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Rocky Mountain House

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2020



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ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2020.

Paper: R64-105/75-2020E
978-0-660-31623-9

PDF: R64-105/75-2020E-PDF
978-0-660-31624-6

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

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Foreword



Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas belong to all Canadians and offer truly Canadian experiences.

These special places make up one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and cultural heritage areas in the world.

The Government is committed to preserving our natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places and contributing to the recovery of species-at-risk. At the same time, we must continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities so that more Canadians can experience Parks Canada places and learn about our environment, history and culture.

This new management plan for Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed through extensive consultation and input from various people and organizations, including Indigenous peoples, local and regional residents, visitors and the dedicated team at Parks Canada.

National parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas are a priority for the Government of Canada. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of co-operation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan.

Jonathan Wilkinson

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

Recommendations

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Executive Summary

The confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Clearwater rivers has been an important gathering place for First Nations and Métis people for countless generations. Located in the traditional territory of the Blackfoot, and within the current Treaty 6 area and the Métis Homeland, it is a special place for First Nation and Métis people. Blackfoot oral traditions speak to thousands of years of use and connections to this area. The Ktunaxa (Kutenai) of the upper Columbia River valley also had a presence here, regularly crossing the Howse Pass to hunt bison on the northwestern plains. At this location in 1799, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company built posts, hoping to capitalize on the Indigenous knowledge of the area and opportunities for trade.

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site invites visitors to experience one of the pivotal eras in Canadian history. The site's dramatic setting, preserved archaeological sites, dynamic programs for visitors and memorable visitor centre strongly connect people to this special place. The Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company managed fur trade posts at this location for much of the 19th century. David Thompson—celebrated explorer, trader and surveyor—used it as a base for his explorations through the Rocky Mountains.

The site encompasses various archaeological remains of pre-contact Indigenous sites, several trading posts built and occupied between 1799 and 1875 and an important burial ground from the fur trade era. Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site enjoys strong support from the region, benefiting from close ties with local Métis and First Nations groups, local associations and municipal and regional governments. The previous management plan was approved in 2007. Based on directions adopted for the 2007 plan, significant improvements have been made that reduce the threat of erosion along the riverbank, promote the site in partnership with others and expand opportunities for visitors, especially in the area of new overnight accommodation (Trapper Tents, Heritage Tipis and parking for recreational vehicles).

This management plan focuses on three key strategies.

Key Strategy 1: Strengthen relationships with Métis and First Nations peoples and organizations.

This strategy focuses both on nurturing existing relationships and establishing new relationships, in order to identify opportunities for increased collaborative activities and to demonstrate leadership in reconciliation. Improving and broadening Indigenous content and perspectives in the overall site presentation is a priority.

Key Strategy 2: Employ an integrated approach to the protection and management of archaeological sites, viewsapes, natural landscape features and contemporary assets.

This strategy addresses the need to employ an integrated approach to working collaboratively with industry operators, neighbours, Indigenous communities and other land managers to minimize disturbances to the site's cultural and natural resources, contemporary assets and to its sensory values, such as sound and smell, which contribute to a positive visitor experience. The strategy also addresses the protection of the extensive in-situ archaeological remains of the four forts, the fur trade era burial ground and the natural setting along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, which all contribute to the integrity of the site's heritage value and long-term protection.

Key Strategy 3: Continually improve visitor experiences.

This strategy aims to enrich the visitor experience through visitor experience planning and new programming, as well as continuing to build and diversify partnerships with a range of interested people, organizations and groups. Parks Canada will work with both new and long-standing partners—such as the Confluence Heritage Society, First Nations groups, the Town of Rocky Mountain House, Clearwater County, Métis Local 845 and Travel Alberta—to enhance the protection of cultural and natural resources, share stories and knowledge, increase the number of visitors and position the site as an authentic regional attraction and gathering place.

This plan identifies priorities that are supported and meaningful to Indigenous peoples, the local community, neighbours, industry representatives and the public. The plan builds on current efforts to broaden presentation so that the stories and history of Métis and First Nations are positioned prominently to enrich the understanding of this place. Core programming will continue to focus on the reasons for commemoration, including its association with David Thompson and exploration of the West, and its relationship with the Blackfoot peoples, particularly the Piikani. The ongoing involvement of visitors, neighbours, industry and provincial partners is essential to the protection of all aspects of the site. This plan builds on these relationships and encourages new partnerships between Parks Canada and others with a shared commitment to work together to protect this special place.

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1.0 Introduction

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

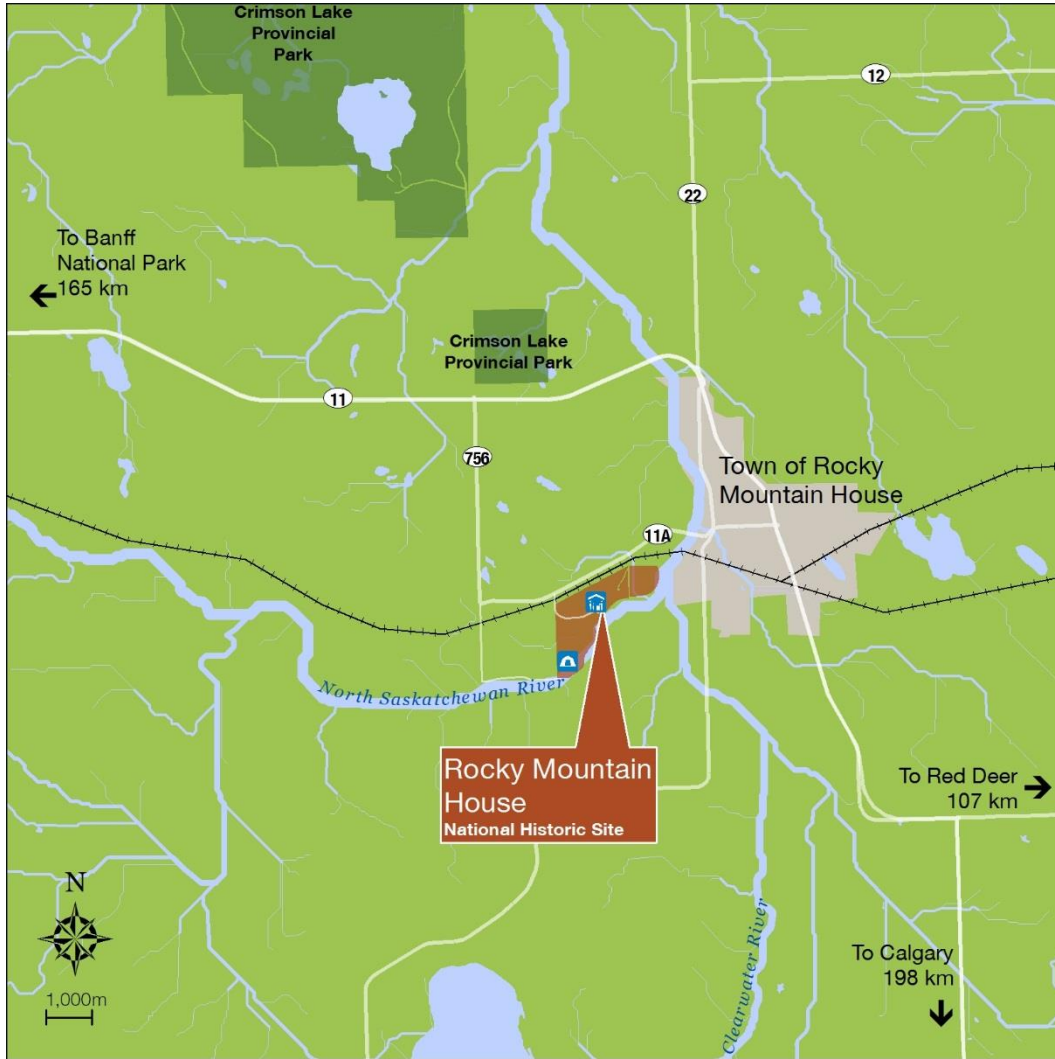
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The *Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site 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 historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

Canadians, including Indigenous peoples, were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national historic site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan 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 plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



2.0 Significance of Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site

In 1926, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommended that Rocky Mountain House be designated a national historic site. In 1968, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada further recommended that a national historic park be established on the site. Accordingly, land was purchased by the federal government in the 1970s. In 1978, a 220-hectare national historic park opened to the public with a visitor centre and walking trails to the four historic fur-trade fort sites. The commemorative intent of the site is expressed in this statement: "Rocky Mountain House is of national historic significance because of its role in the historic fur trade; its association with David Thompson and exploration towards the westward; and its relationship with the Blackfoot peoples, particularly the Piikani. The designation encompasses the trading establishments built and occupied between 1799 and 1875 on the west bank of the North Saskatchewan River, including a fur trade era burying ground. The extensive in-situ archaeological remains of the four forts, the fur trade era burial ground and the natural setting along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River all contribute to the integrity of the site's heritage value."

The following information is based on the Commemorative Integrity Statement for Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site, and on historical research conducted to date. The understanding of Indigenous perspectives on the history of the site is lacking, and this needs to be addressed through Indigenous engagement and collaboration.

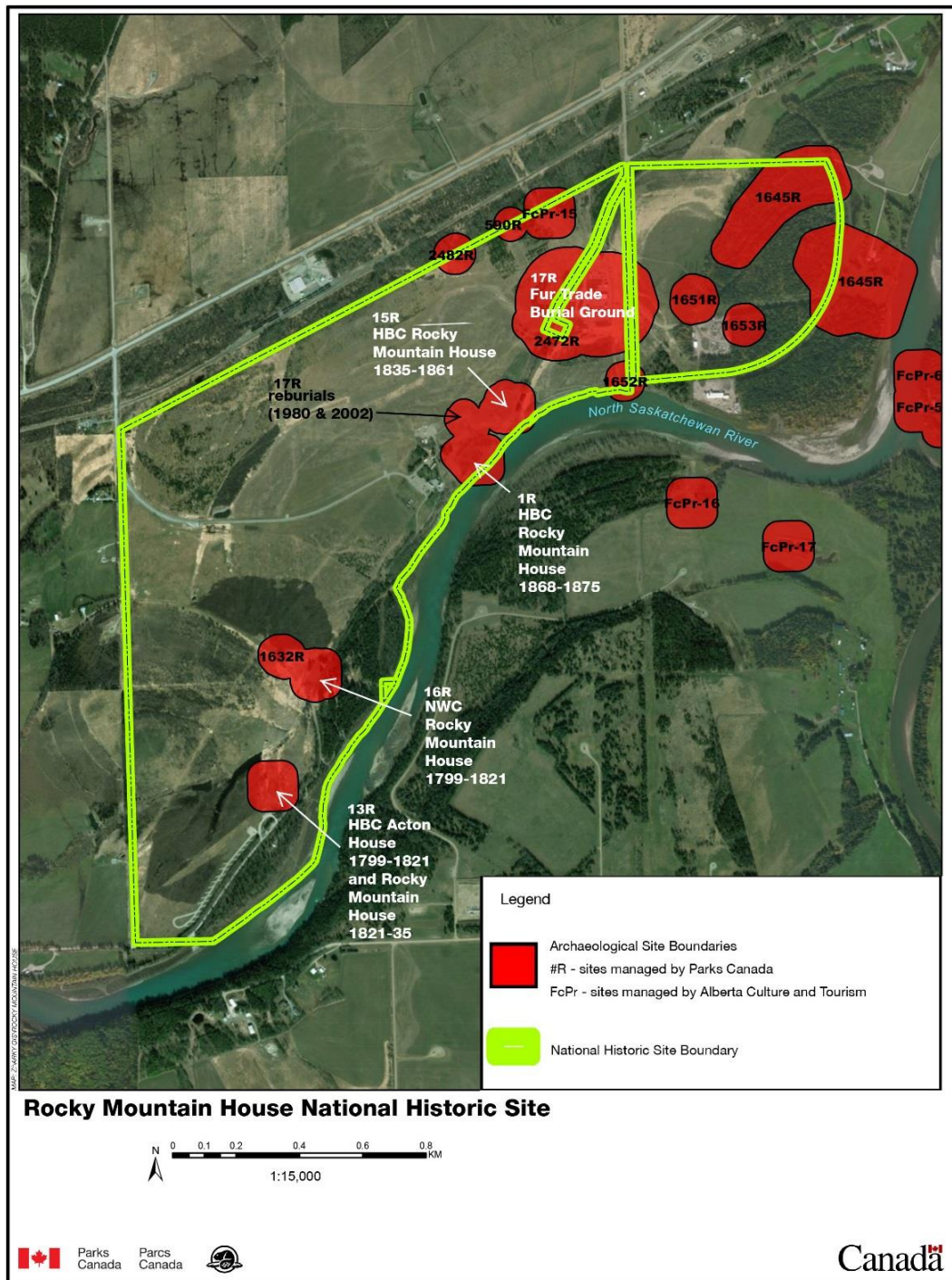
Archaeological research indicates that the confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Clearwater rivers was occupied and used for thousands of years by Indigenous peoples before the establishment of four fur-trade forts at this site. In 1799, at the junction of these two rivers, the North West Company built the Rocky Mountain House fur-trade post, hoping to attract trade from the Kutenai First Nations residing west of the mountains and to establish a base of exploration for new trading territories. Also that year, the competing Hudson's Bay Company established Acton House nearby. These two trading posts were situated strategically close to the hunting grounds of the northern Blackfoot (Niitsitapiksi) people—the Piikani (Peigan), Kainai (Blood), and Siksika—who became the principal traders.

For several years, explorer and map-maker David Thompson lived at Rocky Mountain House with his Cree wife Charlotte Small, an accomplished translator and hunter. From this location, Thompson was determined to launch his expeditions across the Rocky Mountains, and thus to fulfil the North West Company's dream of a practical route to the Pacific Ocean and China. In 1807, he journeyed upriver from Rocky Mountain House and crossed the mountains through Howse Pass to reach the Columbia River. But the Piikani people resisted this push across the mountains, as it threatened their own dominance of the transmountain trade in that region. A few years later, in 1811, Thompson crossed the Rockies over Athabasca Pass, which allowed the European traders to bypass the Piikani. In response to the incursions on their trade, the Piikani increased their beaver trapping, providing a new basis for their relationship with the two trading companies, which amalgamated under the Hudson's Bay Company name in 1821.

Circumstances changed again by 1830, however, as American traders stabilized their relations with the Blackfoot and built trading posts close to the heart of Piikani territory in what is now known as southern Alberta. The loss of the lucrative Piikani trade relegated Rocky Mountain House to the status of a seasonal outpost, populated only in the winter by traders from Edmonton. Nevertheless, the post found some success as a boat-building centre, and played host to numerous travelers, explorers, artists and missionaries during the middle of the 19th century. The Hudson's Bay Company built two

additional posts on higher ground to the northeast of 1799 posts during this period (1835-1861 and 1868-1875). Opening of these last trading establishments did little to draw trade from the Blackfoot. During this period, trade shifted to the Cree, Stoney and Métis people of the eastern slopes and Upper Saskatchewan River valley. Trading remained limited and the third post survived with limited success until 1861, when a group of Blackfoot burned it to the ground. In anticipation of a new era of prosperity, the company returned in 1864 and began construction of a new permanent post that was completed by 1868. Trading remained meagre and the post was permanently abandoned in 1875. In 1870, the Canadian government purchased Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory from the Hudson's Bay Company, including much of the land that is now Alberta. Farming and ranching began to develop on the prairies, and the Rocky Mountain House fur-trade post was abandoned in favour of posts closer to burgeoning settlements, and North West Mounted Police outposts such as Fort Calgary. For about 50 years after the post was abandoned, and before the Brierley family purchased the land in 1924 from the Hudson's Bay Company, this location was used by the Métis.

Map 2: Archaeological sites within Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site and on surrounding lands.



3.0 Planning Context

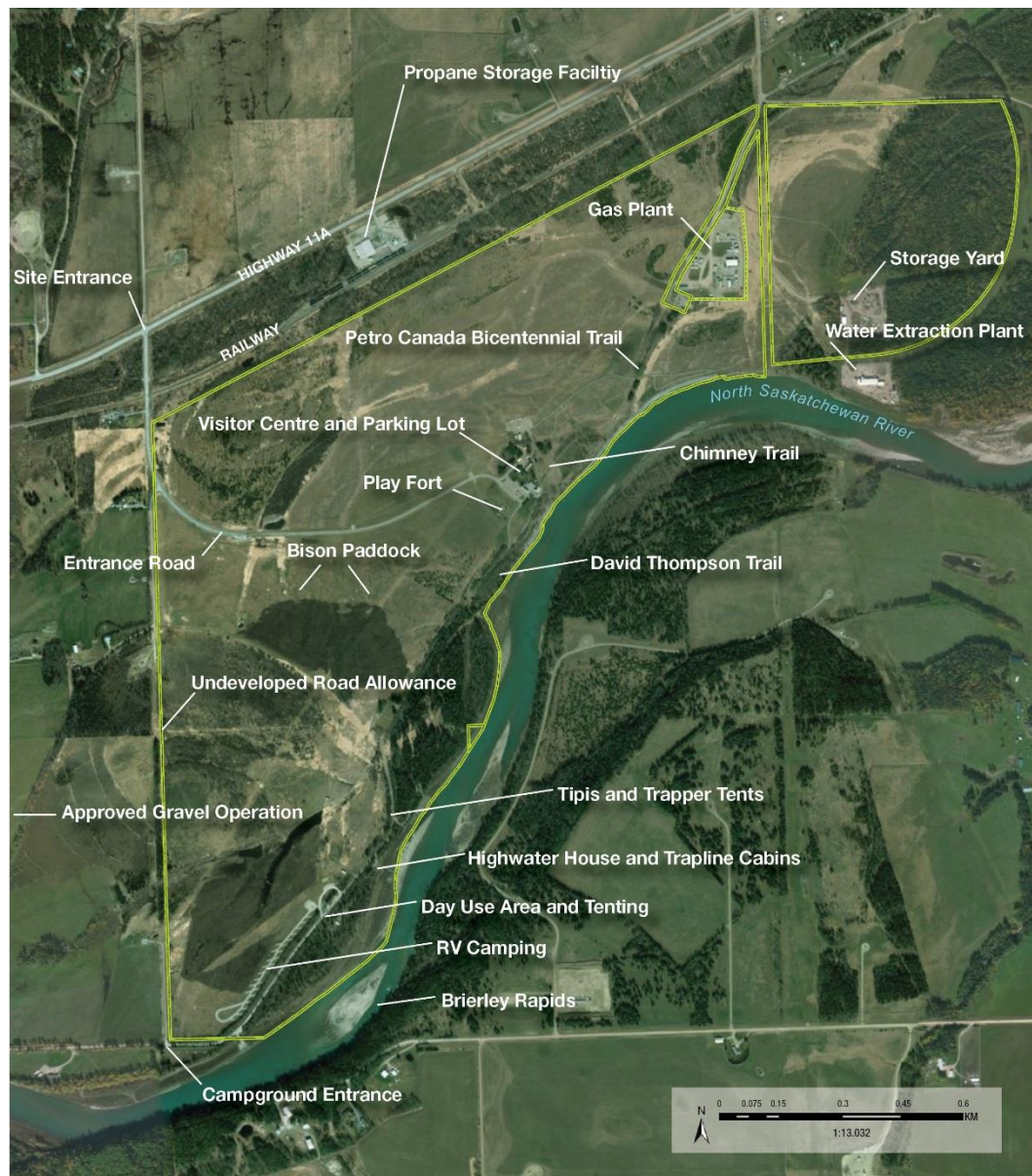
Rocky Mountain House is a large and complex collection of historical and contemporary assets that consists of the underlying physical features of the natural landscape, such as the North Saskatchewan River with its broad floodplain and associated river terraces, and the fur-trade posts, trails and other cultural features that have been built on this landscape over time. This special place gains meaning and context from the interplay between the site's location on the North Saskatchewan River, its nationally-significant cultural resources, and the preservation of the setting and its features. All these elements work together to provide an intact and evocative attraction where visitors come to imagine and appreciate the rich history of the fur trade at Rocky Mountain House during the 1799-1875 period.

Within the community of Rocky Mountain House and the wider region, the site has seen a resurgence of interest since the approval of the 2007 management plan. A number of factors have contributed to these developments, including strong community support; increased promotion of the site and collaboration with the tourism industry; new Indigenous cultural tourism products; the use of the site for reconciliation activities, and its hosting of a variety of celebratory events. The 2017 regional "David Thompson Country Tourism Strategy" identified the site as a key attraction. Opportunities for camping became available through Parks Canada's online reservation system in January, 2018. Parks Canada anticipates that these developments will result in a significant increase in public awareness of the site, and improve its status as a destination location.

As of 2018, Rocky Mountain House is open seven days a week from May through Labour Day and four days a week from Labour Day through the end of September. The development of the camping offer has diversified visitation patterns from primarily day use activity to include overnight stays. Overall visitation numbers are trending upward: 11,134 visitors in 2009, 20,052 in 2014 and 25,552 in 2018. Over 10 percent of the annual visitors to the site are students (3,000) who spend a half-day or more participating in experiential activities during May and June. Programming at the site is targeted at these groups. There is demand from participants in school programs and teacher training professional development workshops for teachings by Indigenous peoples. In 2016, 600 teachers spent time at the site participating in reconciliation training. That program was co-ordinated by Parks Canada staff in conjunction with an Indigenous wellness team from the province's local and regional school divisions. From July through September, the focus is on interpretive programs led by Parks Canada partners, as well as special events and overnight camping.

Two primary interpretive trails take visitors through the archaeological remains of the four forts. Visitors can see a herd of bison. Interpretive panels and props located throughout the site include a York boat, a children's play fort, a demonstration tipi and a replica of a Métis camp; there are also picnic areas for day use.

Map 3: Parks Canada and industry-related assets within and near Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site



Rocky Mountain House offers visitors a variety of overnight camping options across 47 sites on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River. These include a heritage camping experience with 11 sites: six trapper's tents, three tipi accommodations and two trapline cabins. More traditional camping is also available, with 24 sites for recreational vehicles/tent trailers and 12 walk-in tenting sites. Camping reservations indicate a growing interest in the heritage camping option, which is a modest but unique cornerstone of the camping offer.

The Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site operation is supported through a number of longstanding partnerships that are integral to its success and authenticity. The site's main partners are the Confluence Heritage Society and Métis Local 845. Since 1984,

the Confluence Heritage Society has been a significant partner for Parks Canada. This non-profit organization collects entry fees and operates the Trading Post gift shop in the visitor centre, it performs the David Thompson puppet show each day, and promotes a number of programs available to visitors through reservations. The relationship between Parks Canada and the Confluence Heritage Society is supported by a licence of occupation and memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Métis Local 845 is another longstanding partner that delivers cultural programming at the site. Among its contributions are regular daily programs and special events featuring traditional Métis skills and crafts. The relationship between the Parks Canada Agency and Métis Local 845 is supported by a MOU and a contract for services.

In 2016, Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site entered into a three-year MOU with the Indigenous cultural organization, Kis Sai Wah Toe Tat Towin Society; its name means “Coming together and taking care of one another in humbleness and wellness.” The cultural organization promotes Indigenous wellness and reconciliation through various programs and events at the site. The MOU supports collaborative activities focused on reconciliation, including the "Sacred Hoop of 100 Eagle Feathers" event, the creation of community healing lodges, and various initiatives with Indigenous elders, knowledge-keepers and youth.

Key Issues and Opportunities:

The Impact of Industrial Development and Periodic Flooding

Rocky Mountain House sits in the heart of one of Alberta’s premier oil and gas fields. Oil and gas activity first began near the four historic fur-trade fort sites in the late 1960s before Parks Canada acquired the property. When Parks Canada purchased the property from a local landowner, the sale included encumbrances on title that had been negotiated by the previous owner. These encumbrances are agreements related to an existing natural gas plant and buried pipelines that enter the plant. Although the bulk of the gas plant is located on federal Crown land that is leased, these agreements permit the owners of the gas plant and pipeline companies to operate in perpetuity. An extensive network of pipelines crosses the site to the plant.

In 1969, workers building the original gas plant uncovered what is now known as the Seafort Burial Site. The interred remains of 13 individuals were recovered in 1969 and one more was found in 1971. In 1979, construction affected three additional human burial sites. Construction was halted and during investigations nine additional graves were located. All of these remains and associated burial artifacts that were recovered during the archaeological work have been reinterred within the site a short distance from their original location.

Two natural deposits of gravel are located on private land immediately west and north of the site. Large-scale gravel mining is expected to start in the near future. Dust and noise will be a significant concern near campground facilities and interpretive trails at the southwestern corner of the site and also near the entrance to the site.

Periodic flooding of the North Saskatchewan River and fluctuating water levels from the Bighorn Dam, approximately 120 kilometres upstream of the site, cause flooding and ice dams at Rocky Mountain House. In the past, water released from the dam has caused concern about the protection of assets and intact archaeological resources near the river. Parks Canada staff work closely with the utility company TransAlta Corporation to monitor the timing and volume of water releases. In 2013, a large-scale flood of the North Saskatchewan River resulted in major damage to visitor facilities and cultural resources.

The 2013 flood necessitated a major project to stabilize a key section of the riverbank with large boulders to protect historic resources. This work has affected some visual aspects of the cultural landscape.

Improving Visitation and Increasing Awareness

The site is among a number of attractions in the vicinity of the town of Rocky Mountain House. As a result of the recent David Thompson Country regional tourism strategy, the site is now being positioned as a destination on its own. Recent improvements in products to enrich the visitor experience, and renewed programming for special events such as Canada Day have resulted in a 27 percent increase in visits over the past four years (2014-2018). Looking ahead, there is strong opportunity to attract Canadians who live beyond the local community to the unique offerings at this site. This opportunity is reflected in the market-growth strategy for the site. The focus will be on the independent travel market, positioning Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site as a destination by promoting its heritage camping facilities and Indigenous tourism experiences.

Improving Campground Access

The main entrance to Rocky Mountain House is off Highway 11a. Currently, the campground is reached by a county-maintained gravel road that exits Highway 11a approximately 1.6 kilometres west of the main entrance. The campground is 5.8 kilometres from the main entrance. Sections of the current gravel access road are close to the North Saskatchewan River and susceptible to flooding and possible closure, which would prevent access to and from the campground. Neighbours have raised concerns about dust on the road as use of the campground has increased over the past two years. The construction of a new one-kilometre road extension on a provincial road allowance that forms the western boundary of the site would shorten the distance to the campground, and integrate its access with the main entrance to the site.

4.0 Vision

The Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is a popular cultural destination where visitors learn about pre-contact Indigenous history, the fur trade, David Thompson's exploration of the Rocky Mountains, and the complex relationship between European traders and Indigenous peoples past and present. Visitors connect with Rocky Mountain House through its evocative landscape along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, the prominent presence of Indigenous partners and programs, popular school programs, community-driven special events, and its unique offer of heritage camping accommodations. First Nation and Métis communities advise, influence and contribute to the site's public programs during the summer months, and access the site year-round for reconciliation purposes and traditional practices on the land. Strategies are in place to ensure that the site's cultural and natural resources are secure and that the reasons for its national historic significance are communicated effectively. The spirit of co-operation is strong between Parks Canada, its partners, neighbouring landowners, industry representatives and local government.

5.0 Key Strategies

Key Strategy 1: Strengthen relationships with Métis and First Nations peoples and organizations.

This strategy focuses on nurturing existing relationships and establishing new relationships that demonstrate leadership in reconciliation. Relationships with Indigenous and Métis peoples establish the framework for collaborative initiatives and

opportunities to achieve outcomes based on calls from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) to “... integrate Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada’s national heritage and history.”

Objectives and targets have been developed and will continue to be revisited through discussion with Indigenous nations. Improving and broadening Indigenous content and perspectives in the overall site presentation is a priority.

Objective 1.1

Rocky Mountain House is a gathering place for reconciliation and the sharing of Indigenous stories through interpretation and programming with visitors.

Targets

- Parks Canada continues to partner with Métis Local 845 and with the Indigenous cultural organization, Kis Sai Wah Toe Tat Towin Society to deliver cultural programs and reconciliation activities.
- Each year, Parks Canada facilitates at least two events or programs in partnership with Indigenous groups.
- Parks Canada builds on new programs that support elder storytelling and youth programming opportunities (e.g., cultural camps and elder tipi teaching programs).
- By 2022, a collaboration is established with Alberta school divisions to develop and deliver professional development programs for teachers about reconciliation and traditional Indigenous knowledge.
- Through interpretive materials, exhibits and advisory roles, Parks Canada acknowledges the pre-contact and historic relationship of the Blackfoot people, particularly the Piikani, to the site.

Objective 1.2

Parks Canada works with Indigenous peoples to build relationships that demonstrate leadership in reconciliation, and that contribute to collaborative initiatives and opportunities for strengthening diversity, inclusion and understanding.

Targets

- Working collaboratively, Parks Canada and Indigenous communities undertake research to strengthen the understanding of this site’s significance to Indigenous peoples, and to provide multiple perspectives on the fur-trade era.
- Parks Canada remains open to the establishment of temporary cultural structures related to on-site activities (e.g., a sweat lodge).
- Parks Canada works with First Nation and Métis groups to investigate the potential for development of a gathering/cultural use structure. This includes engaging with Indigenous groups, partners and other stakeholders and assessing the scope of the impact on the environment, viewscape and archaeological sites. Cost-sharing options are investigated with industry representatives.
- By 2020, a collaborative partnership with the Rocky Mountain House Native Friendship Centre is developed.
- By 2021, working collaboratively with Indigenous communities, Parks Canada addresses gaps in presentation of pre-contact Indigenous history.

Key Strategy 2: Employ an integrated approach to the protection and management of archaeological sites, viewsapes, natural landscape features and contemporary assets.

This strategy emphasizes the importance of employing an integrated approach to the management of the site's cultural and natural resources and contemporary assets. This includes working collaboratively with Clearwater County, The Province of Alberta's Cultural Heritage branch and Indigenous and industry leaders to minimize the effect of activities on the site's resources. The impacts of climate change (e.g., extreme events) and natural processes on this site is a real concern. Riverbank erosion during large floods has been an important issue for the site for a long time. This integrated strategy is aimed at monitoring all impacts and identifying mitigations, as necessary.

Objective 2.1

Archaeological sites, viewsapes and the landscape are protected.

Targets

- By 2021, a cultural resource management plan is produced that includes a component for vegetation and landscape maintenance. Traditional knowledge and Indigenous participation are integrated into this plan.
- Each year, conservation activities are carried out to protect archaeological sites, viewsapes and the landscape as a whole, as well as to protect historical objects and archaeological artifacts.
- The riverbank is monitored regularly and a report is completed annually to assess its stability and the condition of threatened archaeological sites.
- By 2021, archaeological specimens and historical objects in storage are assessed in order to inform a better understanding of the sense of place and its value to Indigenous peoples.

Objective 2.2

Industry operators (e.g., oil, gas, gravel extraction, propane storage) actively working on or near the site understand its purpose. To this end Parks Canada will ensure that open and responsive lines of communication are maintained and will share and expand knowledge of the site's protocols and information about impact reviews, monitoring and other regulatory processes in accordance with existing federal and Parks Canada requirements.

Targets

- By 2021, Parks Canada and the operators of the gas plant facilities within the site develop a protocol and guidelines for the protection of the fur-trade-era burial ground, and for the assessment or review of the plant's impact on the environment and on cultural resources.
- All agreements between Parks Canada and commercial businesses (including leases, rights of way, licences of occupation and others) are reviewed and updated when their terms dictate review or renewal. When a business approaches Parks Canada about the maintenance or development of their operational facilities, these requests are used as opportunities to work through any outstanding agreements or lapses in adherence to the terms of existing agreements.
- Gas plant operators continue to submit an annual groundwater monitoring report to Parks Canada to ensure that there is no downstream contamination of site lands.

Objective 2.3

Items that are considered priorities for attention or protection are identified in the site's long-term investment plans, in order to ensure that the maintenance of contemporary assets is addressed in a timely fashion.

Targets

- Within 10 years of the approval of this management plan, the site's contemporary assets are judged to be in good condition.
- By 2021, the water system at the visitor centre (including the chlorination system) is repaired.
- By 2021, the security fencing around the maintenance compound is improved so that it is more sympathetic to the sense of place.
- By 2024, repairs have been made to the visitor centre washroom, the Play Fort corner bastions, the bison viewing platform, and trails and bridges.

Objective 2.4

Parks Canada continues to work with others to increase awareness and understanding of the site's management and conservation priorities.

Targets

- Parks Canada field staff communicate with TransAlta Corporation on a regular basis regarding water releases from the Bighorn Dam, monitor erosion and ice damming.
- Staff of the site work with Clearwater County and gravel pit operators to ensure that visual screening and other measures are in place to buffer the effect of new gravel pits immediately outside the boundaries of the site.
- Parks Canada engages with Indigenous groups and other stakeholders regarding the management and evaluation of the bison herd.
- Parks Canada works with The Province of Alberta and the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) on issues of archaeological management, fire protection and prevention, and public safety.

Key Strategy 3: Continually improve visitor experience.

This strategy focuses on continual improvement of the visitor experience through planning, including new programs and partnerships with organizations and groups that value the site. Visitors will be inspired by an enriched offer, and encouraged to return to the site to attend special events, participate in hands-on activities, see the daily programs offered, stay overnight or simply relax and enjoy this special place.

Objective 3.1

Visitors and community members are inspired by the features that make Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site a unique destination.

Targets

- Over the course of this management plan a Visitor Experience Strategy will be developed that showcases the site's unique features, leverages engagement with partners including Indigenous peoples and proposes innovative methods of site interpretation and education. The Strategy will be based on target market, historical and archaeological research.

- Parks Canada will explore approaches for increasing the engagement of volunteers. These may include developing voluntourism programs or participation by student researchers, as well as offering opportunities for historic and archaeological research, or using participatory interpretive methods to heighten public interest in the site.
- More people volunteer with the Confluence Heritage Society in the future, compared with the volunteer numbers in 2017-2018.
- At least 90 percent of visitors leave with a deeper appreciation of the role that Rocky Mountain House has played in the history of Canada.

Objective 3.2

The general sense of arrival at Rocky Mountain House is improved.

Targets

- By 2020, signs directing people to the site are updated.
- By 2021, Parks Canada completes a feasibility study that examines the potential for improving road access to the campground. Consultations will be undertaken with neighbours, Indigenous groups and other stakeholders, and the scope of the impact on the environment and archaeological sites will be assessed. Cost-sharing options will be investigated with Clearwater County and industry representatives.

Objective 3.3

The site's exhibits, programs and visitor experience opportunities resonate with key segments of the visitor market, inspiring both first visits and repeat visits.

Targets

- By 2021, a study examining the feasibility of building a “climb through time” playground is completed.
- By 2023, 90 percent of visitors are satisfied or very satisfied with their overall visit.
- By 2023, overnight camping increases by 20 percent over 2016-2017 numbers.
- The site offers two “learn to camp” opportunities per year.
- By 2023, the main exhibits and on-site interpretation at the site have been refreshed.

Objective 3.4

Parks Canada continues to work closely with partners to protect, present and promote the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site.

Targets

- Continue to strengthen interpretive programs and special events that enhance the presentation of the main commemorative themes of the site: the role of Rocky Mountain House in the historic fur trade; its association with David Thompson and exploration of the west, and its relationship with Blackfoot people, particularly the Piikani.
- The Confluence Heritage Society continues in its role as one of the key providers of the site's interpretation program. The society also continues to operate the gift shop and administer the sale of admissions passes.
- Parks Canada is productive and active participant on an *ex officio* basis in the boards of directors of both the Confluence Heritage Society and Métis Local 845.
- Collaboration between Parks Canada and Alberta school divisions continues and on-site program attendance is maintained at 3,000 students each year.

- Parks Canada hosts annual and regular meetings with Travel Alberta, Blackfoot Crossing historic park, Métis Crossing interpretive centre and other groups and sites to share best practices and information and promote awareness of the site.

Objective 3.5

Rocky Mountain House is positioned as a high-profile destination in the "David Thompson Country Regional Tourism Strategy." Communities collaborate with Parks Canada to develop, implement and market integrated and exciting cultural tourism experiences from spring through fall.

Targets

- Within the first years of the new management plan, promotional strategies are developed to reach target markets in Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer.
- The site is profiled regularly in regional media and marketing publications.
- Memberships for the site's social-media accounts increase by 15 percent per year.
- Parks Canada collaborates with other tourism organizations in central Alberta and "David Thompson Country" to cross-promote the site within the 10-year time frame of this management plan.
- More people visit the site more frequently, stay longer and include the site in their travel itineraries. By 2028, there is a 50-percent increase in visitation over 2014-2015 numbers.
- Parks Canada staff collaborate with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) to facilitate the telling of Indigenous stories in person by Indigenous people at the site.
- By 2021, at least one commercial tour operator adds Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site to its itinerary.

6.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

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 Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, requires a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of all plans and policies submitted to the federal Cabinet or to a Minister for approval deemed to have important positive or negative environmental effects.

A strategic environmental assessment was undertaken on this management plan, and the management direction found within has been adjusted to respond to findings. The following is a summary of the environmental assessment:

The spatial scope of the SEA for this management plan included areas within the boundary of Rocky Mountain House. The temporal scope of the assessment was a period of ten years from the date of the management plan's approval, at which time the plan will be reviewed. The site's "valued components" according to the SEA are primarily its cultural resources, but also include the riverbank, wetlands, and relevant habitats. Other important resources considered in the assessment are visitor-experience resources, including facilities.

The SEA found that in order to ensure the consistent application of conservation principles, and to enhance the understanding of the value of the site, as well as improve relations with industry, it will be beneficial for Parks Canada to develop a protocol and clear set of guidelines for reviewing the potential impact of existing industrial operations and proposed new developments on the environment and cultural resources. To protect

environmental and cultural resources that could be adversely affected by the construction of the proposed road extension to the campground, the SEA noted the feasibility study could include an initial scoping exercise. This approach allows for the early identification of potential risks to resources, and can be an effective early start to the impact assessment process for the project.

The assessment found that this management plan will have the significant positive effect of introducing many more visitors to Rocky Mountain House, thereby improving the public's awareness and appreciation of its historic value. By enhancing the stability and conservation of the site's environmental and cultural resources, and by improving contemporary visitor facilities, this management plan will contribute to the mandate of the Parks Canada Agency and to the overall quality of the visitor experience.

The SEA concluded that any potential negative environmental effects from increased visitation can be mitigated through the use of existing policies and instruments, and by carefully managing visitor use.

In future, assessments of project-level environmental impacts will be able to identify ways to mitigate against any adverse impacts from individual construction projects resulting from this management plan. The overall environmental effects of the management plan's strategies, objectives and targets are expected to be positive.