

2021

Waterton Lakes

National Park of Canada

Management Plan
- Draft-

DRAFT

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by the Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada, 2021.

WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2021

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Note to readers

The health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians are of the utmost importance. Parks Canada is following the advice and guidance of public health experts to limit the spread of COVID-19 while allowing Canadians to experience Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have unforeseeable impacts on the Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada Management Plan. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public of any such impacts through its annual implementation update on the implementation of this plan.

For more information about the management plan or about
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1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers 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:

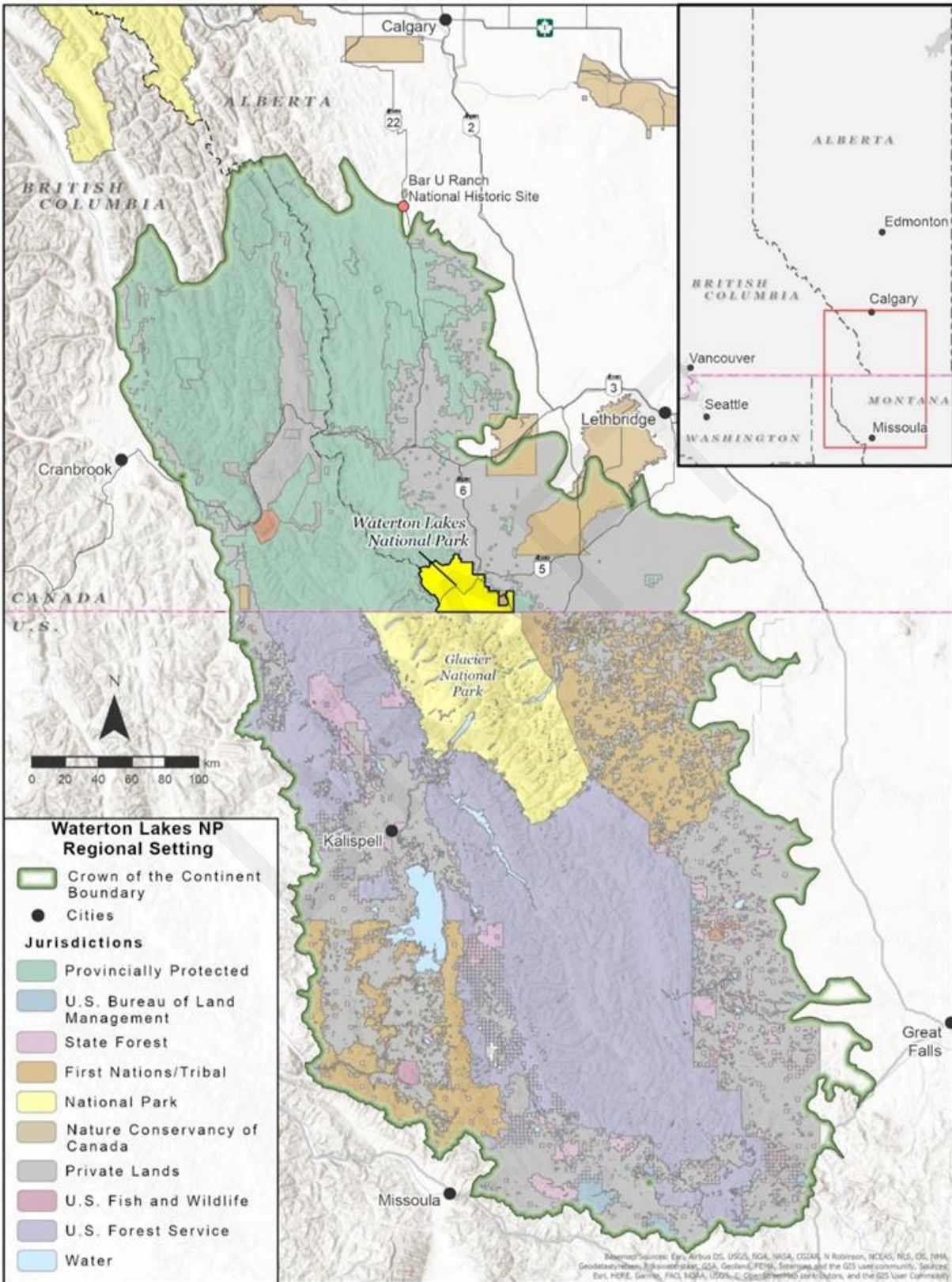
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *Waterton Lakes National Park 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 park management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

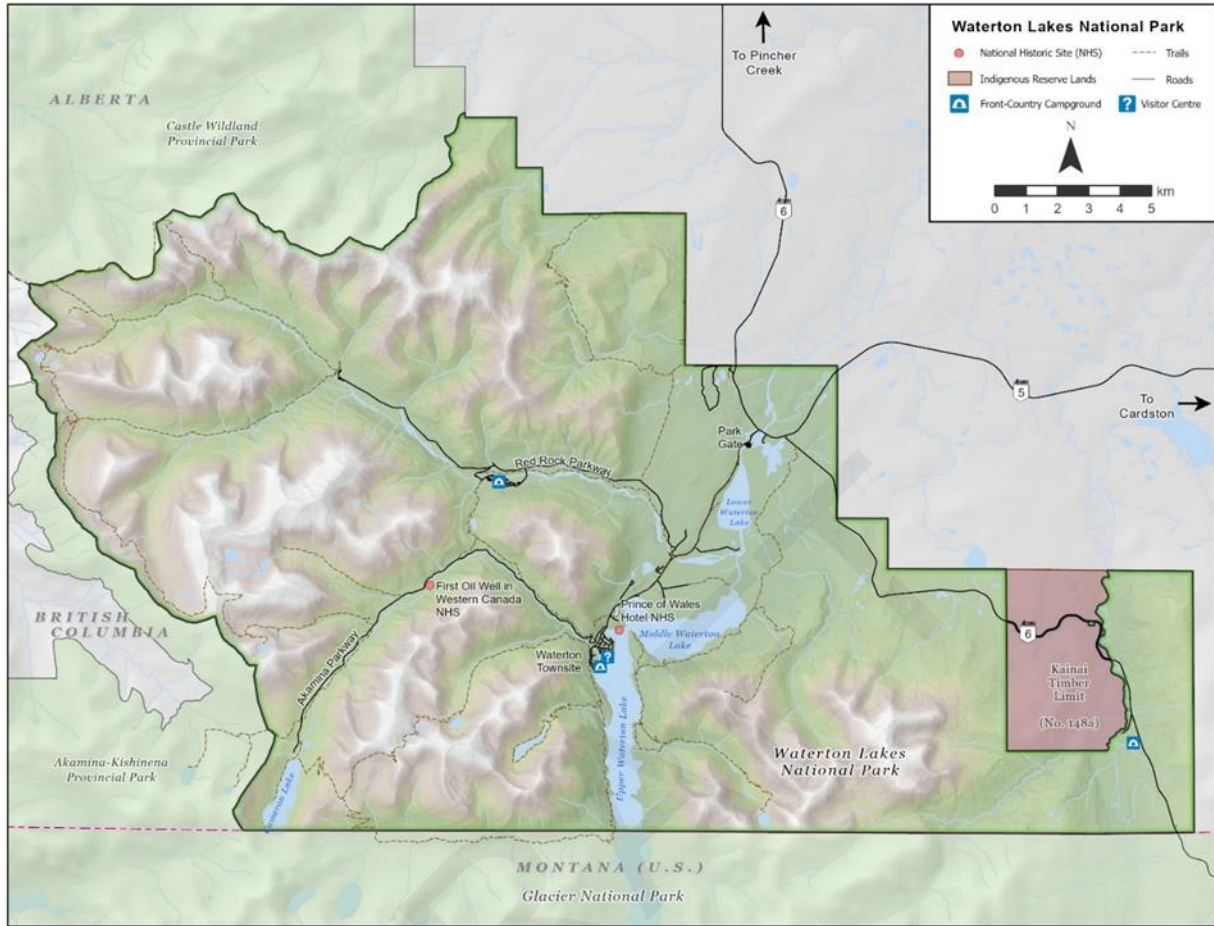
Indigenous peoples are important partners in the stewardship of heritage places, with connections to the lands and waters since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Waterton Lakes National Park 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 a dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement and, where appropriate, consultation, on the management of Waterton Lakes National Park in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Waterton Lakes National Park



2.0 Significance of Waterton Lakes National Park

Waterton Lakes National Park (Waterton Lakes National Park) protects and presents a portion of the southern Rocky Mountain Natural Region, “where the mountains meet the prairie.” The Blackfoot name for Waterton Lakes – Paahtómahksikimi – means the *inner sacred lake within the mountains*. It is a landscape shaped by wind, fire, and water with strong human connections since time immemorial. Old-growth forests, windswept prairies, flowing rivers and deep lakes, intersect to support an astounding variety of plants and animals. Wide open spaces framed by spectacular mountains create a sense of peace and wonder. Waterton Lakes National Park is Canada’s fourth national park, established in 1895 thanks to the leadership of local citizens. Located in the southwest corner of Alberta, it is the smallest of the Canadian mountain parks (Banff, Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks) at 505 square kilometres.

The park lies within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, one of North America’s most ecologically, physically and jurisdictionally diverse landscapes. This ecosystem is located within one of the narrowest points along the Rocky Mountain chain. The park helps protect this crucial north-south wildlife corridor. Five ecoregions meet in Waterton Lakes National Park: foothills parkland, montane, lower subalpine, upper subalpine, and alpine, setting the stage for the park to host a large variety of plants for its size. Waterton Lakes National Park contains 83 vegetation communities and over 1,000 vascular plant species across grasslands, shrublands, wetlands, forests, and alpine areas, featuring seasonal fields of many-hued wildflowers. Almost 175 of these plant species, such as the Waterton moonwort, are rare or not found elsewhere in Alberta or Canada. This diverse vegetation supports a vast array of wildlife, from 256 bird species, 66 mammals, 24 fish, 3 reptiles, and 6 amphibians to thousands of invertebrates, including insects.

This cradle of mountains, prairie, lake and sky has attracted and connected people to the natural world for millennia. Waterton Lakes National Park is part of the territory and a place of significance for the Siksikaitsiitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy, which consists of the following Nations/Tribes: Kainai [Blood Tribe], Siksika Nation and Aapatohsippiikani [Piikani Nation], in southern Alberta, Canada, and the Amsskapipiikunniwa [Blackfoot Tribe] in northern Montana, U.S.) and other Indigenous peoples. Paahtómahksikimi - the Blackfoot name for Waterton Lakes – is pronounced *paah-to-mak-sick-imi*. The Beaver Bundle – representing all living beings, including the four-legged, the two-legged (humans), the ones who fly and the ones who live in the water – was given to the Blackfoot people in Aahkiaahkoinimaan, today’s Maskinonge area of the park. It signifies the sacred kinship between the land and all of its inhabitants, based on respect and reciprocity, from which flow the traditions of conservation and sustainability, values shared by Parks Canada.

The earliest evidence of human presence among Waterton’s lakes and mountains stretches back more than 10,000 years. In these rich valleys, Siksikaitsiitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) and Ktunaxa peoples hunted bison and collected plants for food and medicine. Close to 400 archeological sites have been identified in Waterton Lakes National Park. Most are Indigenous sites that include fire rings, bison drive-lanes, butchering and fishing camps, and ceremonial sites. This was a place where the Blackfoot Confederacy and other First Nations would gather for camping, travelling, trading and peacemaking. The Blackfoot continue to hold ceremonies and harvest medicine plants in Paahtómahksikimi.

International designations and inscriptions signify the importance of this area to citizens around the world. In 1932, Waterton Lakes National Park partnered with Glacier National Park in Montana (USA) to form the world’s first International Peace Park (Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park). Today, the two parks use this long-established relationship to work together to protect the water, plants and animals found in this unique setting. The Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995 in recognition of the International Peace Park’s Outstanding Universal Value for its ecological processes and scenic beauty. More recently, Waterton Lakes National Park and Glacier National Park, Montana, are collectively recognized as the first International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) International Dark Sky Parks, based on commitments to preserve their high-quality night skies and offer night-sky viewing opportunities. Waterton Lakes National Park also forms the core area of the Waterton Biosphere Reserve, established in 1979. Canada’s second Biosphere Reserve, its objectives are to better

understand the relationship between people and the natural environment, and to promote knowledge exchange and good practices through collaboration.

Two National Historical Sites (NHS) are present within park boundaries: The First Oil Well in Western Canada, and the Prince of Wales Hotel. The First Oil Well in Western Canada was designated in 1965 to commemorate the first commercially productive oil well in the western provinces. Located in the Cameron Valley, this exploration foreshadowed the growth of the oil industry that has underwritten much of Alberta's subsequent economic development. The Prince of Wales Hotel is an iconic example of Swiss-chalet architectural style strongly associated with the Canadian Rockies and the country's historic railway hotels. It opened in 1927 and received National Historic Site designation in 1992. Presently, the hotel is operated by a third party through a land agreement. Its striking design and dramatic setting make it Waterton Lake NP's most recognized landmark.

3.0 Planning Context

Waterton Lakes National Park is situated within a complex multi-jurisdictional, ecological, social and political landscape. It shares histories, boundaries, and plant and wildlife communities with the Siksikaitsiitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), particularly the Káinai and Piikáni, the Ktunaxa people, Glacier National Park in Montana (USA), Akamina-Kishinena Provincial Park in British Columbia (BC), Castle Wildland Provincial Park in Alberta (AB), and a range of other Alberta public lands, municipal governments and private landowners.

Parks Canada collaborates with the Siksikaitsiitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) to ensure that their worldview and sacred kinship are reflected and valued in a range of projects including cultural interpretation in the new visitor centre, interpretive activities and events, and the conservation of natural and cultural resources. Parks Canada endeavours to respect all applicable treaties and work collaboratively with all Indigenous peoples who have a historic connection to the Park or who assert the Park is part of their traditional territories, such as signatories of Treaty 7. Parks Canada also strives to work with all Indigenous peoples in as equitable a manner as possible. Waterton Lakes National Park remains committed to continued engagement with Indigenous partners to ensure history, culture and values are shared respectfully.

Given the park's size and location, transboundary partnerships and collaborations with regional partners and stakeholders are especially essential to successfully meet the park's management, conservation, visitor experience and engagement goals. Waterton Lakes National Park collaborates with Glacier National Park (USA), provincial agencies, local municipalities, community residents and businesses, local ranchers and conservation organizations. Information and resources are shared to manage fire, search and rescue, non-native species, species at risk, wildlife, restoration projects, and to inform memorable visitor experiences. Many private landowners neighbouring the park have partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to maintain the natural values of their working ranches, maintaining habitat for a variety of wildlife including wide-ranging species such as grizzly bear.

Waterton Lakes National Park is an inspiring place to visit, with a diversity of opportunities to explore. Its proximity to Lethbridge (1.5 hours) and Calgary (2.5 hours) make it an easy day trip. The park includes lakes and rivers, mountain and prairie vistas, hundreds of kilometres of trails and roads, campgrounds and picnic sites (day use areas). The welcoming townsite of Waterton is the focal point for visitor services, offering outdoor activities, dining experiences, and accommodations within a setting of rugged natural beauty. The community's population varies with the seasons, ranging from 108 residents to a seasonal population that increases to approximately 1,000 during summer months. An additional 5,000 to 6,000 day-use visitors and roughly 2,000 overnight visitors stay in park campgrounds or lodging in peak periods.

On September 11, 2017, the Kenow Wildfire entered the southwest corner of Waterton Lakes National Park through Akamina Pass. The fire significantly impacted park ecology, burning approximately 39% (19,303 hectares) of the park's area, or 50% of its vegetated landscape, affecting plants, wildlife and

aquatic systems. While fire is a natural part of the Waterton Lakes National Park ecosystem and essential to maintain its ecological integrity, this wildfire was of uncommon size and exceptional, uniform intensity. The smaller, similar-intensity Boundary Creek Wildfire took place in 2018. A thorough understanding of both wildfires' impacts on the park's ecology will take many years to observe and assess, based on a multitude of research and monitoring projects underway in collaboration with partners.

The Kenow Wildfire also damaged or destroyed built infrastructure in the park and neighbouring lands. Despite the best efforts of firefighters to protect facilities, over 30 park assets – such as buildings, campgrounds, parkways, and 80% of the hiking trail network – were either damaged or destroyed. Decades of fuel reduction efforts and fire management planning, in addition to on-the-ground firefighting, protected buildings and assets in the Waterton townsite and at the Prince of Wales Hotel National Historic Site. Waterton Lakes National Park will continue with fuel reduction efforts around the townsite and outlying facilities to ensure a strategic approach to landscape-level fire management in support of wildfire risk reduction.

The wildfire revealed more than 70 new archeological sites, and expanded 170 known archaeological sites within the burn zone. Members of local Blackfoot communities contributed to identifying and acknowledging some of these archeological sites, and Indigenous communities will continue to be engaged as work continues. Parks Canada is working to restore visitor experiences that are safe, enjoyable, inclusive and fully consistent with the ecological objectives for the park.

Alongside post-fire recovery, Waterton Lakes National Park has seen an unprecedented investment in park infrastructure. In 2015, approximately \$96 million was committed through the Federal Infrastructure Investment (FII) Program to support high-quality and meaningful visitor experiences and to help protect the environment. Key investments made under the FII program include utility and road upgrades in the Waterton townsite, extensive modernization of the Townsite Campground and Peace Park Plaza, and construction of a new visitor centre.

This management plan replaces the 2010 Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plan. A number of key issues and challenges were identified and considered during the development of the current draft plan based on the 2019 State of the Park Assessment (SOPA), internal reviews and public consultations. These include:

Ecological integrity: Ecological integrity is the first priority in park management. Waterton Lakes National Park faces many challenges to ecological integrity, foremost among them the threats posed by non-native species. Terrestrial invasive plants threaten grassland ecosystems by outcompeting native species, reducing biodiversity or eliminating key habitats. Five-needle pines, which are keystone species in the forest ecosystem, are under severe threat from the introduced disease, blister rust, while introduced fish have nearly eliminated the aquatic ecosystem's native trout population. The potential introduction of new invasive species to the grasslands and forests, or new invasive aquatic species like quagga mussel or Eurasian water milfoil, remains a constant threat. Maintaining ecological integrity will require managing the impacts of introduced species and preventing new species from being introduced, along with continued fire management that will safeguard this key ecological process and allow it to safely play its role in ecosystem renewal. Appropriate human-use management is necessary to ensure people can continue to enjoy the area while leaving it unimpaired for future generations.

Impacts from climate change: Climate change will increasingly alter the park's native biodiversity, wildlife habitats, wildfire cycles, weather patterns, and water systems and can exacerbate the risk of invasive species. Climate change impacts place additional stress on park infrastructure, human health and safety, cultural and archeological resources, and visitor demand and experience. Integrating climate change adaptation actions into park planning and operations will help build climate resilience by reducing the negative impacts of climate change, while taking advantage of potential new opportunities.

Managing visitation: Visitors value the unique character, minimal commercialization and tranquil feel of Waterton Lakes National Park. This appreciation, in addition to the park's accessibility as a day trip within driving distance, has contributed to increases in visitation over the past decade. Visitation is anticipated to remain strong, particularly as popular visitor areas (Red Rock Canyon, Cameron Lake,

Bear's Hump Trail) reopen after restoration following the Kenow Wildfire. Understanding and limiting impacts of increasing visitation on the park's ecological integrity, character, resources, and experiences is crucial to developing effective strategies to manage park visitation in the future.

Relationships with Indigenous peoples: Waterton Lakes National Park is a place of significance for a number of Indigenous peoples, particularly Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Ktunaxa and the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA). Relationships and collaborative work have deepened since the last management plan. Further progress is expected as the park works closely with Indigenous partners so that their stories, knowledge, and values are included in park management decisions and shared appropriately with the public.

Partnerships and regional connectivity: This park is a small component of an internationally significant, ecological, social and political landscape. Increased inter-jurisdictional coordination and enhanced connectivity across the larger regional network of protected and conserved areas is essential to effectively advance the park's objectives. Further opportunities exist for Parks Canada to collaborate with neighbours, regional businesses and tourism organizations to amplify common messaging and information in areas such as trip planning, appropriate behaviour and available services.

Maintenance of built infrastructure: Ongoing investment is needed to maintain built infrastructure (e.g. buildings, campgrounds, roads, water systems, sewers, etc.) to meet visitor safety needs and quality visitor experience objectives, while ensuring ecological integrity and effective cultural resource management. This challenge is heightened as the park strives to offer inclusive access to the park and adapts to evolving visitor demographics and increasing visitor demand.

4.0 Development of the Management Plan

Parks Canada engaged with Canadians to develop the Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plan, and the management plans for all mountain national parks - Banff, Yoho, Jasper, Kootenay, Mount Revelstoke, and Glacier. Through in person and online engagement, stakeholder groups, Indigenous partners and the general public were invited to share ideas, issues and opportunities to shape the future of Waterton Lakes National Park.

Waterton Lakes National Park gathered input from interested Canadians and used a variety of in-person and online engagement methods. During the first three-month engagement period, the Waterton Lakes National Park Let's Talk Mountain Parks website received approximately 2,500 visits and a total of 443 online submissions. Parks Canada spoke with over 150 people at 12 different engagement events, including discussions with Indigenous groups, an open house, stakeholder workshop, youth workshop, and outreach at local festivals and regional events.

Phase One engagement (April 10, 2019-July 3, 2019) focused on refining the long-term vision for the park and exploring priorities to address over the next decade. Feedback from Indigenous peoples, youth, stakeholders and the general public was considered in the proposed vision, key strategies, and objectives. A summary of the feedback received is available at: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ab/waterton/info/index/participation/entendu-heard>.

Engagement activities for Phase Two focus on the public release of the Draft Management Plan. Although initially planned for 2020, Phase Two engagement activities were paused at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic until meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples, stakeholders and the general public could be held. Phase Two engagement, is delivered in parallel with the other mountain national parks, encouraging local, regional and national dialogue on refining the draft management plan for each national park.

5.0 Vision

Waterton Lakes National Park is an awe-inspiring legacy of alpine peaks, pristine lakes, tranquil forests, and abundant wildlife that inspire a sense of wonder, self discovery, and heartfelt connection to the landscape. Its intact wilderness, unique beauty, ecological integrity and native biodiversity persist. Wildlife thrive as they travel through secure habitat, enabling movement across the region. Humans continue to co-exist harmoniously with the park's rich ecosystem. Vibrant insights are offered into the park's storied past, including relationships with Indigenous peoples, and the Prince of Wales Hotel and First Oil Well in Western Canada national historic sites. In this place, nature and culture are alive, treasured, and shared.

The longstanding role of the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) as stewards of this area of their ancestral homelands is recognized and Blackfoot community members and all Indigenous peoples feel welcome in Paahtómahksikimi. Greetings and place names in the Blackfoot language remind us all of the enduring cultural, physical, and spiritual significance of Waterton Lakes for Indigenous groups. Ongoing and meaningful involvement with Indigenous partners is founded on strong relationships of mutual respect and trust, and their perspectives influence key decisions about the park's future. Their stories and knowledge are visible, honouring the sacred kinship with the land and its inhabitants.

Waterton Lakes National Park is committed to inclusivity and invites people of diverse backgrounds to develop their own personal connections to this landscape, inspiring a sense of shared responsibility and stewardship now and in the future. Waterton Lakes National Park offers a broad range of experiences for all abilities, ranging from rugged and remote backcountry to accessible front country experiences. Increasing visitation is actively managed by working with local and regional partners, promoting sustainable modes of travel (e.g. car-pooling, mass transit, timed entry) and influencing visitor traffic patterns to create high-quality experiences and help protect park ecosystems. Waterton Lakes National Park also increasingly provides innovative and accessible digital experiences and information. The Waterton community remains a friendly hub with a small town feel. It provides a springboard for authentic and meaningful opportunities for visitors to experience the area. The new Waterton Lakes Visitor Centre, in the heart of the community, is open year-round and welcomes visitors to discover the park, its enduring significance, and local and Indigenous cultures.

The park is recognized as a living example of collaboration across borders and ecosystems. Inscription of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park on the UNESCO World Heritage List attests to its significance, as do the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and International Dark Sky Park designations. The park uses evidence-based decision-making and actively participates in the management of the regional Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. Each visitor finds a personal connection to the web of life, and commits – as Canadians and as global citizens – to be active stewards in caring for it.

6.0 Key Strategies

The following key strategies will guide Waterton Lakes National Park's decision-making over the next ten years in order to achieve the vision, consistent with the mandate of Parks Canada and its inscription as a World Heritage Site. Objectives describe the desired outcomes following the successful implementation of each strategy. Targets identify measurable progress toward achieving each objective and allow for adaptive management, along with specific dates where feasible. Targets are deemed achievable during the timeframe of the management plan, based on opportunities, agency priorities and capacity. Management Plan implementation updates will be provided to Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders and the general public.

Six key strategies frame the broad approach Parks Canada will use to manage Waterton Lakes National Park. These strategies support each other and will be implemented in an integrated manner.

Key Strategy 1: Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage for Future Generations

The protection of natural and cultural resources and park landscapes are core to the reason for the park's existence, and maintaining and restoring ecological integrity is the first priority in park management. Parks Canada's approach to conserving these important aspects will be guided by an understanding of and respect for significance of place and natural and cultural values. Knowing that uncertainties exist, Parks Canada's ecosystem management, conservation and restoration initiatives will be built on the best available science and Indigenous knowledge, in support of a precautionary, adaptive approach that provides for evolution of management policies and practices based on the monitoring of outcomes.

Waterton Lakes National Park is the only national park that protects foothills rough fescue grasslands within the Foothills Parkland ecoregion. Grassland ecosystems are among the most threatened in the world and Alberta's native fescue grasslands continue to undergo substantial declines; less than 35% remain intact. Within the region, loss and degradation of fescue grasslands is due to invasive plant species, historical infrastructure, recreation development, and previous agricultural conversion. The absence of key processes – including disturbance by plains bison, and mixed-severity wildfires – are also detrimental to the integrity of this ecosystem.

Waterton Lakes National Park's ecosystem conservation and management efforts will continue to place a high priority on key factors that define ecological integrity: biodiversity and habitat, ecological processes that shape the ecosystem (e.g., fire, plant succession, predation, migration), and long-term ecosystem sustainability. Where ecological integrity is compromised by human-related impacts (e.g. high human-use, the introduction of invasive species, long-term fire suppression), these will be managed to minimize their effects. Similarly, known climate change impacts will be managed adaptively to minimize their negative effects on the park's natural and cultural heritage values.

The 2017 Kenow Wildfire dramatically changed the ecology of Waterton Lakes National Park. The transformed landscape offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance understanding of ecological renewal and the long history of human habitation in the area. Significant work will be required over the next decade to ensure that changes to the park's baseline ecology and archaeology are well documented. For example, a review of the ecological monitoring program will include both burned and unburned areas, while new baseline vegetation inventories will provide critical information to support the ongoing ecological management of Waterton.

Issues related to the management of species-at-risk, invasive species, wildfire, effects of climate change (e.g. extreme weather events), and habitat security for sensitive species will be addressed through landscape-level collaboration involving neighbouring protected areas and other regional stakeholders. Collaboration with academic communities and other knowledge holders, including Indigenous communities, will continue to advance understanding of post-fire renewal, native rough fescue grassland ecosystems, natural processes such as fire, and unique aquatic species communities, and will be considered in each objective.

Objective 1.1: A mosaic of functioning native grasslands persists on the landscape through ensuring fire remains an active ecological process, restoration of disturbed sites, actively managing existing non-native plants and preventing the establishment of new invasive species populations.

Targets

- Reduce the risk of establishment of new invasive terrestrial species and continue reduction of the extent of existing populations.
- Disturbed sites within native grasslands are restored to improve ecological integrity by 2029.
- The *invasive non-native plants* measure for the grasslands indicator improves to a positive trend in the next State of the Park Assessment (SOPA).
- The *grassland extent* measure for the grasslands indicator is assessed and improved to a GOOD condition in the next SOPA.
- By 2026, the *area disturbed by fire* measure for the grasslands indicator changes to 'good'.

Objective 1.2: A mosaic of functioning forests persists, forest ecological integrity improves and species at risk are restored.

Targets

- A minimum of 50,000 rust-resistant five needle pine seedlings are planted, monitored, and reported following regional collaboration by 2029.
- Prescribed fire is used to improve the *area disturbed by fire* measure for the forest indicator to a 'good and stable' condition in the next SOPA.
- The establishment of the Front Range Management Area ensures the *sensitive-species secure habitat* measure for grizzly bears is maintained at 'stable and fair' condition in the next SOPA.
- The *multi-species mammal occupancy* measure for the forest indicator is maintained at 'stable and good' condition in the next SOPA.

Objective 1.3: The ecological integrity of aquatic communities is improved through preventing the establishment of aquatic invasive species and restoring native fish and amphibian species.

Targets

- Reduce the risk of establishment of aquatic invasive species in Waterton.
- Preventative measures such as mandatory inspection of watercrafts and permits are assessed, implemented and enforced.
- Targeted communications and active management, in coordination with other mountain national parks and agencies adjacent to Waterton Lakes National Park where appropriate, inform and influence behaviour of visitors, and other audiences such as contractors, to reduce the risk of introducing aquatic invasive species.
- The trend of the *lake fish* measure for the freshwater indicator changes to 'improving' in the next SOPA.
- Parks Canada will undertake restoration of native aquatic species in Waterton Lakes National Park where appropriate as informed through monitoring of aquatic ecosystems.
- More visitors are aware that Upper Waterton Lake has a unique aquatic ecology as one of the only known lakes to include bull trout (a threatened species), lake trout, northern pike, and glacial relic species such as pygmy whitefish, deepwater sculpin, and opossum shrimp.

Objective 1.4: Species-at-risk are protected and recovery actions improve local populations and distribution through park and landscape-level conservation measures that address known threats, promote species recovery and strengthen public awareness.

Targets

- Conservation and recovery measures for species-at-risk (including Bolander's quillwort, half-moon hairstreak, and little brown myotis) outlined in the *Multi-Species Action Plan for Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada and Bar U Ranch National Historic Site of Canada (2017)* are implemented within the timelines.
- The Waterton multi-species action plan is updated regularly to reflect current status of species in the park and to identify emerging issues, needs and priorities such as new species listings.
- Information on species-at-risk and how people can impact and protect them is presented to stakeholders, visitors and the public to enhance awareness and promote compliance with the *Species at Risk Act*.

Objective 1.5: Understanding of the heritage value and condition of significant cultural resources is improved and documented in collaboration with Indigenous partners.

Targets

- All archeological sites, including those affected by the Kenow Wildfire, are assessed and have condition ratings by 2025, and any necessary mitigations are implemented.
- A climate-based vulnerability assessment of cultural resources guides decisions on management of related sites.

- The inventory and management of Indigenous cultural sites, including archaeological sites, is developed in collaboration with Siksikaitsitapi and other Indigenous partners with traditional relationships to the area.
- A Cultural Resources Management Strategy is completed, including a Cultural Resource Value Statement for Waterton Lakes National Park, upon engagement with partners and stakeholders by 2030.

Objective 1.6: Management of park ecosystems and cultural resources incorporates considerations of climate change and changes brought by the 2017 Kenow and 2018 Boundary Creek wildfires into decision-making.

Targets

- A detailed climate change model is completed for the region by 2023 in cooperation with regional partners, which will inform park climate change adaptation planning, including resource conservation activities to ensure continued ecological integrity and commemorative integrity in the park while adapting to a changing climate.
- The ecological integrity monitoring program is reviewed and updated to reflect changes from the wildfires.
- By 2022, the vegetation inventory is updated to document the dramatic changes shaped by the Kenow and Boundary Creek Wildfires.
- By 2024, available results on post-fire ecological monitoring and research are presented to the public, stakeholders and partners and influence ongoing research, monitoring needs and management actions.

Objective 1.7: Human disturbances on wildlife and habitat are reduced through the active management of potential human-wildlife conflicts and the promotion of responsible behaviour and stewardship by park users.

Targets

- A diverse range of communication products provided on various platforms and visitor experience programs continue to inform park visitors how to minimise risk of human wildlife conflict and reduce incidents and impacts on wildlife when exploring the park.
- The wildlife corridor in Blakiston Valley is enhanced through improvements in Crandell Mountain Campground.
- A range of visitor use management strategies and tools such as day-use area quotas, area closures, and trail restrictions are considered and implemented when and where necessary to protect sensitive ecosystems and reduce wildlife disturbance in affected areas.

Key Strategy 2: True to Place Experiences

National Parks provide exceptional opportunities for Canadians to develop a sense of connection to their natural and cultural heritage. The opportunity to be immersed in nature, history and diverse cultures while surrounded by true wilderness and mountain landscapes is truly distinctive. Maintaining the authenticity and quality of this experience while ensuring that visitors understand its uniqueness is central to Parks Canada's mandate. Visitor opportunities will be characterized by sustainability and responsiveness to diverse visitor needs and expectations. Activities and communications will be designed to advance understanding and stewardship of natural and cultural resources, encouraging all to share the responsibility of conserving these special places.

For thousands of years, Waterton Lakes National Park has been a meeting place of cultures. This perspective continues to resonate for the park and community of Waterton. The townsite is the focal point for information, interpretation, events and activities. It offers facilities and activities that directly support the mandate of national parks, characterized by environmentally sustainable practices. The visitor centre, located at the heart of the community, serves as the entry-point to discover the park, its enduring significance, and Indigenous and local cultures.

Waterton Lakes National Park will continue to offer visitors a range of experiences that encourage stewardship, raise awareness of the value of protected areas, and minimize impacts on the park's ecology and local cultures. These experiences will allow visitors the firsthand opportunity to learn, understand, appreciate, and contribute to the exceptional natural and cultural values of the region, including the Kenow Wildfire ecological renewal. Opportunities will be provided to enable youth to enjoy the mental and physical health benefits of spending time in this landscape while developing connections with nature. Working closely with partners, opportunities to develop and deliver authentic Indigenous experiences will be pursued.

Visitation will be managed as understanding of human pressures on the ecosystem, existing and future visitor use patterns, and climate change impacts improve over time. Approaches to manage visitor use and demand across seasons in different areas of the park will be developed. This may include transportation and reservation systems. Collaborating with regional partners and stakeholders will be essential to ensure that visitors have appropriate pre-trip information so they can take advantage of the opportunities being offered, be prepared, arrive with the right expectations, and maintain those connections long after their visit.

Visitor facilities will be planned to protect park ecological integrity, prioritize public safety, offer quality experiences, and improve accessibility and inclusion. The vast majority of visitation occurs within the townsite and along major parkways while the remainder of the park has lower levels of use.

Objective 2.1: Visitor appreciation and connection to Waterton Lakes National Park is maintained through a wide range of enjoyable, accessible and inclusive experiences and services that respect essence of place.

Targets

- 90% of visitors have a high satisfaction rating of their overall visit to the park and consider the park meaningful to them.
- As of 2022, the proportion of visitors who engage with Park Canada at the new year-round Visitor Centre and discover opportunities for learning and exploration has increased from the 2016 baseline.
- Accessibility and inclusivity are improved in park operations and asset upgrades.
- Improvements are made to existing infrastructure such as trails, trailheads, kiosks, exhibits, backcountry campgrounds and signage to provide high quality experiences, orient visitors, influence behaviours and manage expectations.

Objective 2.2: Visitors and the general public are offered a variety of learning opportunities that help them connect to the park, its stories, its nature and its cultures.

Targets

- A variety of communications products, visitor experience programs, and outreach activities incorporate multiple narratives and reach audiences (such as youth, urban and new Canadians) inside and outside the park through online platforms, appropriate venues and collaborations.
- By 2022, new exhibits at the Visitor Centre contribute to enhance understanding of the significance of Waterton Lakes National Park and the essential role of various partners to successfully protect it.
- New interpretive signs at trailheads, developed in collaboration with Siksikaitsiitapi, inform visitors on Blackfoot traditional place names and significance by 2022.
- By 2024, in-person contacts through events, activities and immersive learning programs in the park have increased 10% from the 2019 baseline.
- In future visitor surveys, 80% of visitors report learning about natural and cultural heritage through engaging interpretive programs, communications products, and events at various venues in the park.

Objective 2.3: Visitor-use patterns are proactively managed to maintain natural and cultural resource protection and exceptional visitor experiences.

Targets

- Trip planning and year-round experiences in the park are enhanced for visitors by a Visitor Use Management (VUM) Strategy, influencing how, where, and when visitors arrive and experience the park, particularly during peak visitation periods, by 2025. This VUM strategy may be used to help achieve wider PCA objectives such as ecological integrity, sustainable asset management, climate change adaptation and regional collaboration in Waterton Lakes National Park.
- Visitor use at busy areas such as trails, the townsite, Red Rock Canyon and Cameron Lake is monitored to identify potential ecological, visitor experience, or congestion issues and evaluate the need for subsequent management actions, including regulating traffic flow/levels and transportation options, by 2024.
- A suite of tools and approaches such as day-use quotas, area closures, and trail restrictions are considered and implemented when necessary to protect sensitive ecosystems and reduce wildlife disturbance in affected areas.
- By 2023, powerboat use in the park is reviewed and impacts are assessed to determine if recreational powerboat use should continue beyond 2025.

Objective 2.4: Throughout the trip cycle, starting from wishing and planning their visit to their arrival to the park and return back home, visitors' expectations match available experiences and they are aware of appropriate behaviours and effectively adopt them.

Targets

- Accessible on-line information, use of new technology, and collaboration with partners help visitors manage expectations, plan ahead and maintain visitor satisfaction on 'information prior to arrival' to 90% in next visitor surveys.
- Accessibility and inclusivity of information available to visitors is assessed and options for improvement are researched and implemented.
- Visitors adopt appropriate behaviour to protect the park from invasive species as a result of communication products, visitor experience programs and outreach initiatives such as *Clean, Drain, Dry* and *Play, Clean, Go*, provided throughout the visitor cycle.
- Visitors follow wildlife etiquette guidelines, reducing instances of wildlife habituation and promoting human-wildlife coexistence.

Key Strategy 3: Strengthening Indigenous Relations

The Government of Canada has committed to deepen and strengthen relationships with Indigenous peoples. Accordingly, many places administered by Parks Canada are managed through cooperative management bodies or advisory relationships with local Indigenous communities. These structures recognize the important and ongoing roles and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples as stewards of heritage places. With approaches founded on renewed relationships, respect and cooperation, the mountain national parks will continue to recognize Indigenous connections and work with Indigenous peoples to advance priorities of mutual interest.

Waterton Lakes National Park will strengthen existing relationships with Indigenous communities whose traditional territories include Waterton Lakes, particularly the nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Ongoing initiatives with Káínai, and Piikáni First Nations will continue. Reconciliation will be advanced through collaboration, based on recognition of traditional Blackfoot protocol, to address interests and priorities to understand, protect, and present the park's vast ecological and cultural legacy.

Working together, we will strive to respectfully braid Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and stories into park management, conservation and presentation. Parks Canada will recognize and profile the area, traditionally known as *Paahótómahksikimi*, as a sacred place based on the Siksikaitsiitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) worldview and value system where nature and humans are deeply interconnected. This sacred kinship with the land and all its inhabitants is based on respect and reciprocity. Recognition of the significant Blackfoot heritage of the area, and more recent settler heritage, promote understanding and appreciation for this special place.

Objective 3.1: Ongoing, respectful relationships form the basis of collaborations with the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) and other interested Indigenous partners with traditional relationships to the area.

Targets

- An Indigenous advisory committee for Waterton Lakes addressing Indigenous initiatives and the management of cultural resources meets annually, by 2022.
- Waterton Lakes National Park employees receive Siksikaitsitapi cultural orientation, starting in 2022.
- The Indigenous relations indicator in the next State of the Park Assessment (2030) is rated collaboratively.
- Parks Canada will support Indigenous communities' ventures through appropriate land use agreements when opportunities become available.

Objective 3.2: The longstanding role of the Siksikaitsitapi as stewards of the area is honoured and their knowledge and perspectives are braided into decisions related to park management.

Targets

- The sacred importance of the area for the Siksikaitsitapi, their perspectives and knowledge are profiled in communications products, at the Visitor Centre, in visitor experience offers and interpretive programming and on digital channels, beginning in 2022.
- The Blackfoot language is present and shared, particularly for greetings and Blackfoot place names of cultural importance by 2022.
- Siksikaitsitapi and other Indigenous partners are actively engaged in the inventory and management of Indigenous cultural sites, including archeological and ceremonial sites by 2025.

Objective 3.3: Indigenous peoples continue to connect with their traditional lands, waters, and cultures in Waterton Lakes National Park.

Targets

- Waterton Lakes National Park remains welcoming and accessible to Indigenous peoples, particularly in areas of spiritual and cultural importance.
- Indigenous partners determine opportunities for knowledge transfer which are facilitated across generations and cultures, including through in person Indigenous-led experiences.
- Initiatives aimed at increasing employment and retention in Parks Canada careers, particularly for Káinai and Piikáni youth, are identified and implemented by 2024.

Key Strategy 4: Connecting with Canadians

This strategy focuses on reaching out to Canadians where they live to connect them with their natural and cultural heritage. Parks Canada will work to adapt to the changing ways Canadians interact with national parks by connecting through the technologies they use, wherever they are. By reaching people who may never visit Waterton Lakes National Park or the region, Parks Canada will increase support for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of these places.

Waterton Lakes National Park communications, including media relations, partnering and engagement strategies, promotions and outreach opportunities, and digital channels will promote awareness of Parks Canada's mandate, share science and conservation stories, especially results of the post-Kenow research, foster stewardship behaviours, and develop an appreciation for the complexities of managing this special place for future generations. These efforts will foster shared stewardship and respect that transcends park boundaries, using a range of media to reach youth, urban and new Canadians.

Parks Canada will continue to take a "digital first" approach to reaching audiences beyond park boundaries. This means prioritizing the use of channels, such as the Waterton Lakes National Park

website and social media, to provide Canadians with opportunities to develop meaningful connection to this special place. A strong digital presence also enables people from around the world to explore the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site even if they are not able to visit in person.

Objective 4.1: Canadians have opportunities to form personal connections with Waterton Lakes National Park and appreciate its ecological integrity and heritage value without visiting the park.

Targets

- Parks Canada works with Indigenous partners to highlight the sacred importance of the area for the Siksikaitsiitapi in park communications, public programming and on digital channels, by 2025.
- By 2024, an Outreach Strategy focussing on digital approaches is developed to guide Parks Canada's ongoing efforts to reach and engage Canadians in learning about natural and cultural heritage conservation efforts in Waterton Lakes National Park.
- Science and conservation stories, particularly post-Kenow Wildfire research updates, are shared widely through forums such as Science and History Day; the Crown Managers Partnership; and academic research publications, web, media, social media and partner platforms.
- Maintain relationships and seek out collaborative opportunities with tourism organizations, media, international conservation groups and others that enhance the ability to share successful cross boundary efforts on sustainability, visitor experience, and science and conservation stories.

Key Strategy 5: Managing Development

Ecological integrity is the first priority in park management, including in managing development. Parks Canada's approach will be transparent and consistent, and will continue to respect limits, zoning and declared wilderness designations. Any development considered must demonstrably support the vision and objectives of each park as described in its Park Management Plan. Development will facilitate greater awareness and connection to natural and historical spaces, and aim to protect for future generations the qualities that make these places distinctive.

Parks Canada has a well-established framework of limits to growth in the mountain national parks comprised of legislation, regulations and policy dating back to the 2001 *Canada National Parks Act* amendments. This framework is a central element of Parks Canada's approach to maintaining or restoring ecological integrity and protecting cultural heritage and land-use management, providing exceptional visitor experiences. Parks Canada applies a suite of regulatory, policy, and operational tools to achieve the spirit and intent of the legislation. In this regard, Parks Canada is developing new regulations and guidelines to implement a modernized planning permit process to ensure transparent and consistent decision-making in reviewing proposed projects. In order to manage risk and responsibilities for utility services infrastructure Parks Canada will use utility service agreements to ensure responsibility for utility maintenance and operations rests with the appropriate utility provider or owner.

Waterton Lakes National Park will apply these regulatory and policy approaches to ensure the protection of ecological and commemorative integrity.

Parks Canada shall maintain limits to commercial development in Waterton Lakes National Park while providing high-quality visitor experiences. The park will support the Waterton townsite in its role as a centre for visitor services and continue to respect established spatial and development limits. For a sustainable future, Waterton Lakes National Park needs to go beyond accommodating increasing demand with more traffic-related infrastructure. At certain times, transportation-related infrastructure such as parking and pull-offs can be stretched beyond capacity. However, research has shown that building more parking and pull-offs is, at best, a temporary solution. Additionally, building new infrastructure such as parking lots, generally requires use of undeveloped lands, which means long-term loss of the ecosystem services and wildlife habitat that would otherwise be provided by those lands. Cohesively planned actions supporting people to arrive at and visit the park by alternative modes of transportation other than personal driving vehicles will be explored. Through the Visitor Use Management Strategy, managers will explore collaborative efforts to reduce the number of personal vehicles coming to the park.

Waterton Lakes National Park is committed to upgrading and maintaining the park's built infrastructure (e.g. buildings, campgrounds, roads, trails, water, and sewer). Following the completion of Federal Infrastructure and Investment (FII) and Kenow Wildfire recovery projects by 2023, efforts will focus on maintaining assets in good conditions. Modifications to improve accessibility, efficiency, visitor experience or to ensure asset sustainability will be considered following standard PCA development guidelines and assessment requirements within existing disturbed areas.

Environmentally-friendly construction methods and materials will be encouraged for construction projects. The park will invest in sustainable solutions to reduce the ecological footprint and greenhouse gas emissions associated with real property, infrastructure and fleet management. It will work with partners and key stakeholders to better understand the impacts of climate change and propose adaptation and mitigation strategies to built infrastructure and visitor-use patterns.

Objective 5.1: Assets are inclusive, accessible, sustainable, and resilient.

Targets

- New or refurbished facilities incorporate accessible and inclusive design principles in accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act* by 2023 – including the visitor centre, new marina washrooms and Crandell Mountain and Townsite campgrounds.
- Climate change impacts are identified and addressed through adaptive designs and asset vulnerability assessments completed by 2025.
- The condition of built assets, including visitor facilities, roads, vehicular bridges, highways and buildings, is maintained at 'good' rating in the next State of Park Assessment.
- Develop a long-term Asset Management Plan by 2025 that defines strategies, resources and actions necessary to optimize asset performance, resiliency and sustainability, to minimize risks, and to ensure their effective contribution to the objectives of this management plan. To meet these goals all new Parks Canada construction are accompanied by a preventative maintenance plan.

Objective 5.2: Development, visitor-use and commercial activities are managed to ensure that ecological integrity and quality visitor experiences are maintained.

Targets

- Strategies related to managing visitor use, including alternative modes of transportation to and within the park, are considered as infrastructure nears capacity.
- The Visitor Use Management Strategy will include a communications strategy to encourage sustainable transportation options, particularly during peak periods.
- Waterton Lakes National Park will update the Waterton Community Plan by 2030 and that plan will reflect commercial, residential and institutional lease conditions within the townsite. Parks Canada will evaluate appropriate land uses and apply appropriate conditions on lands outside the Townsite.
- Parks Canada will implement a modernized planning permit process to review proposed development projects in Waterton Lakes National Park when *New Land Use Planning Regulations* and guidelines are brought into force.
- Potential intensive use of wilderness settings by large groups is regulated by the Parks Canada permitting process.

Objective 5.3: Carbon emissions from human sources within the park are decreased through energy efficient infrastructure, use of renewable energy, and fossil fuel reduction programs.

Targets

- By 2025, 10% of the total park vehicle fleet is electric or hybrid.
- By 2025, high-use park facilities with access to the power grid expand their visitor offer through a 100% increase in the provision of electric charging stations since 2020.

- New or upgraded park infrastructure, including housing, operational spaces and visitor facilities, increasingly incorporates energy efficient design and technologies.
- Waterton Lakes National Park will support the installation of a solar array to provide backup power to the townsite and to offset greenhouse gas emissions.

Key Strategy 6: Regional Connectivity and Landscapes

The mountain national parks will strive to contribute to landscape-scale conservation in Canada by being ecologically, culturally and socially connected across boundaries. Many aspects of park management such as ecological restoration, emergency preparedness, climate change mitigation and adaptation, wildlife corridors, and tourism function over a broad region within and beyond park borders. Parks Canada will aim to maintain and expand regional collaboration to better monitor, understand and address these and other landscape-level issues.

As a vital component of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem, Waterton Lakes National Park is well positioned to participate in regional collaborations, and to protect and present the Outstanding Universal Value for which the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The park will continue to work closely with Glacier National Park (USA), provincial agencies, municipalities, community residents and businesses, neighbouring land managers, Blackfoot communities (First Nation communities) and organizations such as the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association and the Crown Managers Partnership on shared objectives.

Sharing information and data, developing complementary decisions and coordinating implementation will broaden the impact of individual efforts in conservation, human-use management and sustainable tourism. Advances made at a regional level will ensure the long-term sustainability of Waterton Lakes National Park.

Objective 6.1: Regional conservation and sustainable tourism initiatives are strengthened by information, data and research results that are widely-shared across partners, Indigenous communities and stakeholders.

Targets

- Based on strong relationships with regional partners, Indigenous communities and stakeholders, data and research are shared between neighbouring management agencies to guide landscape-level cooperative planning in conservation, climate change adaptation, human-use and sustainable tourism.
- Lessons learned from the 2017 Kenow and 2018 Boundary Creek wildfires help inform emergency preparedness and resource conservation efforts in the region.
- Regional tourism product development and marketing across the Crown of the Continent region informs visitors and regional residents of appropriate behaviours and shared stewardship responsibilities.
- Waterton Lakes National Park actively participates in the Government of Canada Open Data portal.

Objective 6.2: Regional connectivity, conservation and species-at-risk recovery initiatives are developed and implemented jointly by neighbouring land managers, stakeholders, Indigenous communities and Parks Canada.

Targets

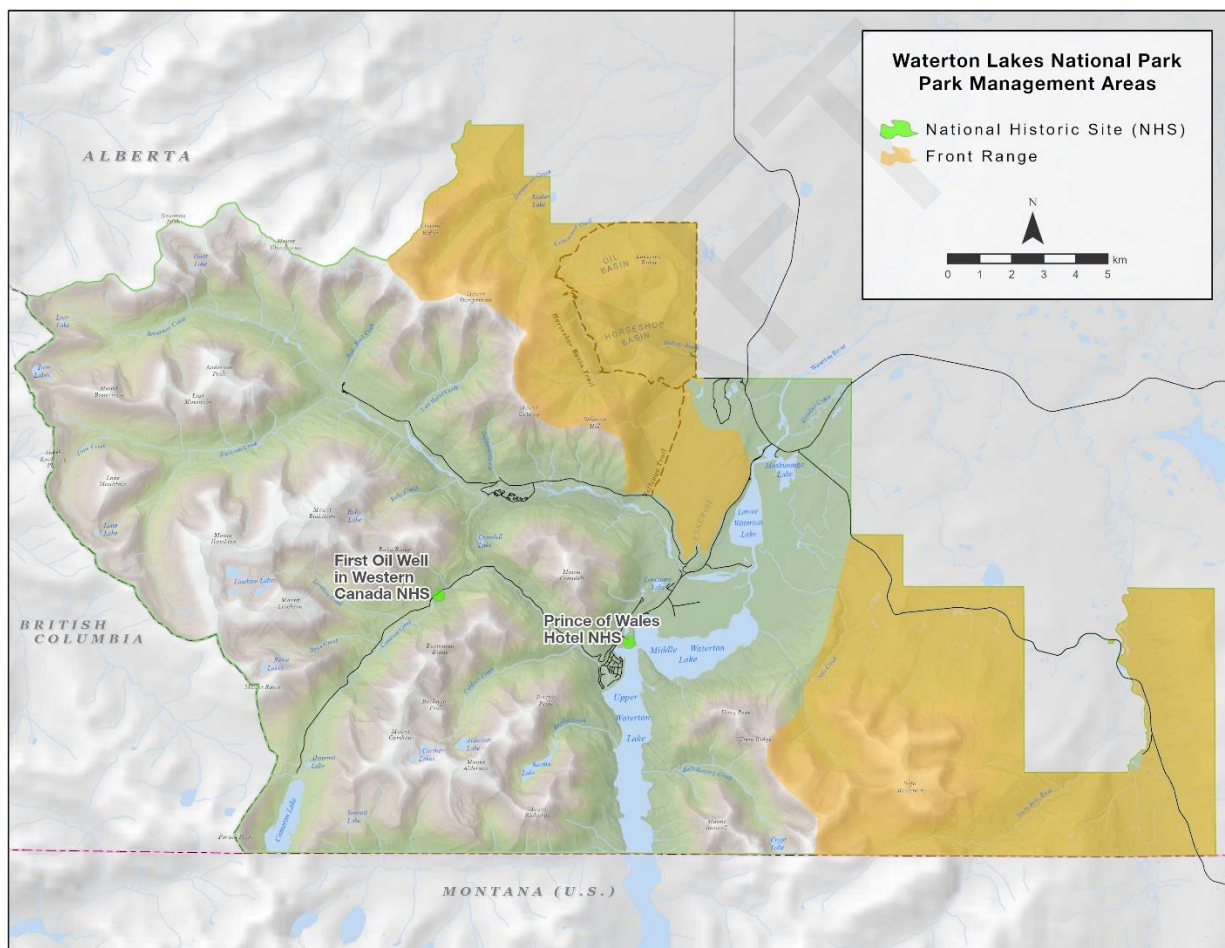
- Recovery efforts for species-at-risk such as northern leopard frog, bull trout, and whitebark pine are underway with regional partners by 2023.
- Waterton Lakes National Park supports Indigenous communities in the ecological and cultural restoration of plains bison within portions of their former range in the Waterton region.

- Cooperative regional programs focussed on preventing and, as necessary, managing aquatic and terrestrial invasive species are developed and implemented with partners and neighboring land managers by 2024.
- Key wildlife corridors within the park are identified and maintained as part of continued work with neighbouring jurisdictions to sustain regional wildlife connectivity by 2024.

7.0 Management Areas

Area management focuses on specific areas of the national parks that have particular management challenges, including important natural or cultural values and specific visitor trends. Two areas of Waterton Lakes National Park warrant special management approaches: The Front Range Management Area and the National Historic Sites.

Map 3: Waterton Lakes National Park Management Areas



Front Range Management Area

The Front Range Management Area consists of the northeastern and eastern portions of the park on the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains. This includes the north side of Cloudy Ridge, Mount Dungarvan, Mount Galwey, and Bellevue Hill, along with Horseshoe Basin and the eskerine grasslands in the north. In the eastern portion of the park, this management area includes everything east of Vimy Ridge and Sofa Creek. It encompasses 154 km² or approximately 31% of the park, all part of Zone II (wilderness, see Section 7.0 below).

Limited human use in the Front Range Management Area is essential for the maintenance of secure habitat for sensitive species. The area protects a natural landscape with few trails and minimal roads, where ecological processes function with minimal human disturbance. Secure habitat will continue to be used as a measure for determining high quality wildlife habitat.

Visitor experiences in the Front Range Management Area rely on opportunities that require a high degree of self-reliance and wilderness skills in remote areas, where there is little or no built infrastructure. This management area does not include campgrounds, day use areas, or shelters. Designated trails in this zone include Horseshoe Basin and the Bellevue trail. Use of unofficial trails in this area will be discouraged through strategies such as active restoration activities, minimal promotions and lack of signage.

Objective 7.1: Ecological connectivity, secure habitat for sensitive species, natural character, and cultural landscapes within the Front Range Management Area are maintained, in support of Key Strategies 1 and 3.

Targets:

- Human-use levels are maintained at the ‘fair’ rating level for the *sensitive-species secure habitat* measure in the next SOPA, using mitigation measures as required.
- Horseshoe Basin and Bellevue trails are managed to reduce impacts.
- Ecological monitoring confirms that wildlife movement and connectivity are maintained in the Front Range Management Area.

National Historic Sites

Two national historical sites are present within park boundaries: First Oil Well in Western Canada and the Prince of Wales Hotel. Together, they encompass 0.06 km², or 0.012% of the park area. Both are accessible either by road or trail.

The First Oil Well in Western Canada was designated a National Historic Site (NHS) in 1965, commemorating the first commercially-productive oil well in Western Canada. Located in the Cameron Valley along the Akamina Parkway, this exploration well foreshadowed the growth of the oil industry that has underwritten much of Alberta’s subsequent economic development. Western Canada’s first oil well was discovered by John Lineham of the Rocky Mountain Development Co. in 1902. While this was a small well that ran dry in 1904, its location signalled the presence of much larger fields that were later developed. Most visible remnants of the drilling operation were removed when the monument was erected over the well in 1968. The 2017 Kenow Wildfire revealed an expanded area for the site, which will be documented and included as part of the management strategy for the site over the course of this plan.

The Prince of Wales Hotel opened July 25, 1927 and received National Historic Site designation in 1992. Constructed in the Rustic Design tradition, this Swiss-chalet style hotel is associated with tourism development in the national parks. Built in Waterton Lakes National Park by the Great Northern Railway (GNR) as the only Canadian link to a network of American park resorts, the Prince of Wales Hotel follows the Swiss-chalet theme established for GNR resorts. It represents the golden age of railway resort development in Canada, a time when the construction of a large hotel was considered vital to the success of the national park as a tourist destination. The hotel is operated commercially under a license of occupation from Parks Canada.

Objective 7.2: The heritage values and characteristics of the two national historic sites located within the Waterton Lakes National Park continue to be protected, understood and appreciated.

Targets

- The First Oil Well in Western Canada NHS is conserved and presented to showcase the origins of the oil industry in Alberta.
- The Prince of Wales Hotel NHS continues to encourage connection to the area’s past and present.
- Both sites will offer experiences as inclusive and accessible as possible.

8.0 Zoning and Declared Wilderness Area

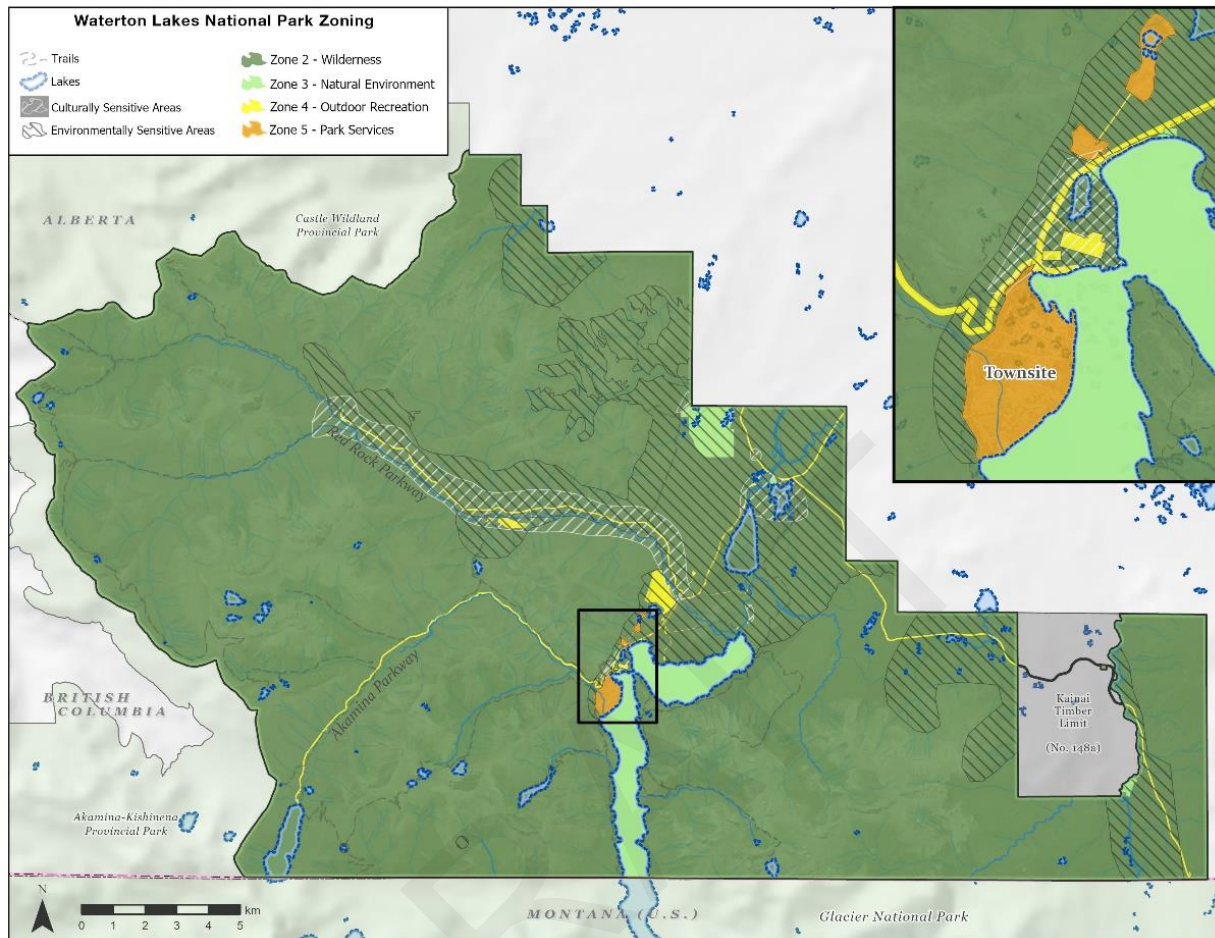
8.1 Zoning

Parks Canada's national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water. Zoning is an important management tool that supports the vision for Waterton Lakes National Park by directing appropriate uses within the park, and ensuring that rare, sensitive ecological or cultural areas are protected. Determining what visitor activities are appropriate in different areas of the park is a key consideration in zoning decisions. The system's five categories are described in the *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* (1994), as follows:

- Zone I - Special Preservation;
- Zone II - Wilderness;
- Zone III – Natural Environment;
- Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation; and
- Zone V - Park Services.

The zoning plan for Waterton Lakes National Park is described below and illustrated in Map 4. Four of the zoning system categories outlined above apply to the park, in addition to Environmentally and Culturally Sensitive Areas.

Map 4: Waterton Lakes National Park Zoning



Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Culturally Sensitive Areas

These designations apply to naturally or culturally significant or sensitive features or areas that require special protection and visitor access management to protect resources, but do not exactly fit the zoning classification system described above. Recognition as an environmentally or culturally sensitive area complements the five zoning categories and ensures that the values for which an area has been designated are at the forefront of park management decisions or actions. Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Culturally Sensitive Areas are not included in the area calculation for zones II to V in the sections below.

Culturally Sensitive Areas provide heightened protection and commemoration of cultural resources without the inherent restrictions of Zone 1 classification. Areas of Waterton Lakes National Park with Culturally Sensitive Area designation include important Indigenous sites and subsurface and surface cultural and archeological resources. Culturally Sensitive Areas cover 20 km², or 4% of the park area.

Culturally Sensitive Areas in Waterton Lakes National Park include (see Map 4):

- Maskinonge Area: Important cultural site for the Siksikaitsiitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy). This is where Blackfoot people were gifted the Beaver Bundle. It also includes a Blackfoot Confederacy marker.
- First Oil Well in Western Canada NHS and surrounding area, including the remains of Oil City and other wells (see Section 6.2, Management Areas)
- Prince of Wales Hotel NHS and Surrounding Area (see Section 6.2, Management Areas)

- Red Rock Valley and other areas of archeological importance.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas provide protection of natural resources, while respecting previous best management practices and also allow some flexibility to implement adaptive management, such as Waterton Lakes National Park's multi-species action plan. In Waterton Lakes National Park, Environmentally Sensitive Areas include fescue grassland areas, critical habitat and residence of a variety of species at risk, and known wildlife corridors. Environmentally Sensitive Areas cover 107.6 km², or 21.5% of the park.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas in Waterton NP include (see Map 4):

- Fescue Grasslands: These grasslands form a narrow band, stretching along the plains and foothills from southern Alberta into Montana.
- Half-Moon Hairstreak Butterfly (*Satyrrium semiluna*) Critical Habitat: This species is listed as endangered in Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. The Alberta population occurs only on the Blakiston Fan area.
- Bolander's Quillwort (*Isoetes bolanderi*) Critical Habitat: An aquatic plant known to occur at only three sites in Canada – all located entirely within Waterton Lakes National Park. It is listed as threatened in the Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*.
- Wildlife movement corridors: Important animal movement routes in the vicinity of the townsite and Crandell Mountain Campground.

Zone I – Special Preservation

Zone I category provides the highest level of protection in the Parks Canada zoning system. This zone is applied to areas that are among the best examples of features representing the natural region, or that support outstanding natural or cultural features. It may be used to protect areas too sensitive to accommodate facility development or large numbers of visitors. Motorized access and circulation are not permitted.

Compared to the previous Management Plan, Waterton Lakes National Park is changing the Zone 1 designated areas to either Ecological or Culturally Sensitive Areas. This change is more aligned with current park management objectives, while at the same time affording high levels of ecosystem and cultural resource protection in these areas. For example, most areas designated as Zone 1 in the previous plan actually have some level of visitation to allow visitors to better understand the significance of those locations.

Zone II – Wilderness

Zone II designated areas protect large areas of natural landscape. Protecting ecosystems for minimal human interference is the key consideration. These areas offer visitors an opportunity to experience nature with few, if any, services and facilities. The visitor experience in these areas is focused on self-propelled activities. No motorized access is permitted.

The vast majority of Waterton Lakes National Park is managed as Zone II, encompassing 481.9 km² or 96.5% of the park. All lakes, with the exception of Middle Waterton Lake and Upper Waterton Lake, are designated Zone II.

Zone III – Natural Environment

Zone III designated areas consist of natural environments capable of supporting a range of visitor experiences. These areas enable visitors to enjoy and learn about the park's natural and cultural features through outdoor recreational and educational activities requiring minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. Motorized access is controlled.

Waterton Lakes National Park has 26 Zone III areas, encompassing a total area of 12.3 km² or 2.5% of the park. They include the Belly River Campground, the Bison Paddock, and most day-use areas outside the Waterton townsite. Upper and Middle Waterton Lakes are also Zone III areas.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

Zone IV designation applies to areas with a wide range of visitor use supported by facilities. Public motorized access is one of the primary characteristics of these zones.

Zone IV areas encompass 4.5 km², or 0.9% of the park. Zone IV areas are mostly composed of roads and heavily-used visitor areas outside the Waterton townsite, such as the Prince of Wales Hotel area, the golf course, and Crandell Campground.

Zone V - Park Services

Zone V areas contain a concentration of visitor services and support facilities. Major park operation and administrative functions are accommodated in this zone.

The Waterton townsite and the park's operational compound area are the only two Zone V areas in the park. They encompass a total area of 0.88 km², or 0.2% of the park.

Some changes in zoning from the 2010 Management Plan were made to offer certain sites better protection and also to update the spatial distribution of the different zones. Zoning changes occurred for approximately 12% of the park's total area, not including areas designated as Environmentally Sensitive or Culturally Sensitive (pg. 21-22). A summary of key zoning changes follows:

- All Zone I areas were transformed into Environmentally and Culturally Sensitive Areas to more accurately reflect the level of protection in place and visitor use of these significant areas.
- Large sections of the Blakiston Fan, previously designated Zone III or Zone IV, are now Zone II. Environmentally Sensitive Area designation has been added to half-moon hairstreak butterfly Critical Habitat.
- Belly River Campground changed from Zone IV to Zone III, covering only the physical area of the campground.
- Cameron Lake, previously designated Zone III, is now Zone II as public self-propelled watercraft are allowed while motorized boating activities are prohibited.
- Middle Waterton Lake and Upper Waterton Lake are modified from Zone IV to Zone III to reflect that public motorized boating activities are controlled which can help protect the aquatic ecosystem from invasive species.
- The park's operational compound and office areas are modified from Zone IV to Zone V.
- The Zone V area around the townsite has been revised to match the legislated boundary of the townsite. The townsite Zone V area is changing from approximately 0.86 km² to approximately 0.74 km². The subtracted 0.12 km² is designated as Zone II. The majority of the withdrawn area was on the west side of the townsite on the slopes of Bertha Mountain.
- Most day use areas outside of the townsite are changing designation from Zone IV to Zone III, reflecting rustic facilities.
- Highways remain Zone IV, with revised areas extending 25m from road centre compared to 100m from centre previously. This Zone IV area continues to encompass roads, ditches, and pullouts, without unnecessarily including forest and grassland areas.

8.2 Wilderness Area Declaration

Large tracts of protected wilderness are becoming scarce. From an ecological perspective, the importance of wilderness areas is their ability to support natural processes and to serve as benchmarks. The Minister

Responsible for Parks Canada may designate areas of a national park as wilderness areas under Section 14 of the *Canada National Parks Act*. The intent of legally designating a portion of a national park as wilderness is to maintain its wilderness character in perpetuity. Only activities that are unlikely to impair the wilderness character of the area may be authorized within the declared wilderness area of Waterton Lakes National Park. Public motorized access is not permitted. Infrastructure within declared wilderness is restricted to rudimentary facilities such as trails and campsites intended to support wilderness experiences.

In Waterton Lakes National Park, all declared wilderness areas established in 2000 by the *National Parks of Canada Wilderness Declaration Regulations* (SOR/2000 – 387) are encompassed by Zone II Wilderness areas.

DRAFT

9.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

All national park management plans are assessed through a strategic environmental assessment to understand the potential for cumulative effects. This understanding contributes to evidence-based decision-making that supports ecological integrity being maintained or restored over the life of the plan. The strategic environmental assessment of the Management Plan for Waterton Lakes National Park considered the potential impacts of climate change, local and regional activities around the park, an expected increase in visitation and proposals within the management plan. The strategic environmental assessment assessed the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including species at risk, forest vegetation, freshwater and grasslands, and habitat security and connectivity.

The management plan will result in many positive impacts on the environment, including the maintenance and improvement of ecological integrity within the park, collaborative initiatives to preserve habitat security and connectivity across the landscape and the development and implementation of strategies to lessen visitor impacts on the ecology of the park. In addition, the management plan identifies mitigations and adaptations for climate change and capitalizes on the potential for ecological restoration and research opportunities within the post Kenow Wildfire landscape.

To help manage cumulative effects to forest vegetation, freshwater ecosystems and grasslands, the park is implementing monitoring, active management and restoration programs. Examples include the restoration of five needle pines, invasive species prevention and management, and the planned aquatic systems restoration as part of the Conserving Waterton's Aquatic Communities program aiming to improve the ecological integrity of water bodies in the park.

Although the occupancy measure of large mammals is currently in good condition, habitat security and connectivity are particularly sensitive to increasing human pressures and vulnerable to cumulative effects. Increasing visitation along with facility development has the potential to impact habitat connectivity and connectivity within the park. In addition, while Waterton Lakes National Park provides important secure habitat areas and local corridors for connectivity, the park itself is not sufficiently large to maintain sensitive species with broad habitat ranges and requirements. The management plan identifies multiple objectives under key strategies 1 (Experiences True to Place), 3 (Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage for Future Generations) and 4 (Regional Connectivity and Landscapes) that focus on visitation management and continued collaborative partnerships to maintain habitat security and connectivity across the regional landscape. The Front Range Management Area strategy will further help to preserve key areas of secure habitat for sensitive and wide-ranging species such as grizzly bears.

Waterton Lakes National Park shares an international border with Glacier National Park (Montana, USA). Together, these two national parks form the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. The management plan was evaluated and found to protect the Outstanding Universal Value criteria and integrity – for which the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public will be consulted on the draft management plan and summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the strategic environmental assessment and management plan as appropriate.

The SEA was conducted in accordance with The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010) and facilitated an evaluation of how the management plan contributed to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Individual projects undertaken to implement management plan objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Impact Assessment Act*, or successor legislation; project approval would be granted through the planning permit process. The Management Plan supports the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals of Greening Government, Sustainably Managed Lands and Forests, Healthy Wildlife Populations, Connecting Canadians with Nature, and Safe and Healthy Communities.

Many positive environmental effects are expected and there are no negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plan.