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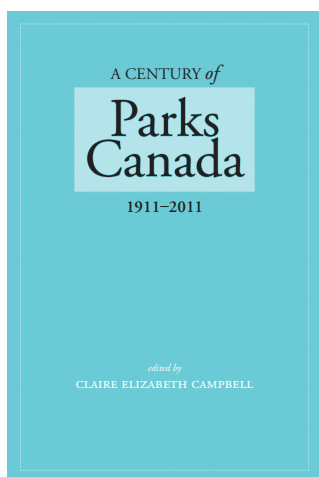
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A CENTURY OF PARKS CANADA

1911-2011

Edited by Claire Elizabeth Campbell

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Appendix B: National Parks Zoning System, Parks Canada Agency

From Parks Canada Agency, *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, 2006.

The national parks zoning system is an integrated approach by which land and water areas are classified according to ecosystem and cultural resource protection requirements, and their capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. It is one part of an array of management strategies used by Parks Canada to assist in maintaining ecological integrity through providing a framework for the area-specific application of policy directions, such as for resource management, appropriate activities, and research. As such, zoning provides direction for the activities of park managers and park visitors alike. The application of zoning requires a sound information base related to both ecosystem structure, function and sensitivity, as well as the opportunities and impacts of existing and potential visitor experiences.

The zoning system provides a means to reflect principles of ecological integrity by protecting park lands and resources and ensuring a minimum of human-induced change. In certain national parks not all zones will be represented. Where zones which permit a concentration of visitor activities and supporting services and facilities are required (i.e., Zones IV and V), they will occupy no more than a small proportion of a national park.

In some cases, environmentally or culturally sensitive areas or sites may warrant special management but do not fit the zoning designations below. Park management plans will include the guidelines necessary for the protection and use of such areas or sites. Their designation complements the zoning system and is important to the protection of the full range of valued resources in certain national parks. Likewise, a temporal zoning designation may be considered for certain areas as part of the management planning program. Ecosystem management requirements will be paramount in consideration of any temporal zones.

The national parks zoning system will apply to all land and water areas of national parks, and to other natural areas within the Parks Canada system as appropriate. It does not preclude resource harvesting activities which are

permitted by virtue of national park reserve status, land claim settlements and/or by new park establishment agreements.

Zone I – Special Preservation

Specific areas or features which deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access and circulation will not be permitted. In cases where the fragility of the area precludes any public access, every effort will be made to provide park visitors with appropriate off-site programs and exhibits interpreting the special characteristics of the zone.

Zone II – Wilderness

Extensive areas which are good representations of a natural region and which will be conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Zones I and II will together constitute the majority of the area of all but the smallest national parks, and will make the greatest contribution toward the conservation of ecosystem integrity.

Zone II areas offer opportunities for visitors to experience, first hand, a park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities which are dependent upon and within the capacity of the park's ecosystems, and which require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. Where the area is large enough, visitors will also have the opportunity to experience remoteness and solitude. Opportunities for outdoor recreation activities will be encouraged only when they do not conflict with maintaining the wilderness itself. For this reason, motorized access and circulation will not be permitted, with the possible exception of strictly controlled air access in remote northern parks...

Parks Canada will use a variety of other direct and indirect strategies for managing public use, and will evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies on a regular basis.

Zone III – Natural Environment

Areas which are managed as natural environments, and which provide opportunities for visitors to experience a park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. While motorized access may be allowed, it will be controlled. Public transit that facilitates heritage appreciation will be preferred. Park management plans may define provisions for terminating or limiting private motorized access.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

Limited areas which are capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage values and related essential services and facilities, in ways that impact the ecological integrity of the park to the smallest extent possible, and whose defining feature is direct access by motorized vehicles. Park management plans may define provisions for limiting private motorized access and circulation.

Zone V – Park Services

Communities in existing national parks which contain a concentration of visitor services and support facilities. Specific activities, services and facilities in this zone will be defined and directed by the community planning process. Major park operation and administrative functions may also be accommodated in this zone. Wherever possible, Parks Canada will locate these functions to maintain regional ecological integrity.

