave the area.
- Stay at distances sufficient to prevent changes to the behavior of animals (more than 1000 m line-of-sight is the default).
- Take immediate action to increase separation distances when animals react to gliders. Avoid activities during periods of the year when wildlife are under severe environmental and physiological stress, in particular during the winter survival and spring natality periods.
- Caribou are most sensitive to disturbance during hot summer weather. During this time they often stay on snow patches to avoid overheating and biting insects. Please avoid launching, landing, or flying near permanent snow patches.
- Follow the *Recommended Flight Guidelines for goat, sheep, and caribou ranges in Jasper National Park* (at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/ne/survols-flight.aspx>).
- While in flight, allow birds (i.e. raptors) to fly with the glider and do not chase or otherwise harass them.
- Do not disturb nests and select access routes that are at least 1000 m from active nests.
- Dogs must be leashed and accompanied at all times.

### **Data Collection:**

Environmental impacts, safety, risk and liability will be considered through the ongoing management of hang gliding and paragliding. Parks Canada will work with HPAC to identify the necessary measures to mitigate any potential impacts identified during the trial period. Flight information collected during the trial period will assist Parks Canada in managing this activity, by providing Parks Canada with information on the nature and frequency of flights, by allowing Parks Canada to evaluate the potential impacts associated with these activities, and by assisting both Parks Canada and HPAC in providing better information to pilots interested in flying in the park in future. The following data will be collected by HPAC and its members:

- Pilot name and contact info (e-mail or phone)
- UTM (NAD 83) coordinates for launch and landing site
- Track of flight path (UTM NAD 83 coordinates)
- Date, time of launch and landing time
- Weather conditions (esp. wind direction, wind speed)
- Flight rating (intermediate or advanced)
- Wildlife observations (approximate location and species)
- Other comments (e.g. hazards observed at launch or landing site, any incidents during flight or landing, any other information the pilot wants to pass on to Parks Canada)

HPAC will send the data collected to Amber Stewart, Land Use Planner for Jasper National Park ([amber.stewart@pc.gc.ca](mailto:amber.stewart@pc.gc.ca); 780.852.6147) by November 1 in each of the pilot years.

### **Attachments:**

1. Hang Gliding and Paragliding Areas closed to Launching and Landing – Jasper National Park
2. Recommended Flight Guidelines for Goat, Sheep, and Caribou Ranges in Jasper National Park



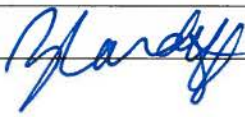


**Development and Review Team**

Team of experts who took part in the development and review of the BMP		
1.	Name: Melanie Hindle	Position: Environmental Assessment Specialist, JNP
2.	Name: Jurgen Deagle	Position: Environnemental Surveillance Officier, JNP
3.	Name: Amber Stewart	Position: Land Use Planner, JNP
4.	Name: Mabaye Dia	Position: Sr. Environmental Assessment Specialist, JNP
5.	Name: Mark Bradley	Position: Wildlife Biologist, JNP
6.	Name: Pam Clark	Position: Visitor Experience Manager, JNP

**Jasper Field Unit**

**Manager, Integrated Land Use Planning and Policy Unit Review**

Name: Shawn Cardiff	Date:
Signature: 	MARCH 30/15