

Gladys Lake

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ECOLOGICAL RESERVES COLLECTION
GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
VICTORIA, B. C.
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SPATSIZI PLATEAU WILDERNESS PARK
MANAGEMENT POLICIES
OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

PARKS BRANCH
MINISTRY OF RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
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GOALS FOR THE PARK

G O A L S

Wilderness Recreation

Spatsizi Park is dedicated to the provision of wilderness recreational experiences.

Wilderness experiences refer to the benefits of expansive solitude, challenge, space, time and unity with nature derived from unmanipulated landscapes. Wilderness recreation includes the provision of opportunities for hiking, horse travel, canoeing and river travel, viewing, photography, hunting and fishing and associated resource-based, non-mechanical activities.

Development in Spatsizi will be limited to the minimum requirements to support primitive means of travel and use. Management will ensure the maintenance of a self-perpetuating natural environment and high quality, low density recreational opportunities for visitors.

Wilderness Conservation

Spatsizi Park is dedicated to the conservation of the natural processes of evolution of its life and landforms.

Recognition is given within this goal to the sensitive management of recreational uses in a manner which does not alter natural evolutionary trends.

Recognition is also given to the inherent educational and scientific values of Spatsizi Park as a benchmark of normality in the biological and earthsciences, as an area exhibiting a diversity of plant and animal communities in which natural selection is the primary influence on species and community structures. hunting?

Management Style

The uniqueness and sensitivity of Spatsizi Park dictates that the management of the area should be conservation-based. This is essential in two respects. Rapid encouragement of recreational use and development would inevitably pose problems because of lack of management knowledge and expertise. The accumulation of knowledge and expertise is best gained through time. Secondly, if the natural qualities of the area are to receive adequate protection, care must be taken to ensure that consumptive uses which have impacts on the evolutionary aspects of the environment are on the conservative side, lest such uses alter that environment before adequate knowledge of natural processes is gained. The accumulation of such knowledge requires time.

The significance of Spatsizi within the Provincial park system is reflected in the interest and concerns which led to its establishment and the continuing demonstrated interest in its management. It appears, therefore, that its management must be an open process, a process which provides for adequate public information, as well as for a forum for resolving controversial or conflicting management interests of the public.

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

LAND MANAGEMENT

Policy Statement: Parklands are held as a public trust. No sale or leasing of lands for private purposes will be permitted within Spatsizi Park. Management will permit and protect the natural evolution of vegetation and landforms. Influences external to the park will be carefully monitored to ensure the protection and continuation of values within the park.

Management Strategies

1. Existing alienations: Current policies in Provincial parks are directed towards the ultimate acquisition of all inholdings. There are two inholdings in Spatsizi Park and the following management options exist:-

(a) Paish Ventures Limited - 207 Acres

Option #1 - leave as is.

Discussion - This is the least costly option and it has the advantage of permitting the development of necessary private sector support services to the park without constraints which would apply if the land were purchased. It has the disadvantage of potential private sector development, which could unduly influence the future course of management of the park.

Option #2 - government purchase of land.

Discussion - Government purchase of the land would ensure the possibility of directing future use and development of the area in a manner which confirmed and complemented park objectives. It has the disadvantages of representing a significant cost to Government in an isolated part of the Province at a time when there is relatively little money for such purposes, and there are pressing priorities for public lands in intensively developed parts of the Province.

(b) Laurene Holdings Limited - 459 Acres
Highland Post

Option #1 - leave as is.

Discussion - This is, perhaps, the most significant access point in the park. Its use for public purposes appears to be essential for general public use, for research purposes, and also in the provision of commercially based guiding activities. Appropriate private sector development of support services could, if controlled by some mechanism, complement park management. This is the least costly option, but appears to pose major future management problems.

Option #2 - purchase by government.

Discussion - Government use of the area for the provision of required public services appears to be essential. It has similar disadvantages, in terms of cost and timing, to Government acquisition of Paish Ventures Limited. It

would appear also that such a move would require that future capital investments required to support park activities would have to be made completely by Government.

Option #3 - Purchase or gift by private foundation. It has been suggested that the Spatsizi Association might be interested in acquisition of this property for the establishment of a research centre.

Discussion - Details of such a proposal would have to be worked out. There may be some mechanism for combining all options into a position which would provide for complementary integrated ownerships by the public agency, private interests and research interests.

2. Boundary Adjustments: It is recognized that existing park boundaries do not necessarily provide for a complete bio-physical management unit. It is also recognized that conflicting resource values may not permit the ultimate inclusion of all of the bio-physical management unit within the Park. The following strategies are recommended to deal with these two problems:

- (a) That a priority item for research be the definition of the boundaries of the appropriate bio-physical unit.
- (b) That, as an interim measure, the anticipated bio-physical unit be identified as a land use control buffer unit adjacent to the park and that proposed activities within that unit be subject to the submission of appropriate environmental impact statements.
- (c) That, as research provides the supportive information for the permanent bio-physical unit, additions to the park would be implemented where resource conflicts could be resolved. Where resolution of resource conflicts is not possible, appropriate environmental guidelines would be laid down for potentially disruptive activities within these units.

GLADYS LAKE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

Policy Statement: This reserve has been established to provide for the protection and scientific study of Stone sheep. ^{mountain goat} Its uses and regulations are controlled by the Ecological Reserve Act and the responsibilities for its management policies lie with the Director of Ecological Reserves. Appropriate designated public agencies may, at the request of the Director of Ecological Reserves, assist in monitoring and regulating uses of the Reserve as prescribed in its management policies.

Management Strategies

The need for additional refinement of the boundaries of the Reserve is recognized. The boundaries will be modified when supportive and complete scientific documentation is available.

NATIVE ACTIVITIES

Policy Statement: The Constitutional rights and the ^{traditional} uses and activities of Indian people will be recognized within the park. Where possible and appropriate the Indian people will be encouraged to participate in the management of the park and to share the benefits of its management.

WILDLIFE

Policy Statement: Wildlife management within Spatsizi Park will provide for the protection and perpetuation of wildlife populations and habitat, low intensity high quality hunting experiences, sanctuaries for study and enjoyment, and educational and interpretive learning experiences.

Management Strategies

1. Hunting: The provision for hunting of game is contained within the Order-In-Council mandate establishing the park. It is re-stated in the above policy statement. Nevertheless, public interests range from permanent or temporary closure of hunting, to hunting levels which are capable of maintaining and supporting the commercially based guiding operations within the park. It is imperative that a well thought out, rational consensus for management be established. Options as outlined in the background resource document are repeated here.

Option #1 - Maintain the status quo.

Discussion - The present form of management would be continued with shortened seasons on caribou, sheep, goats and moose, and no open seasons on grizzly bear and mule deer. This option is consistent with technical information on the area and can be carried out without incurring compensation costs related to established guiding operations.

Option #2 - Close all hunting.

Discussion - This option can only be conceived to be consistent with the Order-In-Council mandate if current practices can be established as being a threat to the continuation of a naturally based, self-replacing wildlife population. Alternatively, it would have to be supported by a revised philosophy, and sound rationale for the Park and/or established and urgent research rationale. This option cannot be instituted without due consideration of existing rights of licenced guides, regional economies and employment opportunities for native people.

Option #3 - ~~Stop~~ ^{Suspend} hunting of caribou, as outlined in research plan.

Discussion - On the basis of current surveys and knowledge, the caribou population appears fully capable of withstanding conservative hunting activity. The rationale for stopping hunting is related to research requirements as outlined in the resource document. This option also requires consideration of rights of licenced guides, regional economies and employment opportunities for native people.

Option #4 - Quotas for guided hunters and compulsory reporting for resident hunters.

Discussion - Quotas would be established on the basis of conservative cropping of the population. There would be no limit to harvesting by residents. A compulsory reporting system would provide better information than is now available on resident hunting, although this system is not foolproof. Quotas would have to be evaluated in terms of impacts upon existing guiding operations. This option is inconsistent with some of the research objectives.

Option #5 - Quota system for guided hunters and a limited entry for residents.

Discussion - This is the most intensive management option and would allow for a "fair" division of the hunting privilege among guided and non-guided sportsmen. There would be continued benefits to guides and the Indian community as well as to residents of British Columbia; but the quotas would still have to be evaluated in terms of their impacts. This option is inconsistent with elements of the research proposal.

2. Guiding

Guiding activities in parks are governed by conditions of the guiding licence as issued by Fish and Wildlife Branch and by conditions of the Park Use Permit issued by Parks Branch which are required by all guides operating in Provincial parks. Guiding is considered a necessary service in Spatsizi Park and it is not considered that this service can or should be provided by Government. The current policy of Parks Branch is to recognize established guiding rights and to expand these, where possible, to include provision for recreational activities such as photography, trail riding, hiking and so on. The only problem that has been identified with the current system is that with the guide being responsible for capital investment in facilities, rapid or complete modification of management practices which may be required for public purposes can be difficult. It is possible that occasions may arise where the operator's

need to stay in operation (i.e. make money) may unduly modify general public demands and/or resource management practices. The following options may be considered:-

Option #1 - maintain the status quo.

Discussion - It is believed that the three existing guiding territories in the park could be maintained and, within guidelines established by Parks Branch, expand and modify their services to accommodate park requirements. The disadvantage of this option is that it does not facilitate rapid changes in park management policies. This is a least cost option.

Option #2 - Purchase of capital investments of current operators, maintain and expand current operations.

Discussion - This option increases the flexibility of management by reducing the monetary commitments of the outfitters. It could be conceived as either a short-term or long-term strategy. It presents considerable cost to Government in the acquisition and maintenance of the capital investment.

Option #3 - Adopt a long-term strategy of modifying the existing pattern of guiding.

Discussion - It may be possible that as a management program evolves, a complete restructuring of the current pattern of guiding may be required. Such a restructuring might consist of establishing the park as a single guiding area with one or more guides operating out of specific activity centres in the park and with capital investments being made by Government to ensure maximum management flexibility. This option requires detailed consideration of all of its ramifications.

F I S H E R I E S

Policy Statement: Spatsizi Park will be managed to provide a self-sustaining native population.

Management Strategies

Further information is required before a more detailed policy or set of management strategies can be determined. A number of optional strategies can be outlined, however.

Option #1 - maintain the status quo.

Discussion - The area is managed within the general fishing regulations. No information is available on the quantity or type of fish taken out and its impact upon the fish or the fisheries.

Option #2 - Devise more specific management policies.

Discussion - These can only evolve over time and with more information. Considerations might include special regulations for the park which would ensure a quality and variety of fishing, ranging from trophy-type fishing, fishing for eating in the park only, pack-out fishing as now practiced and emphasis

upon skills such as fly fishing or fishing with barbless hooks. The development of such tools requires further definition of the nature and purpose of fishing in the park as well as better information upon which to base decisions.

O U T D O O R R E C R E A T I O N

Policy Statement: Spatsizi Park will be managed to provide for a wide variety of extensively distributed wilderness type recreation opportunities. The extent and variety of uses will be designed so as to limit the degradation of resource values and to preserve for the individual a total immersion into this natural heritage; for resourcefulness, adventure and challenge; for peace, solitude and contemplation.

Management Strategies

There are a number of factors which prevent the establishment of a master plan for recreational use and development at this time. Firstly, little is known about the nature of current use, the potential for future use or the nature and capacity of the landscape and features of the park in terms of recreational capability. Secondly, there are a number of considerations which form part of this paper for which directions must be established before proceeding with recreational use planning. Finally, there are some strong arguments which suggest that recreational planning should be permitted to evolve slowly, over time, as compared to the sudden creation and implementation of a long-range plan without the benefit of comprehensive knowledge or management experience. The following are seen as the preferred strategies over the next few years:-

1. A monitoring program should be established to provide information on the nature, distribution and trends of current uses.
2. Work should begin which would systematically record the outdoor recreation potential of the area.
3. Research work should be considered that would provide initial observations on the impact of different types of visitor use on the landscape and on wildlife populations.
4. Developments of all kinds should be very limited during the next few years.
5. It would be a reasonable objective to have a more complete statement for outdoor recreation in approximately five to seven years and such a statement should be combined with wildlife and related information into a master plan for the park.
6. No immediate controls over existing recreational uses, e.g. permits, etc., are contemplated.

R E S E A R C H

Policy Statement: Research will be encouraged which contributes to the bodies of knowledge associated with the natural and cultural history of the park and which assists in the realization of better resource and recreational management programs for the Park. Research which would unduly disrupt the natural processes in the Park will not be permitted.

All research will be carried out under authority of a Park Use Permit or Letter of Authority issued by Parks Branch and among other items will require compulsory and regular reporting on research progress and findings.

Management Strategies

Two immediate issues relate to the implementation of the research policy statement. Firstly, there appears to be the need for a permanent research centre. Secondly, within the resource document, a question arises as to the extent to which research needs may take priority over, or otherwise displace, on-going recreational uses.

1. Permanent research centre - It is perhaps too early to fully describe the options for a permanent research centre as a research program has not yet been approved and no detailed information is available on the specific requirements of such a centre. A number of preliminary options may be outlined.

Option #1 - Independent research centre.

Discussion - An independent research centre, established by private funding, could be created. The suggested location for this centre is the Hyland Post area; a prospect which requires discussion and negotiation with the private landowner.

Option #2 - An integrated research and administrative centre.

Discussion - There are strong arguments, considering the isolation of the area, to integrate as many of the facility requirements as possible. This option should take into consideration the options previously reviewed with regard to private land within the park.

2. Research and management conflicts - There are three possible options for dealing with potential research and management conflicts.

Option #1 - Recreation takes priority over research proposals where such proposals are not directly required to improve management practices. This would be the common application of research practices within provincial parks. ||

Option #2 - Research takes priority over recreational uses. This would be the common application of research practices in ecological reserves. ✓

Option #3 - Research and recreation co-exist in a manner which permits the realization of all or some portion of both objectives, but not the elimination of either. In an area the size of Spatsizi, it may be possible to work on this basis.

ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATION

Policy Statement: It is intended that the park be managed for its wilderness conservation and recreation values and that management resources and skills be adequate to ensure the achievement of these objectives. It is further intended that the management of the park be responsive and informative with respect to public needs.

Management Strategies

1. Organization - The responsibility for management of the park is assigned to the Regional Manager, Parks Branch, Smithers. (The immediately adjacent park, Tatlatui, falls under the jurisdiction of the Regional Manager, Prince George). No permanent or auxiliary staff and no specific operational funding have been allocated for Spatsizi.

Option #1 - No immediate resources will be applied to park administration.

Discussion - Resources which would be applied would come from the general regional resources of the Branch and would be available on an ad hoc, as required basis. The co-operation and assistance of the guides would be solicited to record and advise on management problems.

Option #2 - Minimum basic organizational resources should be applied as soon as possible.

Discussion - The Parks Branch regional manager at Smithers has recommended the assignment of two full-time positions, along with seasonal assistance to administer the park. Annual costs would be in the neighbourhood of \$40,000 per year. In addition, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Smithers, has recommended increased conservation patrols in the order of \$5,000 per year.

2. Responsiveness to public needs - A number of mechanisms have been suggested in the resource paper which would provide a program responsive to public needs. It is recommended that an annual conference or seminar sponsored by the managing agency and public groups be the mechanism for achieving responsive public management. The seminar would incorporate an annual review of activities, provide for workshops and reports in specialized areas of concern and establish resolutions respecting policies, programs and priorities.