



August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Subject: Update on the proposed national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen**

Hello,

We hope that you are doing well, staying safe, and looking out for one another as we continue to work to limit the spread of COVID-19. As a stakeholder and/or land owner in the area of the proposed national park reserve, Parks Canada wants to provide you with an update, enhanced map, and answers to questions frequently received.

***Background***

On July 2, 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia, and the syilx/Okanagan Nation as represented by the Osoyoos Indian Band and the Lower Similkameen Indian Band to formally work toward establishing a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

***What is an MOU?***

An MOU is a document that summarizes an agreement between multiple parties. An MOU is a significant step because of the time and effort invested to develop a mutual understanding of important issues. An MOU signals the willingness of the parties to take the next step towards a formal agreement, and provides an outline to use as a starting point for negotiations of an agreement. It also details the mutual expectations of all parties involved in order to move forward.

The signing of the MOU in July 2019 confirms agreement among the parties on the proposed working boundary, next steps, and provides a framework for collaboration as negotiations begin towards an agreement to establish a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

***What is a Working Boundary and What Does it Mean?***

A “working boundary” identifies borders and areas of provincially-owned parklands and Crown lands that may one day be included in a national park reserve, following the negotiation of an establishment agreement. The working boundary is subject to further refinement as part of negotiation of the establishment agreement. The working boundary contains a mixture of current unprotected Crown lands and provincial protected areas.

This working boundary does not affect private lands. Private land owners would not be subject to the *Canada National Parks Act*, associated regulations or policy. Private lands within the working boundary would only be acquired for inclusion in the national park reserve if there was both a willing-seller and a willing-buyer. For a map and description of the physical boundaries of the proposed national park reserve, please refer to the end of this document.

### ***Highlights of the July 2019 MOU include***

- Agreement amongst the parties that the protection of species, ecosystems, endangered habitats, and the connection between land and people are priorities and need to remain intact for present and future generations;
- Important issues still require negotiation, including cooperative management with local First Nations;
- Confirmation that the Government of Canada **cannot and will not** expropriate private property in order to establish or expand a national park or national park reserve; acquisition would only take place on a willing-seller/willing-buyer basis;
- Confirmation that privately owned lands within or adjacent to the proposed national park reserve **will not change** from their current jurisdiction, be it under local, First Nations, provincial or federal governments;
- Agreement that all public highways will remain under the administration of the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and will not become toll/pay for use roads;
- While negotiations continue, the provincial lands will remain under the administration and control of the Province of British Columbia, including provincial protected areas (under the administration of BC Parks).
- No **new** allocations for timber harvesting, mineral exploration and development will occur on provincial Crown lands.

### ***What is new?***

#### *Negotiations Update*

Negotiations for a national park reserve establishment agreement are underway between the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia, and the Syilx/Okanagan Nation as represented by the Osoyoos Indian Band and the Lower Similkameen Indian Band. Both local First Nations continue to engage on the proposal with their community members. As the situation around COVID-19 evolves, work on the proposed national park reserve continues through the use of remote/virtual meeting technology. Even under normal circumstances, this is a detailed process that takes time, and seeks to address the concerns, needs, and priorities of each government and the communities they represent. There are many characteristics and considerations unique to the South Okanagan-Similkameen region. There is no specific timeframe for moving through the process; we need to take the time to do it right.

Once negotiated, an establishment agreement will define the terms and conditions for the development, management and operation of the national park reserve. Topics planned for discussion amongst the parties in the next year include employment, training, contracting, dispute resolution, a conservation based/ecotourism economy, sustainable tourism, administration facilities and infrastructure, and exploring ways that the Syilx nation and Parks Canada land management systems can coexist and inform one another in cooperative management.

**Subject:** Update on the proposed national park reserve in the South Okanagan – Similkameen

### Regional Government Updates

Since the signing of the MOU, Parks Canada and the Government of British Columbia have continued to meet with Area Directors of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) electoral areas that overlap with the proposed national park reserve. Meetings between the RDOS, Provincial ministries and Parks Canada will provide opportunities to review the negotiations topics and obtain feedback and input on matters important to constituents in the South Okanagan-Similkameen with regards to the proposed national park reserve. Similar meetings will occur with local governments from Keremeos, Osoyoos, Oliver and Penticton.

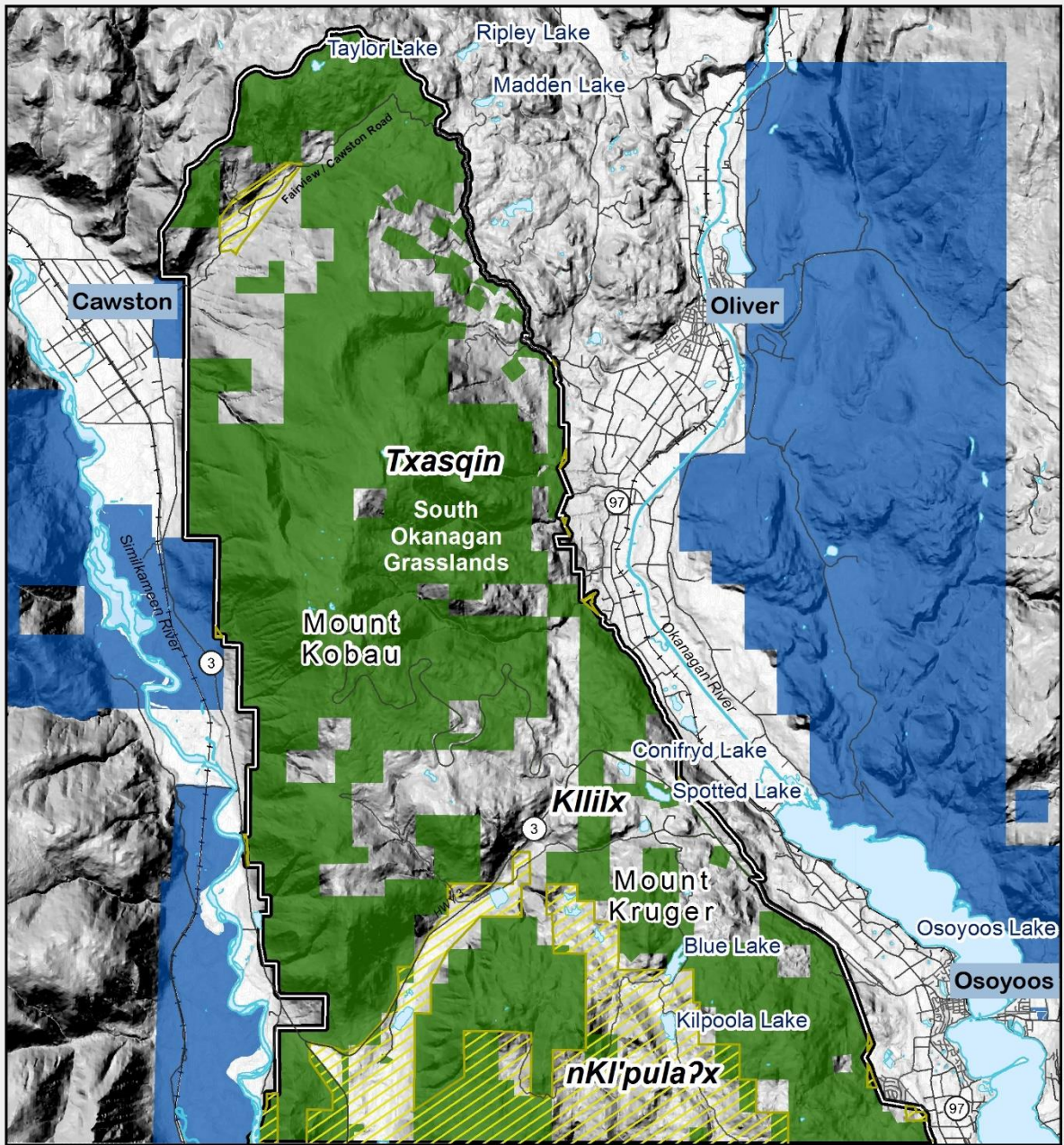
Regular updates, frequently asked questions, and a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding can be found on the Parks Canada website at [parksCanada.ca/okanagan](http://parksCanada.ca/okanagan) or <https://letstalksouthokanagansimilkameen.ca/Okanagan> where you can also sign-up to receive e-mail updates.

Sincerely,

The Protected Areas Establishment Team  
Parks Canada

# South Okanagan - Similkameen Proposed National Park Reserve Working Boundary Map

- Working Boundary
- Indian Reserve
- Agriculture Land Reserve / Boundary intersection
- Crown Land within Working Boundary



Privately owned lands will remain under the title of the private owner(s), and would only be considered for future inclusion on a willing-seller willing-buyer basis. No lands will be expropriated as part of a national park reserve establishment.

### Description of the Physical Boundaries of the Proposed National Park Reserve

The proposed working boundary of the proposed national park reserve can be described as follows:

- The Western boundary lies roughly parallel to Highway 3 and the Similkameen River valley and trends at mid elevation from approximately 400 metres, Above Sea Level (ASL) to 520 metres (ASL).
- The Eastern boundary runs parallel to Highway 97 and the Okanagan River Valley and trends at mid elevation from approximately 450 metres (ASL) to 600 metres (ASL).
- The Southern boundary is the international border between Canada and the United States and reaches an elevation of approximately 800 metres (ASL) at its highest point
- The Northern boundary is the height of land (approximately 1,470 metres ASL) on Crown land to the north of the Fairview-Cawston Road.
- The boundaries protect the intact watershed catchment basin including the headwaters of the following creeks: Cawston, Conifryd, Reed, Hester, Testalinden, Tinhorn, Swartz, Togo, Lone Pine, Strawberry, Cawston, and Blind.