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WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

Management Plan Summary



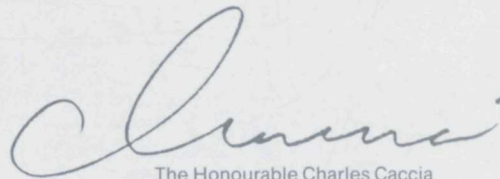
Foreword

This Plan Summary briefly describes the main decisions reached in the recently completed planning program for Wood Buffalo National Park. These decisions reflect the park's national and regional significance, while recognizing traditional and changing patterns of use, the National Parks Act, and Parks Canada Policy.

Public participation has been invaluable in clarifying the values and expectations of people interested in the future of this park. There has been an extensive exchange of ideas and information over the last few years. I believe this exchange of ideas and opinions has produced a much better plan for the park than would otherwise have been created.

In 1982, we made public a draft plan resulting from the revisions and consolidation of proposals presented earlier in the program. This plan was well received and the decisions presented here are essentially based on the draft plan and the discussion which followed.

I would like to thank the many people who participated in the planning for Wood Buffalo National Park, and assure you that we are committed to continue this open exchange in the planning, development, and management of the park.

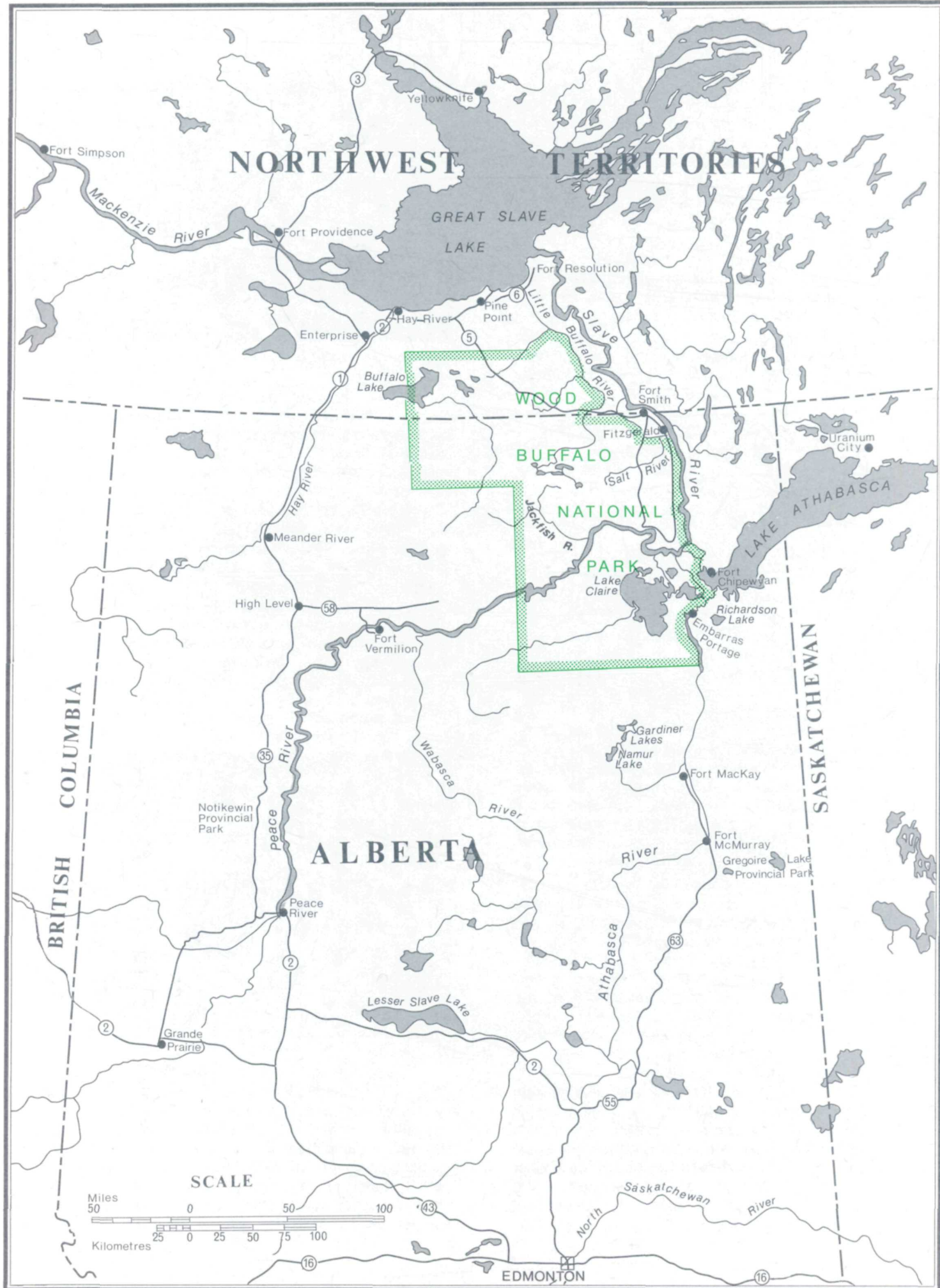


The Honourable Charles Caccia
Minister of the Environment

August 8, 1984

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1.0 Introduction

A management plan is a conceptual guide for the management and use of a national park. The plan defines the purpose of the park and serves as an expression of Parks Canada's policy for the park in its regional context. It contains management and operational objectives and the strategies for achieving desired results that are consistent with Parks Canada policies.

This plan for the management of Wood Buffalo National Park is the product of an extensive program of research, consultation and analysis. It has involved resource specialists, other federal, provincial and territorial government agencies, the general public, concerned interest groups and Parks Canada staff.

This management plan summary is intended to state concisely the salient decisions and proposals included as part of the management plan.

2.0 Park Purpose and Objectives Statement

2.1 Purpose of the Park in the National Parks System

The purpose of Wood Buffalo National Park is to protect an outstanding and representative example of the Northern Boreal Plains natural region and small portions of the Southern Boreal Plains and the Northwestern Boreal Uplands, and to enable present and future generations to continue to appreciate and experience the park's wilderness environment.

The park protects a very large example of the boreal forest of Canada as it has developed through time on the interior plains landscape. A full assemblage of wildlife and vegetation species and landscapes is represented within its boundaries. The collection of natural systems protected in the park is unique in the country in their number, extent and in the degree to which they are self-contained and self-perpetuating.

The park includes one of the largest freshwater deltas in the world, the Peace-Athabasca Delta. This great wetland contains over 4,800 sq. km of biologically productive shallow lakes, marshes, grasslands and forests. The delta provides spawning grounds for goldeye, walleye and other fish species, a nesting and staging area for hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and habitat for muskrat, beaver, wolves, moose and bald eagles, among other animals. The largest undisturbed grass and sedge meadows left in North America are protected there and constitute the prime bison range in the park.

The park contains the most extensive gypsum karstland known in the world. Where the gypsum in the bedrock has been dissolved by groundwater, solution caves and large collapse sinkholes have formed. An unusual hydrologic regime is evident in the karstlands and includes large sulphur and salt springs, underground rivers and swallow holes. A number of species of animal life are believed to be dependent on the karst formation for their survival.



Sinkhole—Angus Tower

A salt plain unique in Canada has formed in the eastern portion of the park. The area most strongly dominated by salt is 250 sq. km in size but even larger areas of the park are partially influenced by saline water. Cold springs deposit mineral salt on the mudflats and meadows of the plain in dry seasons. Mounds of salt a metre high may form where the springs emerge from the ground. In historical times, they provided natives, explorers and missionaries with much needed supplies of salt. Several plant species that require saline environments are found on these plains far from other growing sites such as marine shorelines.

The park was originally set aside to protect the last remaining herds of bison in Canada. They now form the largest free-roaming and self-regulating herd in the world. It also provides protection for the last natural nesting ground of the endangered whooping crane, the last nesting sites of the endangered peregrine falcon in Alberta and a full array of typical boreal wildlife species.



Whooping crane

At the southern and western boundaries of the park, the Birch and Caribou uplands rise over 500 metres above the general level of the park. The colder climate on the tops of these plateaux has resulted in a spruce-lichen tundra environment not protected elsewhere in the national park system. The slopes of the uplands are continuously eroding and now exhibit massive land slumps, large inactive alluvial fans and steep-sided creek gorges. In some areas,

beds of fossils have been exposed and include fish scale fossils of particular significance to geologists.

Little is known of the prehistory of the park. However, stone artifacts and flint implements have been found by archaeologists indicating that native peoples have used parts of the park for thousands of years. Men of European descent entered the area during the eighteenth century. The park region then passed through several developmental phases beginning with the exploitation of the fur trade, a northern resource development phase which included lumbering, commercial fishing and wildlife harvesting, and finally the modern phase of conservation and resource protection as exemplified by current park management policies. Man continues to play an important role in the park. Local natives still hunt, fish and trap within the park to provide for their cultural and domestic needs.

2.2 Park Objectives

Park objectives are specific definitions of management philosophy and intent which are prepared to provide direction for resource protection, public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment and regional integration.

2.3 Resource Protection Objectives

a) Natural Heritage Resources

Parks Canada will protect and preserve the expansive wilderness character of the park by ensuring the survival of all of its varied habitats, wildlife populations, vegetation communities, cultural resources and land and water systems. These include representative elements such as the extensive boreal forest ecosystems and unaltered watersheds and landform systems, and the nationally and internationally significant resources of the park such as free-roaming bison, the endangered whooping cranes, salt plains, gypsum karst and the Peace-Athabasca Delta. By protecting this rich array of heritage resources in their boreal plains wilderness setting, Parks Canada will ensure that the park remains, for all time, a good representative of the Northern Boreal Plains natural region of Canada.

b) Historic and Cultural Heritage Resources

Parks Canada will protect the cultural heritage resources of the park including archaeological and historic artifacts and sites related to prehistory of the park and the historic settlement and development of the region, so that the public will have the opportunity to understand and appreciate the park history. Parks Canada will also help to ensure the continuance of significant modern cultural activities in the park, in particular the hunting, fishing and trapping activities of local native residents, as they embody cultural values that are inherent to the character of the park.

2.4 Objectives for Public Appreciation, Understanding and Enjoyment of the Park

Parks Canada will provide appropriate opportunities for the public to appreciate, understand and enjoy the significant park resources and themes and to experience the ongoing natural processes and the wilderness qualities of the park. These include the delta, bison, whooping cranes, salt plains, karst features, traditional native resource harvesting activities and the backcountry wilderness in general.

Parks Canada will provide backcountry access opportunities, transportation corridor orientation and on-site facilities. All of these facilities will respect the preservation priority of the park.

2.5 Regional Integration Objective

Parks Canada will ensure that the planning, management and development of the park are as compatible as possible with local and regional concerns by:

a) Carefully integrating resource management activities with pertinent land management policies of the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Alberta.

b) Providing facilities and opportunities for access that complement developments and activities in the region and respond to both park needs and regional requirements, where practical.

c) Operating the park in ways that maximize the employment and economic benefits for the region.

d) Addressing the particular requirements of regional residents for year-round interpretation and recreation opportunities and for opportunities to be involved in relevant areas of park management.

3.0 Plan Decisions

The following sections summarize the major decisions and proposals contained in the park management plan. Land use zoning is discussed first as it serves as an overall guide to the use potential and resource protection requirements of the park.

3.1 Land Use Zoning

Land use zoning provides a framework for park management. It classifies park lands into different categories based on their need for protection and the opportunities they provide for park visitors. It sets limits on what uses can occur and where they can occur and it provides a general statement of management objectives for each zone and the subsequent management practices required to achieve those objectives.

There are five zones in the national park zoning system. Only four are applied in Wood Buffalo National Park. The use of the park services zone (zone V) is not appropriate in this park.

Zone I Special Preservation

The primary management objective of the special preservation zone is the protection of features or resources which are unique, rare or sensitive. Public access to these areas will be strictly controlled. The uses that will be permitted will be determined by the degree of fragility of the designated features. Nine zone I areas have been designated, comprising 10% of the park (Map I).

These areas include:

- 1) The whooping crane nesting area
- 2) The north arm of Lake Claire in the Peace-Athabasca Delta
- 3) The salt plains
- 4) The karst landscape in the Needle Lake area

- 5) Darough Creek meadows
- 6) The frontal slopes of the Caribou Mountains
- 7) Peregrine falcon nesting sites
- 8) Fossil beds
- 9) Peace Point and Lake One archaeological sites

The latter three zone I areas are not mapped due to their sensitivity and susceptibility to impairment which could be caused by unauthorized access.

Each zone I area will have its own specific management guidelines which will ensure the protection of its resources and features.



Salt plains

Zone II Wilderness

Lands designated as zone II will be maintained in a wilderness state. They are extensive areas which represent the natural history themes of the park. Only certain activities requiring limited visitor facilities appropriate to a wilderness experience will be permitted. Limits may be placed on the numbers of users to ensure the preservation of the wilderness character of zone II areas. Management actions will ensure that visitors are dispersed. Motorized access is not consistent with the objectives of the wilderness zone designation and will not be permitted.

The major portion of the park, approximately 86%, has been zoned as wilderness, in keeping with the objective of maintaining the wilderness character of the park.



Shield topography

Zone III Natural Environment

Zone III park lands are those which can accommodate low density outdoor activities. Modest visitor facilities may be developed in such zones. Non-motorized access or public transit are the preferred modes of access. Controlled access by private vehicles is only permitted where it has traditionally been allowed in the past.

This zone designation is applied to an access corridor through the Peace-Athabasca Delta, which will be used primarily by guides licenced by the park. The zone III designation comprises about 3% of the park area.

Zone IV Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation zones are areas of limited extent which can accommodate a broad range of outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities in ways that respect the natural landscape. Motorized access is permissible.

In Wood Buffalo National Park this zone designation is applied to all major rivers and channels, the Highway 5 corridor and adjacent developed areas, the loop road and associated facilities, the Pine Lake recreation area, the Peace Point road terminus, the salt plains viewpoint, the Parson's Lake Road and the potential road corridor along the Peace River.

The area included in this zone comprises 1% of the park area and reflects the limited capability of the resources of the park to sustain recreational use of an intensity and type warranting the zone IV designation.

The limited zone IV designation also reflects the importance of limiting and focusing visitor use and facility development to ensure the maintenance of the wilderness character of the park.

Non-Conforming Uses

Certain land uses and activities in Wood Buffalo National Park are not consistent with the current objectives of the park or with the overall policies of Parks Canada. Such activities and land uses are considered as non-conforming in terms of the zoning plan, and will be subject to special management arrangements. The long-term objective will be to phase out these uses.

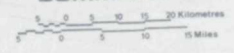


Timber operations—timber berth no. 408



**WOOD
BUFFALO
NATIONAL
PARK**

**MANAGEMENT PLAN
SUMMARY**



MAP 1

ZONING

LEGEND

-  **ZONE ONE
SPECIAL PRESERVATION**
-  **ZONE TWO
WILDERNESS**
-  **ZONE THREE
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**
-  **ZONE FOUR
RECREATION**

Three land uses are classified as non-conforming.

These are:

1. Timber berth no. 408 and commercial timber extraction
2. The community of Garden Creek
3. The community at Peace Point

Zoning and Park Operations

Certain park operations and administrative activities, such as patrols in motorized vehicles and fire management activities, do not comply with certain requirements of the zone designations. These activities are essential for effective park management and are accommodated by the zoning plan as non-conforming uses.

Zoning and Traditional Resource Harvesting

Traditional resource harvesting activities are likewise accommodated by the zoning plan. Specific measures for the management of this activity are presented in the resource conservation and management section of the park plan.

3.2 Resource Conservation

3.2.1 Objectives

The following objectives will guide the resource management program:

I) General Resource Management

- to ensure that the park remains an integral example of the northern boreal plains living system by allowing natural forces and processes that have created the park as it is today to continue to play their part in the maintenance and natural evolution of the wilderness of the park.

II) Vegetation

- to maintain the existing wide variety of vegetation communities of the park in an evolving state and to protect and manage significant, endangered, or sensitive vegetation resources, such as salt plains and grassland communities, to ensure their continued survival.

III) Wildlife

- to maintain the species diversity and general population levels of park wildlife including mammals, birds and other fauna and to manage and protect significant, endangered or sensitive wildlife species such as bison, whooping cranes, peregrine falcons and red-sided garter snakes so as to ensure their continued survival and to increase their numbers and well-being, when resource monitoring indicates this to be necessary.

IV) Landforms

- to ensure that the landforming processes continue to function and create the landform features that characterize the park, such as karst features, saline flats and erosional features of the cretaceous highlands of the park. Also, to provide special protection to particularly significant landform features such as sulphur springs, salt deposits and gypsum caves to ensure that they do not deteriorate through the influence of man.

V) Historic Resources

- to carry out historical and archaeological research to provide a comprehensive inventory of cultural resources and to protect historical and cultural resources through analytical and artifact conservation processes.

VI) Modern Cultural Activities

- to develop an improved working relationship between the park's resource protection mandate and the resource harvesting activities of local residents to ensure that the cultural, traditional ties between man and the land on the northern boreal plains remain a part of the character of the park.

VII) Future Studies and Plans

- to carry out a comprehensive, systematic and rigorous program of park resource management and conservation.

3.2.2 General Program Guidelines

The types of activities and programs which will be undertaken to achieve the objectives for resource management during the period of the plan can be characterized by the following general principles:

a) Research and monitoring of natural processes will receive greater attention so as to better identify issues and problem areas warranting action, to evaluate the effectiveness of management actions and generally to develop an increased awareness of the natural environment of the park, as well as man's impact on it.

b) Programs and management measures in general will recognize more strongly the conservation mandate of the agency. Active resource management involving manipulation of naturally occurring processes such as fire and disease will take place only when monitoring has shown that such action is necessary.

c) Resource management activities will continue to recognize adjacent land uses and management programs and will continue to accommodate traditional resource uses. New management techniques, in keeping with the management philosophy of minimal interference to natural processes, will be introduced with the objective of reducing the negative impacts of such resource harvesting activities on park resources.

d) Detailed direction for the park resource management program will be provided by the Natural Resource Management Process within the context of the objectives and guidelines included in the park management plan.

3.2.3 Management Strategies

I) Vegetation Management

For the life of the plan, vegetation resource management activities will focus primarily on forest resources. Plan specifics include:

a) The maintenance of the current policy of "modified fire exclusion" which involves forest fire suppression based on a priority fire fighting zone system until required information and systems are in place to effect a fire management program more oriented to natural processes.

b) The initiation of a vegetation monitoring program to improve Parks Canada's understanding of changing resource conditions and natural processes in the park.

c) The preparation of a plan that will identify specific objectives for vegetation management and the strategies for achieving those objectives.

d) The preparation of a fire management plan specifying procedures and programs to achieve the long-term objectives for vegetation management.

e) The completion of a fire history study to determine forest fire intervals and burn patterns and to contribute to the preparation of a vegetation management plan.

f) The timber berth, located along the Peace River adjacent to the west park boundary, will be managed on the basis of 4 five-year forest management plans which will describe the harvesting program for the period. These plans will be complemented by annual operating plans. The Environmental Assessment and Review Process will be applied to both types of plans.



Fire lookout tower

Other measures will be used in keeping with the principles of environmentally sound forest management, including the withdrawal of certain areas from harvest to protect significant resources, and the use of forestry practices which will minimize impact and encourage regeneration.

The timber berth lease will expire in 2002 and will not be renewed.

II) Wildlife Management

The following plan decisions will guide management actions for a number of specific wildlife management issues. These general decisions will be supplemented by individual resource management plans which will be prepared as part of the implementation of the park plan.

a) Resource Harvesting

Resource harvesting activities including hunting and trapping of selected species, domestic fishing in non-stocked waters, residence on park lands and access and travel required to carry out the above activities will continue to be permitted. This activity will continue to be regulated and controlled by the provisions of the Wood Buffalo National Park Game Regulations. Park hunters and trappers will be consulted when amendments are made to the regulations.

To improve the management of the resource harvesting activity, the following measures will be implemented:

- 1) areas of no resource use will be designated. The designation of these protection zones will help achieve the resource conservation and regional integration objectives of the park and will be designated by mutual agreement between Parks Canada and park hunters and trappers;
- 2) improved methods and techniques of assessing wildlife harvests and population levels will be instituted to permit more effective management of hunting and trapping activities; and
- 3) the involvement of park hunters and trappers in an advisory capacity in the resource management program will be increased.



Park trapper

b) Bison Management

The objective for the management of bison will be to allow natural processes to regulate herd size unless population levels, which will be monitored, reach a point where the long-term survival of the herd is endangered.

The following plan provisions will guide bison management:

- 1) bison will remain a fully protected species;
- 2) resource monitoring of the bison herd will be improved;
- 3) Parks Canada will undertake discussions with Agriculture Canada and the Governments of Alberta and the Northwest

Territories with the intent of designating buffer zones adjacent to the park where livestock operations will be prohibited. This measure will reduce the risk of contact and disease transmission from bison to domestic stock; and

4) research programs on disease, herd dynamics and behaviour will be implemented. Research techniques will be utilized that will not result in stress on the herd.



Bison herd—Peace-Athabasca Delta

c) Whooping Cranes

The objective for resource management will be to increase the population of this endangered species.

Management activities will be guided by the following plan decisions:

1) The Canadian Wildlife Service in co-operation with Parks Canada will continue its program of active resource management.

2) In addition to being a zone I special preservation area, the breeding area will be designated as a restricted area under the terms of the National Parks General Regulations and will remain as a priority zone for fire suppression;

3) Interpretive programs will be developed to provide opportunities for visitors and local residents to become aware of the whooping crane conservation program.

d) Fisheries Management

The Pine Lake trout stocking program will be continued. The current program will be studied to determine why it has not achieved a greater degree of success to date. Possible future options will be explored including the stocking of different species of fish.

Commercial fishing will not be permitted as it conflicts with Parks Canada's policies and park objectives.

III) Environmental Monitoring

Parks Canada will increase its environmental monitoring activities to better assess conditions in the park such as water quality and vegetation changes, as they are important indicators of the general health of the park environment. Where desirable, this work may be carried out jointly with other federal and provincial agencies.

Parks Canada will participate as a member of the interdisciplinary Federal-Provincial Peace-Athabasca Delta Implementation Committee with the intent of developing successful co-operative management strategies for the delta.

IV) Cultural Resource Management

The management of cultural resources will involve inventory programs and monitoring activities to ensure archaeological and historical resources are preserved and protected. Interpretive programs based on cultural resource themes will also be developed to improve public understanding of the history of the region.

The most significant cultural resource is in the Peace Point area which is presently involved in a land claims process. Parks Canada will work co-operatively with native residents to ensure that the resource is protected and interpreted to the public.

3.3 Public Appreciation and Understanding of the Park

3.3.1 Objective

The objective for interpretation will be to provide opportunities to the public to become aware of the significance of the park, the role that it plays in the national park system, its management policies and each of the ten park interpretation themes: 1) Ecology of the Boreal Plains, 2) Bison, 3) The Whooping Crane, 4) Man on the Boreal Plains, 5) Boreal Plains Physiography, 6) The Delta, 7) Karst, 8) Salt, 9) Water, and 10) The Size of the Park.

Current management issues as well as topics related to the regional impact of the park, its influence on tourism and its national and international context will be addressed.

3.3.2 Management Strategies

I) Operation of the Interpretation Program

Orientation facilities in Fort Smith and Fort Chipewyan and the preparation of information packages for distribution by mail will be utilized as the prime means of orienting visitors to the park;

Programs given by park interpretive staff, including field events and theatre presentations at the Pine Lake recreation area, will be emphasized during the summer months and will be available to the public on demand in the spring and autumn;

Extension programming in schools in the region will occur in winter months;

Interpretation and visitor services programs will continue as a joint operation;

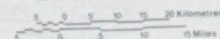
The interpretive program will continue to involve local residents through staffing and program content decisions; and

Park interpretive staff will continue to work closely with park licenced guides to ensure park visitors using the services of a guide receive accurate information and have an opportunity to develop an awareness and appreciation of the park and its resources.



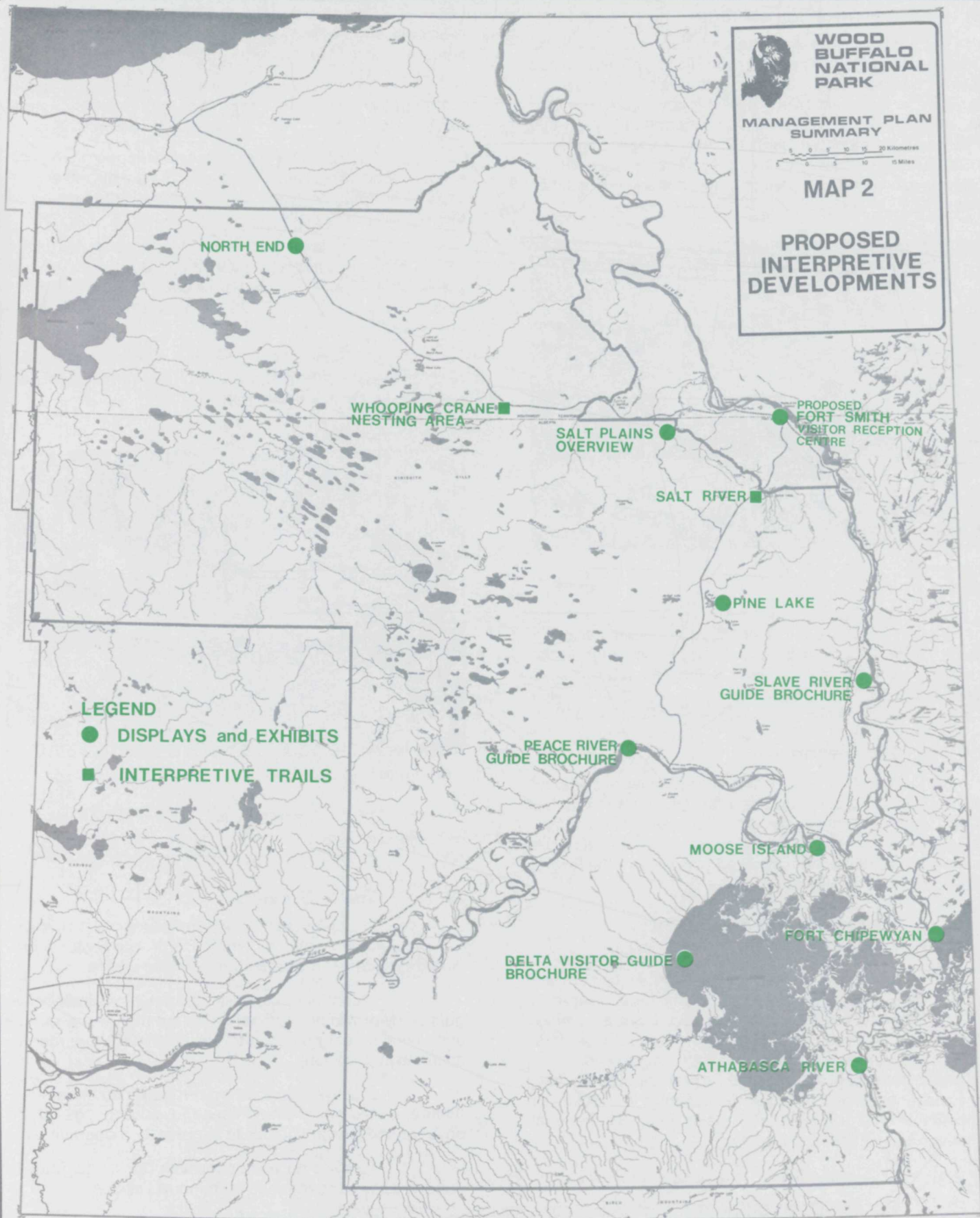
**WOOD
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**MANAGEMENT PLAN
SUMMARY**



MAP 2

**PROPOSED
INTERPRETIVE
DEVELOPMENTS**



II) Interpretive Facilities

Orientation and interpretation displays will be developed at the north park entry on Highway 5 near Angus Tower, at the salt plains overview, at the Salt River crossing, at Pine Lake, Moose Island, Fort Chipewyan and on the Athabasca River at Embarras. Self-conducting interpretive trails will be developed at the Salt River crossing and adjacent to the whooping crane nesting area. Special care will be taken in designing, constructing and operating this latter facility.



Salt plains

A major visitor reception area, housing an interpretation theatre and display area, will be included in the new park administration complex at Fort Smith. It will serve a major role in orienting visitors to the park, and will provide a site for interpretive displays and presentations (Map 2).

III) Publications

A visitor guide to the Peace-Athabasca Delta will be produced to provide on-site interpretation and orientation to visitors, and to be used in the park extension program. Other publications will be produced to interpret travel routes in the park including the Highway 5 corridor and the Peace, Slave and Athabasca rivers.

3.4 Visitor Use and Enjoyment

3.4.1 Objective

The objective for public use and enjoyment will be to develop and operate a system of facilities and services to provide the appropriate recreation, access and accommodation opportunities for both local residents and park visitors. These developments will be compatible with the wilderness character of the park and its resource protection objectives. The location of the facilities will recognize the policy of encouraging the development of major facilities in regional communities whenever possible.

3.4.2 Management Strategies

I) Facility Development

The following visitor facilities will be developed to supplement existing visitor services and facilities:

Primitive camping facilities will be developed at the south end of Pine Lake, at Rainbow Lakes and in the Needle Lake area in the north end of the park;

Primitive campsites will also be designated in a number of areas in the Peace-Athabasca Delta to channel use to those areas capable of supporting such activities;

New day-use sites will be developed on the east shore of Pine Lake. These will be accessible by trail or boat and will complement the existing day-use area located on the west side of the lake;

A boat launch will be constructed at Moose Island. The existing launch ramp at Hay Camp will be improved and a new launch ramp may be developed at Fort Fitzgerald as a co-operative project with other federal and provincial agencies;

Facilities at the Pine Lake Recreation area will be improved to strengthen this area's role as the primary recreation zone in the park (Map 3); and



Pine Lake day-use area

The 16-lot cottage subdivision at Pine Lake will be retained through an extension of tenure for a limited period and will be subject to a number of terms and conditions.

II) Visitor Services

In addition to the above measures, Parks Canada will encourage the involvement of the private sector in providing services to visitors by the following means:

a) continuing to assist existing and prospective guides by providing information on the park, its resources and management practices to ensure that visitors receive accurate information;

b) actively supporting the development of additional escorted winter expeditions and tours by dog sled and encouraging existing guides to improve their operations;

c) providing the opportunity for an outfitter to operate a canoe concession at Rainbow Lakes;

d) encouraging escorted river trips;

e) encouraging escorted aircraft overflights;



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**MANAGEMENT PLAN
SUMMARY**

0 5 10 15 20 Kilometres
0 5 10 15 Miles

MAP 3

**PROPOSED
VISITOR
FACILITIES**

Needle
Lake

Rainbow
Lakes

Pine
Lake

Hay
Camp

Moose
Island

LEGEND

-  PRIMITIVE CAMPGROUND
-  BOAT LAUNCH
-  NEW DAY-USE SITES

f) encouraging the development of commercial accommodation and other associated visitor facilities and services in communities adjacent to the park; and

g) working co-operatively with other governments and agencies and local groups and associations by participating in a regional tourism study and developing and distributing publications and other interpretive material to associations and to the public in order to promote use of the park and to foster an understanding and appreciation of its resources and its objectives.



Boating—Rivière des Rochers

III) Access and Circulation

Access to and circulation within national parks is intended to provide visitors with opportunities for understanding and enjoyment. The circulation system in Wood Buffalo National Park, however, also serves a significant role in providing access to regional communities and functions as a component in the regional transportation network. Elements of the system include seasonal and all-weather roads, trails, aircraft and water-based transport. Users include regional residents, park visitors, hunters and trappers as well as park personnel.

a) Roads

Plan proposals for road development focus primarily on the improvement of existing roads to ensure that they are serviceable, safe and contribute to visitor enjoyment. Provision is also made for the development of new roads which will complement the existing park road system and the regional road network (Map 4).

Park Loop Road

The park loop road will be improved and upgraded to ensure its continued serviceability and to provide improved opportunities for visitor travel.

Highway 5

Parks Canada will support an initiative of the Government of the Northwest Territories to apply a hard surface to Highway 5, the major access route to the park, to improve safety and enhance visitor enjoyment.

Peace River Road

In terms of new road development, Parks Canada accepts in principle the construction of a road linking Alberta Highway 58 to the existing park loop road at Peace

Point in view of its potential importance as a component of the regional transportation network. Parks Canada will not participate financially in the construction or future maintenance of the road, as it is not required for park purposes, but may provide funds for design assistance and the development of modest visitor facilities in the travel corridor. A decision to undertake construction of the road would recognize the impact of the road on Garden Creek, the requirements of the Environmental Assessment and Review Process and the results of other technical and engineering studies.

Fort Chipewyan Winter Road

The winter road to Fort Chipewyan will be retained and minor improvements made as required. Parks Canada would support a proposal to relocate this road outside the park, should one be made by Alberta Transportation.

Facility Access Roads

Spur roads providing access to areas or facilities adjacent to the main road corridors will be maintained at their current standards, with the exception of the north portion of the Parsons Lake road. It will receive minor upgrading to improve access to the proposed interpretive display adjacent to the salt plains.



Parsons Lake road

b) Trail Access

The plan proposals focus on maintaining and upgrading the existing trail network in the Salt River-Parsons Lake Road area of the park, and the development of new trails to serve specific areas or facilities. Trail construction will be limited and of a primitive nature. Natural hiking routes, such as bison migration trails, will be used where practical.

The Pine Lake shoreline trail will be extended to the east side of the lake.

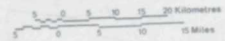
A short interpretive trail in the area adjacent to the whooping crane nesting area will be developed to provide visitors with an opportunity to view areas similar to the nesting habitat and obtain an appreciation of the conservation measures undertaken to ensure the survival of this species. Special care will be taken in designing, constructing and operating the trail to avoid negative impacts on the birds. If any negative impacts are identified, the facility will be closed to public use.

The salt plains-Rainbow Lakes-Grosbeak Lake area will continue to be the focus of trail development. Winter



**WOOD
BUFFALO
NATIONAL
PARK**

**MANAGEMENT PLAN
SUMMARY**



MAP 4

ROADS/ACCESS

HIGHWAY 5
-HARD SURFACING / PAVING

2.

4.

3.

1.

LOOP ROAD
-UPGRADED

TRAIL DEVELOPMENTS

- 1.-EAST SIDE OF PINE LAKE
- 2.-SALT PLAINS
- 3.-GROSBEAK LAKE
- 4.-RAINBOW LAKES AREA

PEACE RIVER ROAD
-CONCEPT ACCEPTED

**WINTER ROAD CONCEPT
FOR RELOCATION
ACCEPTED**

use of trails in this area will be encouraged and the Salt River picnic site will provide a trailhead facility to support this winter use.

Existing tracks, cutlines and abandoned roads which provide access to various areas of the park, such as the Sweetgrass area in the Peace-Athabasca Delta, will also serve as hiking trails.

(c) Water Access

Watercraft historically have been used in the park because of its many rivers and lakes. Boating is still an ideal way of exploring and travelling in the park. Parks Canada will strengthen the role of water access in the park by:

- constructing or upgrading a number of boat launch ramps at various locations in the park (Hay Camp, Moose Island, Fort Fitzgerald); and
- preparing interpretive/navigation guidebooks in conjunction with local residents and the Department of Transport to encourage the use of park waterways. One of these guidebooks will be a visitor's guide to the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Others will provide interpretive and navigational information for the major rivers of the park.

(d) Air Access

Due to the park's size and resource characteristics, travel by light aircraft is an appropriate mode of access. However, the protection of park resources requires air access be closely controlled.

Parks Canada will control and regulate the use of aircraft to the extent of its jurisdiction and mandate. Additional measures to improve the regulation and control of this activity will be pursued in discussions with the Department of Transport.

The Garden Creek landing strip will remain as the sole formally designated landing strip in the park.

Landings by fixed wing float-equipped aircraft, either by the general public for the purpose of experiencing the park, or to enable park trappers to gain access to registered trapping areas in the interior of the park, will be permitted subject to certain limitations and conditions. Air access by members of the general public will occur, preferably in the company of a guide licenced by Parks Canada and holding a valid backcountry use permit. Air access by hunters and trappers will continue to be controlled by the provisions of the Wood Buffalo National Park Game Regulations. The water bodies where landings may be permitted will be selected and designated by the Superintendent based on an assessment of a number of factors including resource protection requirements, visitor safety, traditional resource harvesting activities, environmental conditions, interpretive and visitor use potential and distance from park roads.

(e) Off-Highway Use of Motorized Vehicles

The zoning plan defines general management guidelines for the off-highway use of motorized transport in the park. More specific directions for such access are outlined below.

The use of oversnow vehicles for recreational purposes is prohibited at present. Their use will continue to be prohibited in light of opportunities for use outside the park, in and adjacent to communities in the region.

The use of oversnow vehicles by trappers engaged in trapping activities is permitted and will continue to be permitted. Such use will continue to be governed by the Wood Buffalo National Park Game Regulations.

All-terrain vehicles will be restricted to public roads and will be licenced and insured according to the requirements of the province or territory in which they are being operated. The off-road use of such vehicles will not be permitted.

The use of motorized means of access for park operational purposes will be sanctioned to permit patrols by motorized means and fire fighting activities. These activities are essential to effective park management.

3.5 Administration and Operations

3.5.1 Park Operations

Parks Canada will improve the effectiveness of its park management operations and the services it provides to park visitors and local residents. Improvements will be achieved in a number of ways:



Garden Creek settlement

- Fort Smith will continue to be the main administrative centre for park operations. A new administration/visitor reception and fire control office complex for the park will be constructed in the town;

- a new warden station will be constructed at Garden Creek to facilitate the carrying out of resource management activities in this area of the park;

- improvements will be made to the area office in Fort Chipewyan to permit this office to carry out its role more effectively. Proposed developments include a new garage and workshop and significant improvements to staff housing; and

- the buildings at Hay Camp and Sweetgrass Station will be made available for use by qualified groups involved in outdoor education or similar programs. Minor improvements will be made to these buildings to make them more suitable for this use.

3.5.2 Administration of Communities

Garden Creek

To facilitate more effective administration of the Garden Creek community, Parks Canada will enter into an interim agreement with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which will define responsibilities and jurisdictions for management. This will enable both agencies to more effectively address and resolve issues which arise due to the evolving nature of the community.

The settlement will remain on national park land. However, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will assume major responsibility for the provision of municipal and social services.

As a longer term management measure, Parks Canada will conduct discussions with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the native band and the Government of Alberta with the intent of altering the park boundary to place the community outside the park. This arrangement will free the community from constraints imposed by its location on National Park lands.

Peace Point Land Claims

The park is subject to land claims arising out of Treaty 8. Parks Canada will work in conjunction with the Office of Native Claims to secure an equitable settlement of the outstanding claim. Efforts will be directed towards a claim settlement that involves compensation, guarantees of traditional resource harvesting privileges and economic development provisions for the band. This approach will respond to the aspirations of the native band and will ensure that the integrity of the park is maintained.

3.6 Boundary Adjustments

The alignment of the existing boundary presents several operational problems. These include boundary lines defined by physical features which are difficult to recognize, and lakes divided by the boundary which results in multiple jurisdictions on a single water body. An additional consideration is whether the park protects the most valuable resources in the region or if there are areas which, while valuable and needed for park purposes, could nevertheless be exchanged for even more valuable and significant lands.

To resolve operational issues related to boundaries, four minor adjustments will be addressed in negotiations with other governments. The following changes will be pursued:

a) realignment of the boundary in the Lobstick Creek-Salt River area, which at present follows the 60th parallel, to eliminate the current problem created by Highway 5 passing in and out of the park repeatedly over a short distance;

b) excisement of the small southern portion of Sandy Lake, which currently is included within the park, to permit the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to exercise jurisdiction over the complete lake surface;

c) the addition of the western portion of Buffalo Lake to the park to simplify management by bringing the lake under a single jurisdiction; and

d) the designation of a fixed and easily identifiable boundary between the Embarras River and Rivière des Rochers and along the shoreline of Lake Athabasca to the southwest of Fort Chipewyan.

Major boundary changes, to improve the effectiveness of the park in representing the natural region, would involve sizeable blocks of land. Four candidate areas have been identified (map 5) as the focus of future boundary discussions. These are:

- the Buffalo River Area
- the Caribou Mountains, west of the park

- the Birch Mountains
- an area of the park, centred on the Peace River, adjacent to the west boundary (Garden Creek block)

Formal negotiations to resolve major boundary changes would be preceded by joint studies to inventory in detail the resource values of the candidate areas. Local residents will also be consulted on major boundary changes.

Boundary adjustments of a major nature, to improve the effectiveness of the park in representing the northern boreal plains natural region, will be accomplished through negotiations with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Province of Alberta. Such negotiations will be initiated upon a clear expression of interest from one of these governments. These land exchanges, if realized, essentially would result in the park remaining at its current size, however, the boundaries would be altered from those which exist now.

3.7 Slave River Dam Proposal

The development of the proposed hydro project on the Slave River downstream from the park could have a significant influence on the resources of the park. Parks Canada's position on this proposed development is as follows:

(a) the perpetuation of the environmental resources of the park, and the Peace-Athabasca Delta in particular, is of great importance;

(b) flooding of park lands in the Peace-Athabasca Delta, or any associated negative impact that may result from a dam being constructed on the Slave River, cannot be accepted;

(c) no changes to the boundaries of the park to excise critical delta lands that may be flooded will be permitted. Parliamentary approval which is required to effect such action will not be sought; and

(d) Parks Canada will continue to provide input to, and participate in, the Environmental Assessment and Review Process, so the full impact of any dam on park resources and the region can be identified.



Rapids on the Slave River

3.8 Regional Integration

Parks Canada recognizes that Wood Buffalo National Park directly affects the social and economic life of residents of the surrounding region and is aware of the historical dependence of regional residents on the resources of the park.

Parks Canada will strive to plan, operate and develop the park in ways which will be beneficial to, and which will ensure the best possible integration with, the surrounding region. Existing practices which contribute to a positive impact will be retained and improved and new measures which will result in a positive socio-economic and physical impact will be introduced. The following range of techniques will be utilized to help achieve regional integration objectives.

Whenever possible, residents in regional communities will be given preference regarding employment opportunities with the park. Programs to provide opportunities to permit development of job skills will continue to be provided.

Parks Canada will utilize local business services to the greatest degree possible where price, delivery capability and quality are competitive.

The park will operate its visitor services activity in ways which will support the local private sector tourist industry. A training and evaluation program for park outfitters, which will satisfy both Parks Canada's requirements and those of other governments with responsibility for adjacent lands, will be established. Co-operative and volunteer

arrangements with organizations and individuals will be developed to involve local residents in park operations.

Whenever possible, Parks Canada will locate and design all new park facilities in ways that maximize their positive impact on regional tourism and economic developments.

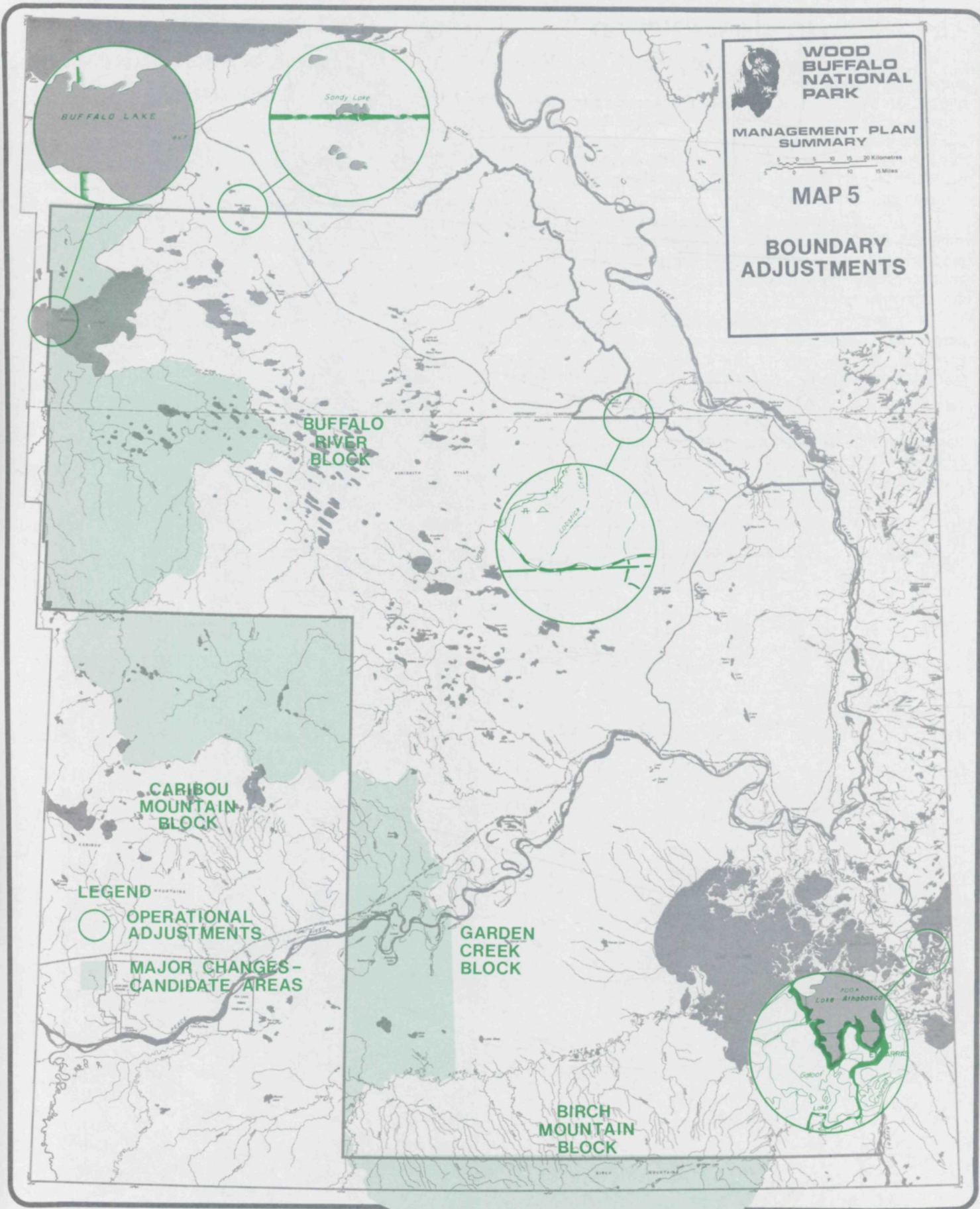
Parks Canada recognizes that the park has a direct and immediate impact on the lives of local residents. The particular requirements of local residents, such as day-use facilities and interpretive programs for schools, will continue to be provided so that they may enjoy the park throughout the year and gain an understanding of its resources and related management policies.

Parks Canada will provide opportunities for regional residents to become aware of, and discuss significant park development and management issues and decisions, by holding public meetings or by publicizing such information as required.

Parks Canada will ensure that the management of park resources is conducted in ways that are well integrated with regional resource management programs by maintaining the Cooperative Fire Management Agreement with Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Government of Alberta, by continuing to seek input from the Alberta Forestry Service concerning timber berth management, and by holding meetings with pertinent staff members of the Alberta and Northwest Territories governments to ensure that the harvesting of wildlife in the region is carried out in a consistent fashion through the co-ordination of quotas and seasons.



Park wardens and park trapper



4.0 Plan Implementation

The management plan constitutes a framework within which subsequent management, detailed planning and research will take place. It is intended to remain in effect for a period of fifteen years. The plan indicates policy directions that are to be followed in the day-to-day operation and management of the park and will serve as a context for annual work plans which will specify the actual tasks to be undertaken and the anticipated results.

Implementation will take place according to a schedule which assigns relative priority to the various plan proposals. More specific direction will be provided in an implementation strategy which will be prepared to supplement the management plan.

A socio-economic impact statement prepared as part of the management planning program will also assist Parks Canada in implementing the management plan in ways that are sensitive to local concerns.

Each year Parks Canada will report on the progress made towards implementing the plan. The management plan will be reviewed periodically to permit adjustments to be made to accommodate changed circumstances and to address and resolve new issues.

The overall implementation of the plan is dependent on the financial resources made available to Parks Canada.

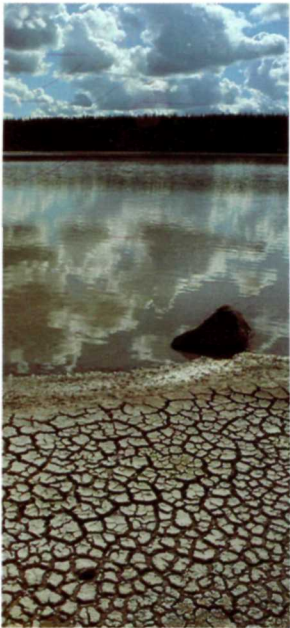
5.0 Environmental and Socio-Economic Review and Assessment

Parks Canada, as a federal agency, is required to comply with the requirements of the cabinet directive to carry out the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process. As a conservation agency it has an additional responsibility to ensure that the environmental effects of its actions are assessed and minimized.

The environmental assessment and review process has been applied at various stages throughout the management planning program. Alternative plan concepts were screened to determine environmental effects, the draft management plan was reviewed to assess environmental impacts and an environmental screening of the park management plan has been prepared.

The decisions contained in the management plan reflect the results of those reviews. In addition, as proposals and plan provisions become better defined, they will be reviewed and assessed again.

Parks Canada's policy, in addition to outlining requirements for environmental assessment, also notes the need for a review of socio-economic implications of proposed actions. A socio-economic review has been conducted as part of the planning program to determine the anticipated socio-economic impact of the plan and has influenced the proposals included in the plan. It will also be used as a reference document during the implementation of the management plan.



3



1



2



4



5



6



7

1. Natives still hunt and trap in the park.
2. Free-roaming bison.
3. Grosbeak Lake.
4. Gypsum anticline in the karstland.
5. Ptarmigans match the snow in winter.
6. Whooping crane nesting area.
7. The park contains vast areas of muskeg.

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6.0 Evaluation of the Park Planning/Public Participation Program

Parks Canada is interested in your opinion of the Wood Buffalo National Park Planning Program. The information we collect will be used in designing future public participation programs for National Parks. Please answer the following questions, checking as many boxes as applicable.

1. How did you learn of the Wood Buffalo planning program?

- ☐ friend/relative ☐ poster
☐ newspaper advertisement ☐ organization newsletter
or meeting
☐ radio announcement ☐ other (please specify)

2. What best describes your involvement in the Wood Buffalo program?

- ☐ presented a written brief ☐ returned a newsletter with
your comments included
☐ wrote a letter
☐ attended public meetings ☐ other (please specify)
-
-

3. Which of the following best describes your reason for getting involved in the Wood Buffalo program?

- ☐ to contribute to the future of Wood Buffalo National Park.
☐ have visited the Park OR ☐ plan to visit the Park.
☐ not satisfied with Parks Canada's management of the Park?
☐ curious about Wood Buffalo National Park.
☐ other (please specify) _____

4. Do you feel that your involvement contributed to the final plan?

5. How can we improve our public documents?

- ☐ shorten, by providing less detail.
☐ lengthen, by increasing detail.
☐ more graphics and pictures.
☐ fewer graphics and pictures.
☐ other (please specify) _____
-
-
-

6. How can Parks Canada improve public participation programs for future planning exercises? _____

Thank you.

Ce résumé de plan
est également disponible en
français.

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and the Minister of Supply
and Services Canada, 1984

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Canada

National Parks
Centennial



Centenaire des
parcs nationaux

1885-1985:

100 years of Heritage Conservation

Canada's first national park was
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Today there are national parks and
national historic parks in every province
and territory. The National Parks
Centennial is an occasion to renew our
commitment to preserve examples of
our heritage unimpaired for the benefit
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