

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Controversy and Compromise: The Creation of Kananaskis Country

By

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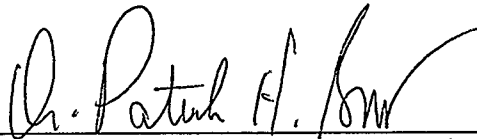
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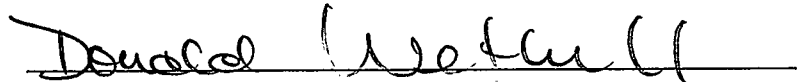
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Controversy and Compromise: The Creation of Kananaskis Country" submitted by Jennifer Amanda Goertzen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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Abstract

Kananaskis Country, the jewel of Alberta's provincial park system, has been the province's largest and most ambitious provincial recreation area project to date. Along with Kananaskis Provincial Park it was officially established in 1978 and is home to recreationalists and business interests alike. It has been a topic of contention since its creation as successive administrations have attempted to balance economic and environmental concerns for almost three decades.

The development of Alberta's provincial park system was initiated in 1930 following the Natural Resources Transfer Act. The expansion of the provincial park system from the 1950s to 1970s reflects the transformation of Alberta from a rural to an urban society. During these years most parks were created in response to public demand for recreation areas based around heavily used lakes featuring intensive development.

The eastern slopes of the Canadian Rockies have had a long and varied history. The Kananaskis valley has welcomed many different First Nation groups, fur traders, explorers, Christian missionaries and entrepreneurs. It was used extensively as a recreation area before its official designation as such. The land has been put to many uses including mining, lumbering, grazing, and more recently recreational activities such as skiing, camping, and atv riding.

Although lauded as an innovative and unique addition to Alberta's provincial park system, Kananaskis Country, on closer examination appears very much like previous parks and recreation areas: it has been highly developed and created on the basis of a realistic assessment of the area's recreational and commercial potential.

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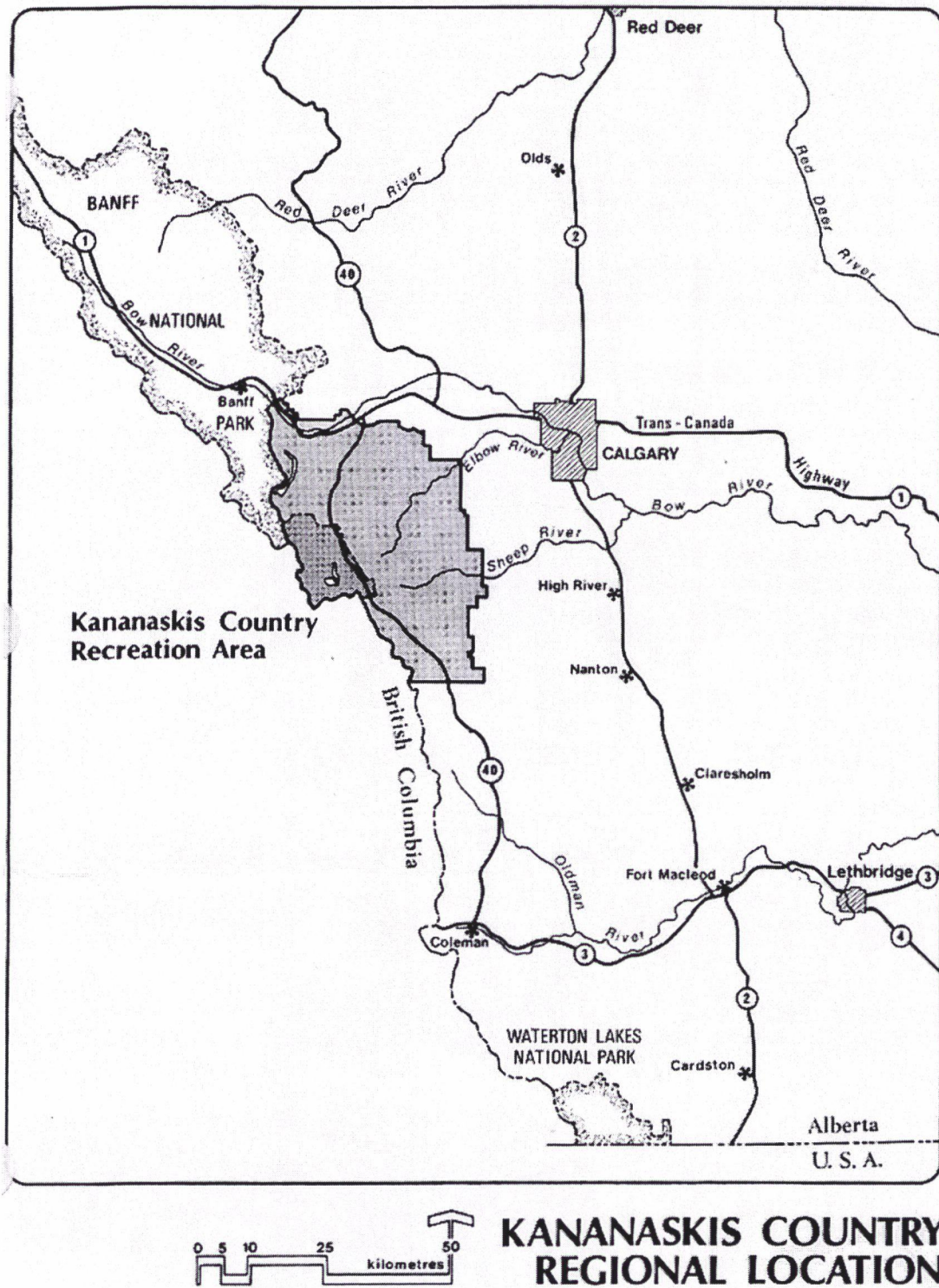
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INTRODUCTION

Kananaskis Country is a 4000 square kilometer recreation area located less than an hour's drive southwest of Calgary. It is made up of several parks, recreation, and wildland areas including Peter Lougheed Provincial Park (formerly Kananaskis Provincial Park), Bow Valley Provincial Park, the Elbow Valley Recreation Areas, and the Evans Thomas Provincial Recreation Area.¹ Kananaskis Country offers year-round recreational activities varying from ice fishing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing to hiking, camping, and horseback riding. This thesis will introduce readers to the long history of the Kananaskis Valley as well as discuss in depth the crucial decade – the 1970's – in which Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial Park was created. It will also illustrate that motivation behind creating the recreation area did not rest solely on environmental or aesthetic considerations, but also firmly on economics. It will discuss how Kananaskis Country is similar to, but also different from, other parks in Alberta. Finally, it will shed light on the multitude of groups and individuals who contributed to the creation of Kananaskis Country.

¹ [http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/enjoying_alberta/parks/featured/kananaskis/General Information.asp](http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/enjoying_alberta/parks/featured/kananaskis/General%20Information.asp). 12 May 05.



Map 1: Kananaskis Country Regional Location

Source: Alberta Department of Recreation and Parks, 1988

Kananaskis Country owes its origins to several factors: an expanding Alberta population, a growing environmental consciousness, the political will to create something new and innovative, and a sense of economic realism. It was the culmination of many years of development in the provincial park system and was intended to represent a complete departure from previous parks. The area would provide environmentally wise, low-impact recreation, as opposed to extensively developed facilities. It was also much larger than any recreation area previously created in Alberta. Planners relied on a sophisticated multiple-use philosophy that attempted to reconcile the needs of all parties concerned, whether commercial or recreational in nature. It was innovative in terms of the amount of planning that was involved, drawing on all levels and sectors of government. Also the planners' land use policies provided for a very large range of activities: from recreational activities such as skiing, hiking, snowmobiling, canoeing, and auto tourism, to limited resource extraction and commercial development.

This was the theory. In practice, many decisions regarding Kananaskis Country were based on economic considerations. The temptation to make a profit was too great and industry, resource extraction, and most of all tourism, have all left their mark on the valley. The Alberta government faced a difficult

task in attempting to balance the needs and desires of all Albertans. This balancing act will likely never end.

Albertans' relationship with the natural landscape has changed significantly over time. For the first quarter century of its existence the province had no control over its Crown Lands, which the federal government retained until October 1930. After Premier Brownlee's dogged negotiation of the transfer of Alberta's natural resources in 1929 from federal to provincial jurisdiction, successive United Farmers of Alberta, Social Credit, and Conservative administrations worked on creating a provincial park system.

As Alberta became increasingly urbanized, largely thanks to the discovery of large oil reserves at Leduc in 1947, its citizens enjoyed greater affluence due to a booming economy based on oil and gas development. This affluence was reflected in the increased ability of Albertans to set aside income for pleasure, rather than survival. More spare time and the literal separation from the land which urbanization created led more and more people to recognize the importance of recreation, particularly outdoor recreation, to the health of the individual and society and consequently further the cause of a provincial park system in Alberta.

Unfortunately little has been written on the development of Alberta's provincial parks, and on Kananaskis Country or Kananaskis Provincial Park in

particular. One of the only studies on Kananaskis Country is Ruth Oltmann's *The Valley of Rumours...The Kananaskis* published in 1976.² Her study reviews the history of this vast area; from original inhabitants to the recreationalists that flock to the area today. Herself a figure in Kananaskis history, Oltmann brings a knowledge and interest to her work that combine to create an important study.

This work differs from Oltmann's in its reliance, particularly in the final chapter, on archival material housed in the Provincial Archives of Alberta. While abundant, material related to Kananaskis County and Kananaskis Provincial Park is scattered among dozens of entries in hundreds of boxes. This made it challenging to obtain the most relevant and concise material possible and has also resulted in unfortunate gaps in the information contained in this thesis.

This thesis covers the period to Kananaskis Country's official creation in 1978 and touches briefly on the difficulties of the early 1980's as well. The archival material utilized in this study reveal complex motivating factors behind the creation of Kananaskis Country. While most Albertans today see "K-Country" as a purely recreational and natural area, it is also a source of income for the provincial government and private business in the way of cattle grazing, timber leases, tourism, and oil and gas development. Therefore this thesis has larger focus than that of Oltmann's study. It will look first at the background to

² Ruth Oltmann, *The Valley of Rumours...The Kananaskis* (Seebe: Ribbon Creek Publishing Company, 1976).

the establishment of a provincial park system in Alberta, then at the competing interests behind the establishment of Kananaskis Country.

A wide range of material exists on the creation of Canada's national parks. Perhaps the best-known study is Leslie Bella's *Parks for Profit*, published in 1987, which focuses primarily on the mountain parks, and Banff National Park in particular.³ Now a professor of Social Work at Memorial University in Newfoundland, Bella has a diverse background, holding an MA in Social Work and a Ph.D. in Political Science. She argues that "most of Canada's National Parks were created as another form of natural resource exploitation."⁴ Bella's discussion of the creation of Banff National Park upholds this thesis exceptionally well, indicating the desire of both the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Conservative government of John A. Macdonald to exploit the revenue-generating potential of the Banff Hot Springs. Bella also expertly draws the reader's attention to the distinction between conservation, which the government of the day defined as "maximizing future profits by good management today,"⁵ and preservation, a desire to maintain the land in an undeveloped state.

PearlAnn Reichwein, now a professor in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta, has also contributed to the history of the National Parks in Alberta's Rocky Mountains in articles such as "At the Foot

³ Leslie Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1987).

⁴ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

of the Mountain: Preliminary Thoughts on the Alpine Club of Canada"⁶ and "'Hands Off Our National Parks': The Alpine Club of Canada and Hydro-development Controversies in the Canadian Rockies, 1922-1930."⁷ Her Ph.D. thesis "Beyond the Visionary Mountains: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Canadian Park Idea, 1906-1969" is particularly influential as it provides a summary of Canada's conservation movement as well as the ACC's contribution to the development of Canada's National Park system. Born in 1906, the ACC encourages wilderness preservation and alpinism through organized events and activities as well as their publication *Canadian Alpine Journal*. Reichwein states that like Canada's National Parks, the Alpine Club also experienced "an ongoing struggle between the values of recreation and conservation."⁸ Her examination of this struggle is particularly relevant to the Kananaskis case.

Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada 1935 - 1970, published in 2001, looks at National Parks in the Maritimes.⁹ A professor at the University of Western Ontario, Alan MacEachern argues that planners felt the area lacked the natural scenic beauty typical of the mountain parks and thus chose to

⁶ PearlAnn Reichwein, "At the Foot of the Mountain: Preliminary Thoughts on the Alpine Club of Canada" in *Changing Parks: The History, Future, and Cultural Context of Parks and Heritage Landscapes* ed. John S. Marsh and Bruce W. Hodgins (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 1998) 160-176.

⁷ PearlAnn Reichwein, "Hands Off Our National Parks': The Alpine Club of Canada and Hydro-development Controversies in the Canadian Rockies, 1922-1930" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 1995 6: 129-155.

⁸ PearlAnn Reichwein, Ph.D. thesis "Beyond the Visionary Mountains: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Canadian Park Idea, 1906 - 1969" (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1995).

⁹ Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada 1935 - 1970* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

develop features in the parks, such as tennis courts and swimming pools, to create a 'seaside resort' feel reminiscent of the Eastern United States coastal resorts. Over time planners have increasingly embraced the policy of designating parks that are representative of a certain type of landscape and rely on the merits of the landscape, instead of tourist facilities, to attract visitors. This is a shift in policy that environmentalists applaud but one that is easily lost, as will be illustrated in the following look at the development of Kananaskis Country.

Another important and lively history is Bill Waiser's *Saskatchewan's Playground: A History of Prince Albert National Park*, published in 1989.¹⁰ Waiser teaches in the history department at the University of Saskatchewan and has written numerous books and articles dealing with various aspects of Western Canadian history. Waiser clearly illustrates the thin line the government walked between providing services for tourists and attempting to preserve the natural integrity of the parks. The creation of Kananaskis Country is reminiscent of the federal government's situation in Prince Albert National Park in that in both areas government planners faced similar competing interests.

Janet Foster's *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* is an important contribution to the history of Canadian preservation of wildlife and

¹⁰ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan's Playground: A History of Prince Albert National Park* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989).

habitat.¹¹ Her book chronicles the efforts of insightful Canadian civil servants like Howard Douglas, James Harkin, and Gordon Hewitt, who initiated the movement to preserve wildlife in Canada. Like efforts to set aside parks in Canada, Foster argues that calls for the preservation of wildlife were made out of commercial and economic considerations at first, rather than aesthetic or sentimental reasons.

J.G. Nelson, a former geography professor at the University of Calgary, and Robert Scace, then a Ph.D. student at the University of Calgary, edited a collection of essays presented at a conference organized by the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada in 1968 at the University of Calgary. The collection of essays titled *The Canadian National Parks: Today and Tomorrow* covers a wide spectrum of issues ranging from the history of recreation in Canada and the United States and the potential for research in the national parks, to the issue of nature preservation in parks and urbanization and the parks.¹² Robert Craig Brown's essay "The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resource and National Park Policy in Canada, 1887-1914" provides a particularly useful overview of early government policy regarding conservation in Canada. The professor of Canadian History at the University of Toronto argues that the development of

¹¹ Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

¹² *The Canadian National Parks: today and tomorrow* ed J.G. Nelson and R.C. Scace, (Calgary: The National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada, 1968).

the National Parks "was not a departure from but rather a continuation of" the National Policy of the Macdonald Government.¹³ Along with countless others, Brown argues that the Macdonald government, and subsequent administrations, pursued a policy of 'wise-use' which consisted of the 'scientific' use of Canada's natural resources in such a way as to produce maximum profits while maintaining those resources for future exploitation as well.

A more recent edited collection of essays by Professors John S. Marsh and Bruce W. Hodgins, titled *Changing Parks: The History, Future, and Cultural Context of Parks and Heritage Landscapes*, published in 1998, also contains essays regarding National Parks.¹⁴ The essays address topics pertinent to all provinces such as Canadian legislation regarding parks, parks in the Canadian north, and the future of parks in terms of ecotourism and sustainable development. It is useful because it familiarizes readers with many of the complex issues facing park planners and the public in terms of park policies.

Unfortunately provincial parks have not been studied to the same extent as national ones. One of the exceptional studies on the provincial level is Gerald Killan's *Protected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Parks System*.¹⁵ This

¹³ Robert Craig Brown, "The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resource and National Park Policy in Canada 1887-1914" in *The Canadian National Parks: today and tomorrow* ed J.G. Nelson and R.C. Scafe (Calgary: The National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada, 1968) 94-110.

¹⁴ John S. Marsh and Bruce W. Hodgins ed., *Changing Parks: The History, Future and Cultural Context of Parks and Heritage Landscapes* (Toronto: Natural Heritage / Natural History, 1998).

¹⁵ Gerald Killan, *Protected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Parks System* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993).

historian, who teaches at King's College University of Western Ontario, argues that the wise-use approach that held sway in the National Parks also did so in Ontario's provincial parks until the 1930's. Recreation and some concern for conservation took precedence more and more at this point until in the 1950's a new affluent, educated, and younger middle class produced an explosion in outdoor recreation and conservation demands. The 1960's environmental movement lifted conservation from a position of subservience to recreation to an influential factor in parks planning. Killan discusses these broad developments as well as the numerous bureaucratic battles connected with the system's creation and evolution. Killan's text is a passionate history of the progress made in the development of Ontario's provincial park system. It is also the first in-depth analysis of provincial parks in Canada.

Unfortunately other information regarding Canadian provincial parks is limited to articles in a number of periodicals. *Park News*; *The Journal of the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada* naturally features articles discussing Provincial Parks. *Canadian Audubon* also includes articles on the National and Provincial Parks as does *Conservationist*, but these are unfortunately short and lacking in detail. *Prairie Forum* also featured an article on Manitoba's Provincial Park System by John C. Lehr, which is useful because many parallels exist between the creation and development of Manitoba's park system and

Alberta's.¹⁶ Manitoba's Provincial Park system was initiated much later than Alberta's, beginning in the 1960's in response to public demands for recreational lands. It has developed in much the same way as Alberta's, initially in response to recreational needs and more recently displaying a complex relationship between preservation and recreation.

Especially important for this thesis is Alan Gordon Mason's unpublished M.A. thesis, "The Development of Alberta's Provincial Parks," completed in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Alberta, in 1988.¹⁷ This exhaustive study details the evolution of the parks system in Alberta from the first legislation in 1930 to 1988. Mason contends that the development of Alberta's provincial parks system was "an *ad hoc* process...influenced by a variety of different factors" that resulted in an "irregular pattern of development."¹⁸ This is essential reading in the area of provincial parks as it is the only in-depth academic study of Alberta's provincial park system.

This thesis will build upon Mason's pioneer work, by first discussing Alberta's provincial park history, then focusing on Kananaskis Country, and the origins of Kananaskis Provincial Park. Chapter One will outline the origins and pre-Kananaskis Country history of the Alberta provincial parks. The expansion

¹⁶ John C. Lehr, "The Origins and Development of Manitoba's Provincial Park System" *Prairie Forum* 22 no. 2 (Fall 2001) 241-256.

¹⁷ Alan Gordon Mason, "The Development of Alberta's Provincial Parks" Master of Arts thesis for the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Alberta, 1988.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

and improvement of the province's road system as well as the proliferation of private automobiles beginning in the first half of the twentieth century made the province's recreation areas easier to access and thus more heavily used. Also contributing to this increase in use was a dramatic shift, after World War Two, in the province's economy; from agriculture to one based on oil and gas development. The first chapter will also review the ad hoc nature of the early park system.

Chapter Two will look specifically at the long and diverse history of the Kananaskis valley. Aboriginal occupation and land use is discussed at some length as well as the entry of fur traders, explorers, missionaries, and those involved in resource exploitation, including the harvesting of timber, mining, oil and gas and hydro-electric development. This chapter also looks at later activities in the valley including research and recreation as well as developments such as roads and tourist facilities. It reviews the developments directly leading to the creation of Kananaskis Country, including land management studies and the many systems of land management utilized until K-Country's creation.

The third and final chapter looks at the development of Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial Park from the mid-to-late 1960's up to their official creation, both in 1978. This chapter draws on primary source material to illustrate the relationships and motivations of all of the interested parties;

government, industry, wilderness and wildlife advocates, as well as the general public. It is a complex series of relationships where the struggle for supremacy is ongoing and cooperation and compromise has most often been given only grudgingly. Chapter three concludes by touching briefly on the controversy that continues to plague Kananaskis Country in the areas of over development and overspending.

CHAPTER ONE

The Development of Provincial Parks in Alberta: 1930 to 1973

Socio-Economic Transformation

For many Albertans at the beginning of the twentieth century, leisure meant a much-anticipated yearly camping trip at the local lake or a bumpy wagon ride to a community picnic. By the mid-1920s this began to change dramatically. Automobile travel became more common as families found themselves able to afford automobiles and as the province's road system improved. The explosion of the oil and gas industry also injected new life into Alberta's economy and eventually transformed the province from being largely rural and agriculture in nature to urban and more dependant on oil and gas revenues than on farming. The Natural Resources Transfer Act, signed in 1929, was immediately followed by the implementation of a provincial park system. Improved economic conditions after the Depression of the 1930s, particularly the prosperity of the province after the discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947, allowed for its expansion. This chapter examines the history of Alberta's provincial park system.

Many factors came together to allow Albertans in the first half of the twentieth century to gradually travel more extensively throughout the province. The expansion of the railroad system in the 1920's, – by 1927 8297 kilometres of

rail crisscrossed the province – the improvement of existing roadways and the creation of new ones, as well as the proliferation of automobiles, all opened new areas of the province to tourism.¹ Automobile travel became more common following World War One and despite the constant maintenance and chronic unreliability of these early autos, urban and rural families welcomed the opportunity to travel beyond their immediate community and the roads of Alberta were soon seeing regular travelers.²

Politicians recognized that better roads meant increased tourism and a healthier economy for all Albertans. The business community launched a campaign during the 1920s promoting better roads, particularly leading to the National Parks. E.B. BeSaw, vice-president and general manager of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of Canada, pointed out that “there are over 22,000,000 passenger cars in the United States today and millions of owners are looking for new places to visit, making it vital for us to have good highways.”³ The federal and provincial governments also recognized the tourism potential and began an extensive road-building program in the 1920’s. Roads came second only to education in provincial expenditures during the 1920’s.⁴ The roads leading into

¹ Donald G. Wetherell with Irene Kmet, *Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta 1896 – 1945* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center/Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, 1990) 15.

² *Ibid.*, 18.

³ “Improved Roads To Lure Tourists,” *Edmonton Journal*, 8 February 1929.

⁴ Palmer, Howard and Tamara, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd. 1990) 225.

Waterton National Park were improved during this period and the Edmonton-Jasper highway was completed in 1928 and then improved in the 1930's.⁵

Developments in transportation allowed tourists to penetrate deeper into Alberta's wilderness. The leisure activities Albertans pursued most commonly in these areas were hunting and camping. Hunters and fishers in this period led the way in the journey toward conservation, voicing some of the first concerns regarding wildlife conservation. They argued that animal resources had to be conserved and managed in order to protect Alberta's tourist industry from irresponsible hunters. Tourists traveled from around the world to hunt the big game that, by the early 1900's, was becoming hard to find on the prairies. Hunters had to travel further and further north, even into BC, in order to hunt big game. As hunters were able to travel more widely and firearm technology improved the government was increasingly pressed to place restrictions on the actions of these hunters.⁶

The government recognized the danger these developments posed and acted on public concerns; they implemented licensing fees, shortened some hunting seasons, and entirely closed others for periods of time. Yet, the early

⁵ Ibid., 228.

⁶ See Janet Foster's *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) and George Colpitts' *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002) for more information on this subject.

part of the twentieth century proved an uncertain time for conservation efforts as enforcement of regulations remained limited. Game wardens issued hunting and fishing permits, but there were far too few of them to enforce legislation.

While hunting and fishing were primarily male dominated activities, the entire family enjoyed camping. Auto camping exploded during the inter-war years, the first auto camp in Alberta being established in Red Deer in 1923, as family holidays became an accepted and anticipated period of enjoyment.⁷ Increasing demand in the 1920's led to an expansion in the number and quality of lakeside resorts such as Aspen Beach on Gull Lake, Ma-Me-O Beach on Pigeon Lake, and Sylvan Lake near Red Deer.⁸ The increasing numbers using these facilities as well as demands on the provincial government to improve existing facilities and create more, led to many of these resort areas eventually being established as provincial parks.

The improvement of Alberta's road system also changed the nature of tourism as the balance shifted from train to car traffic and from wealthy European tourists to middle class Albertans; "...improved roads ultimately democratized the Parks." ⁹ The average Albertan now visited, as well as local lakes and picnic sites, the National Parks, previously frequented primarily by the wealthy.

⁷ Wetherell, 193.

⁸ Ibid., 201.

⁹ Palmer, 226.

Alberta is home to five National Parks, including Canada's first, Banff National Park. The area that eventually became Banff National Park underwent a number of boundary changes before its current boundaries were established in 1930.¹⁰ Banff National Park was born as the Banff Hot Springs Reserve in 1885. It was expanded by an order-in-council in 1887 to form the 416 square kilometer Rocky Mountains Park of Canada.¹¹ In 1902 this area was extended to an unprecedented 7,840 square kilometers and included much of the Kananaskis area. This was later shrunk to 2,880 square kilometers in 1911 and expanded again in 1917 to 4,401 square kilometers and again contained much of the Kananaskis valley.¹² The final boundary change in 1930, however, excluded the Kananaskis area from Banff National Park's 4,128 square kilometer area.¹³

Waterton National Park was established in 1895 when 140 square kilometers were set aside as Kootenay Lakes Forest Park. After the United States established Glacier National Park, directly adjoining the Waterton Lakes area, Canada followed suit and on June 8, 1911, Waterton Lakes Dominion Park was officially created.¹⁴

¹⁰ <http://www.banfflakelouise.com/media/newpress/heritage/historictimeline.htm>. 28 April 05.

¹¹ J.L. Nicol, "The National Parks Movement in Canada" in *Canadian Parks in Perspective* ed. J.G. Nelson (Montreal: Harvest House, 1969) 21.

¹² E.J. Hart, *Exploring the Heritage of the Banff-Bow Valley; The Place of the Bows, Part I, to 1930* (Banff: EJH Literary Enterprises Ltd., 1999) 232.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 328.

¹⁴ Joy and Cam Finlay, *Parks In Alberta: A Guide to Peaks, Ponds, Parklands & Prairies* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1987) 73.

Jasper Forest Park was set aside in 1907 but the park experienced increased visitation only after 1911 when the transcontinental railroad arrived and Jasper became a rail terminal. It was also at this time that promotion of the park's hot springs began. Early visitors did not receive the same opulent treatment as the Banff hot springs offered at this point, as the visitors to Jasper bathed in log-lined pools and slept in canvas tents. Banff tourists could choose to stay at either Banff Springs Hotel (1888) or Chateau Lake Louise (1890).¹⁵

Elk Island National Park began as a Dominion Forest Reserve in the Beaver Hills area in 1899. In the early 1900's there was concern over the safety of the elk in the area and a group of local farmers and one game guardian began a campaign to protect a herd of elk within the confines of the forest reserve. In 1913 the area became the only national park in Canada created explicitly to protect a mammal.¹⁶ Like Elk Island National Park, Wood Buffalo National Park, officially created in 1922, was a fenced wildlife sanctuary.¹⁷

The existence of a large and diverse (the national parks cover 8.1% of Alberta's land base) National Park system, established while the federal government still controlled Crown lands in what is now Alberta, helps to explain why Alberta trailed so far behind the rest of Canada in developing a provincial

¹⁵ Ibid., 116.

¹⁶ Ibid., 153-154.

¹⁷ *Statement Respecting the National Parks in Alberta Obtained from the Department of the Interior, Ottawa*, Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter referred to as PAA), Acc. 64.11, File 194, 1.

park system. For instance, Ontario's first provincial park was established in 1893, Quebec's in 1894, and British Columbia's in 1911. Alberta's first provincial park did not appear until 1932.

Thoughts & Theories on Resource Use

Resource exploitation has always been the driving force behind development in the Canadian West. Macdonald's National Policy in part stressed the importance of the railway in developing the West's economy based on its "inexhaustible" wealth of resources.¹⁸ The Rocky Mountains Park Act was a direct fulfillment of this policy in that it sought to bring the hot springs at Banff into "usefulness."¹⁹ The concept of the "Wilderness Park" that would appear later in Alberta's provincial park system could not have been conceived of at this point as a park was not truly a park until it had been developed with roads, hotels and other tourist facilities.²⁰ Few in government at this time saw anything wrong with the above development policies – lumbering, mining and grazing were economic activities that would benefit everyone in the West.

However, in 1911 a slight reorientation occurred as a number of politicians began to realize that Canada's natural resources were in fact finite. In the 1910s the new approach taken by the important Committee of Conservation,

¹⁸ Robert Craig Brown, "The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resources and National Park Policy in Canada 1887-1914" in *Canadian Parks in Perspective* ed. J.G. Nelson (Montreal: Harvest House, 1969) 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

known as "wise-use," stressed the scientific and efficient harvesting of resources within National Parks. It is important to recognize that at this time it was conservation, or 'wise-use,' and not preservation, keeping land in its original state, that ruled government policy - wildlife was viewed as a natural resource to be managed and exploited indefinitely.²¹

The tension between 'wise-use' conservation and preservation is evident throughout the literature on Canada's pioneering environmentalists. As mentioned in the introduction, the Alpine Club of Canada was one such pioneering organization. As PearlAnn Reichwein points out in her Ph.D. thesis the ACC's constitution contained the dual mandates of opening the parks to increased recreational use and protecting the fauna and flora of the mountains.²²

James B. Harkin was also a pioneering Canadian environmentalist. The Commissioner of Dominion Parks, from 1912 to 1936, he was very much in favor of the preservation of Canada's wilderness areas by way of designation as parks. He argued that the stresses of modern society could be cured by a liberal dose of "wholesome play" in the outdoors. But while Harkin believed the country's parks to be comparable to "priceless works of art" he also recognized their commercial value. He understood that the government needed a greater

²¹ Wetherell, 169. Also see Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* (London: Yale University Press, 1967) for a more in-depth discussion of the distinction between the ideas of preservation and conservation.

²² Reichwein, "Beyond the Visionary Mountains," 6.

incentive than spiritual restoration to support the idea of a national park system and pointed to the examples of European and American revenue-generating parks.²³

The policy of 'wise-use' was thus a flexible one that allowed supporters to move along a spectrum between unrestricted use of natural resources and preservation. This philosophy, a step toward more responsible environmental stewardship, was greatly influenced by developments in the United States where the conservation movement had been flourishing for a number of years.²⁴

The important federal advisory board, the Commission of Conservation, was created in 1909, with Clifford Sifton, a former Minister of the Interior (1896-1905), as Chair.²⁵ The impetus for establishing Canada's Commission of Conservation stemmed from a 1908 National Commission charged with compiling an inventory of the natural resources of the United States.²⁶ This was quickly followed up by an international conference attended by representatives of Mexico and Canada as well. The Canadian government decided to create a permanent Commission of Conservation after observing the proceedings of this international conference.

²³ Foster, 79-82.

²⁴ Brown, 54-55.

²⁵ Ibid., 56.

²⁶ Clifford Sifton, "Inaugural Address" (Inaugural Address, First Annual Meeting of the Commission of Conservation, 1910) 6.

Sifton's 1910 inaugural address stressed the importance of the commission not only for his generation, but also for future generations as well. The commission was composed of three members of the federal government, and one member from each of the provinces as well as members from the country's universities.²⁷ The advisory board collected and organized pertinent information in order to advise government departments and individuals. Sifton pointed out that the commission was essential on account of Canada's vastness. Because of its varied resources and great distances the responsible federal and provincial government departments required assistance in collecting information as well as analyzing it in order to make informed decisions.²⁸ As an advocate of "wise-use," Sifton also stated that the Commission's mandate was not to halt development altogether but rather to make recommendations which would allow development to exist within a wider ideology of conservation.²⁹

Important natural resources identified by the Commission included water, lands, and forests. Forest resources, for instance, were an area of great concern for Sifton. He identified their destruction by fire as a serious threat to Canada's economic well-being. Sifton's concern included the maintenance of forest lands in general as they protected the water systems. He advocated the protection of water systems in parks or reserves, such as Algonquin Park in Ontario or in the

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ Ibid., 8.

forest reserve under consideration for the Eastern Slopes area of the Rockies, which eventually would become Kananaskis Country. Sifton's concern regarding the conservation of land was not for recreational purposes, but for the wise-use of its natural resources.³⁰

Sifton left the Commission in 1918 but it continued its work until it was disbanded by a disinterested federal government in 1921. In general little federal conservation planning existed from 1921 to 1961 but the Commission had introduced concerns about conservation planning, concerns which would return forty years later, with the important "Resources for Tomorrow" Conference.³¹

The Natural Resources Transfer Act

The prairie provinces did not possess control over their natural resources when Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces in 1905. This disparity only became resolved for Alberta in late 1929 when Premier John Brownlee signed the Natural Resources Transfer Act that on October 1 1930 transferred control of Alberta's natural resources to the province.

United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) politician John Brownlee had become premier in November 1925 and remained in power until 1934. He was an analytical, rational man committed to the idea that through hard work he could

³⁰ Ibid., 21-27.

³¹ Alan F.J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, "Conservation Planning and Urban Planning: The Canadian Commission of Conservation in Historical Perspective" in *Consuming Canada; Readings in Environmental History* eds. Chad Gaffield & Pam Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1985) 163.

help his fellow man. Brownlee made an imposing figure at six feet four inches with a confident stride and was a serious man that had a knack for public speaking. Throughout his career he was a teacher, salesperson, corporate lawyer, attorney general and finally, Premier of Alberta.³² Brownlee was concerned with Alberta's financial situation and his primary objective was to avoid any large capital projects until the province's debt was considerably reduced.³³ Alberta's natural resources were an incredible source of wealth that could assist Brownlee in his goal if it were not being funneled out of the province into the coffers of the federal government.

Every administration in Alberta faced the question of natural resources. In February 1918, for example, the premiers of the Western provinces wrote Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden requesting that Borden address the issue of their natural resources "at an early date" so that the question "may be disposed of once for all."³⁴ In November of the same year a conference was held in Ottawa between the federal and provincial governments in which the transfer of natural resources was discussed. A statement, again signed by the three western

³² Franklin L. Foster, "John Brownlee, 1925-1934" in *Alberta Premiers of the Twentieth Century* ed. Bradford J. Rennie (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004).

³³ Franklin L. Foster, *John Brownlee: A Biography* (Lloydminster: Foster Learning Inc., 1996) 161.

³⁴ Thomas H. Johnson, W.M. Martin, and Chas. Stewart, *letter to Sir Robert Borden regarding the transfer of natural resources*, 19 February 1918, PAA, Acc. 64.11, file 195.

premiers demanded that they "be placed in regard to...resources entirely upon the same footing as all the other provinces of Canada."³⁵

For Brownlee another reason existed for obtaining control of Alberta's Crown lands – a desire to establish a system of parks throughout the province. Brownlee's interest in the beautification of Alberta and the development of a provincial park system was inspired by a trip he took to Britain in 1927.³⁶ He toured Britain's countryside and was impressed with the existence of many reserves of parklands. A tour through northern Alberta in August 1929 further solidified his commitment to creating a park system in Alberta. Before taking the "typical Alberta holiday of a week in the mountains," Brownlee traveled by train to Peace River and then downriver to Lake Athabasca. From there he traveled to Fort Smith. He returned up the Athabasca River to Fort McMurray and by rail to Edmonton. He was so struck by the natural beauty he had witnessed on his trip that he publicly announced on his return his desire to create a system of parks and campsites so all Albertans could enjoy their province.³⁷ He soon became one of the key figures in the development of Alberta's provincial park system as he helped mastermind the Alberta Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, a critical pre-requisite for the development of provincial parks in Alberta.

³⁵ *Proceedings of the Conference between the Government of Canada and the Provincial Governments at Ottawa, November, 1918*, PAA, Acc. 81.312, Box 1, File 2, pages 9 & 10.

³⁶ Mason, 47.

³⁷ Foster, *John Brownlee: A Biography*, 164.

Brownlee knew the vital importance of securing the transfer from the federal government of Alberta's Crown lands and natural resources. The prairie province's wish to be on the same footing as the rest of Canada's provinces in terms of the control of their natural resources was met in 1929. Section 109 of the British North America Act ensured that "all Crown lands, mines, minerals...and royalties derived...within the Province...belong to the Province," which had thus far not been the case for the prairie provinces.³⁸ Not only did Brownlee seek control over the natural resources, but he also demanded compensation for the preceding years in which Alberta was denied its provincial rights. Lands sold to the Hudson's Bay Company and railway companies over the years had enriched federal coffers, to the understandable resentment of Albertans.³⁹ The federal government had also set aside Alberta land for Indian reserves, mining reserves, and the National Parks. An agreement was reached in late 1929 wherein the province would receive a one-time cash payment as well as ongoing payments tied to population figures.⁴⁰

Signed on December 14 1929, the Alberta Natural Resources Transfer Act came into operation on October 1 1930.⁴¹ This act proved one of the most important events in Alberta's history. Alberta now controlled eighty-nine

³⁸ Ibid., 168.

³⁹ Foster, "John Brownlee, 1925-1934," 89.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁴¹ Foster, *John Brownlee*, 168.

million acres of Crown land, Canada's largest coal reserves, enormous hydroelectric potential, and, of course, the country's largest reserves of oil and gas.⁴² For Albertans this was another step toward constitutional equality and the true completion of Confederation.⁴³ This act gave the provincial government the ability to start work on the system of parks Brownlee envisioned.

Alberta's provincial Parks were created in response to "recreational needs and not by the need for conservation" or resource exploitation, as was the case with the National Parks.⁴⁴ Recognizing that the National parks were not meeting Albertans' recreation needs, in 1929 the provincial government announced plans to create a number of smaller provincial parks throughout the province. Provincial parks provided local communities with improved recreational facilities at the areas they already frequented. By mid-century there were more than thirty-five parks in the province.⁴⁵

Park planning and legislation was underway even before the Natural Resources Transfer act came into effect. Brownlee's first step was the enactment, in late 1928, of the Town Planning and Preservation of Natural Beauty Act. A list was then drawn up by local authorities of areas currently used as recreation sites to help choose sites for official parks. In May 1929 the premier announced a

⁴² Foster, "John Brownlee, 1925-1934," 92.

⁴³ Foster, "John Brownlee, 1925-1934," 91.

⁴⁴ Wetherell, 212.

⁴⁵ Wetherell, 203.

special committee to investigate possible park developments.⁴⁶ The committee's report, submitted in November 1929 suggested six areas to be established as provincial parks immediately; Aspen Beach, Ghost River Dam, Elk Water Lake, Gooseberry Lake, Laurier Lake, and Lee Lake.

Alberta's small, resource-rich, and regional economy, depended on the export of its primary industries and was vulnerable to fluctuations of overseas, continental, and national markets. Consequently the province's 730,000⁴⁷ citizens felt the full force of the collapse of the world economy in 1929.⁴⁸ European protectionist economic policies severely restricted Alberta's agricultural imports and the province watched helplessly as wheat prices plummeted 50% from 1929/30 to 1930/31. Farm families were hit hardest as net farm income plunged from \$102 million in 1928 to only \$5 million five years later.⁴⁹ Farms were abandoned as people left dryland rural areas to try their luck in the cities; schools closed as children were compelled to help their families where they could; and whole communities in southern Alberta vanished in the blowing sands. Despite these financial blows, Brownlee's provincial government proceeded with legislation. The Alberta legislature passed the Provincial Parks and Protected Areas Act on 31 March 1930.

⁴⁶ "To Make Survey Of Public Parks," *Edmonton Journal*, 28 May 1929.

⁴⁷ M.C. Urquhart ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1965) 14.

⁴⁸ Mason, 21.

⁴⁹ Palmer, 244.

While the financial situation of the 1930's necessitated the abolishment of the Town Planning Commission and the firing of its director, work progressed nonetheless, largely thanks to volunteer labor⁵⁰ and donated land.⁵¹ The province's first provincial park, Aspen Beach Provincial Park, was established in 1932 and was immediately followed by several more for a total of eight parks established by order-in-council during the Depression.⁵² The fact that Brownlee's administration was able to create provincial parks while still practicing severe fiscal restraint is an indicator of his commitment to the idea of a provincial park system.⁵³

World War Two helped to pull Alberta from the Depression. Following the war, the discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947 ushered in a new era of economic prosperity. The period from the end of the Depression to the creation of K-Country in 1978 proved one of great activity in road building, population growth, and rapid urbanization. In the 1940s and 1950s the provincial government built significantly on the eight parks created during the Depression. Domestic tourism boomed and the fledgling provincial park system was nurtured by the efforts of the provincial and federal governments as well as continued citizen volunteer support.

⁵⁰ Wetherell, 203-204.

⁵¹ Mason, 63.

⁵² Ibid., 63.

⁵³ Ibid., 69.

The new economic wealth of Albertans allowed them to travel more extensively in the postwar era. Alberta's roads continued to improve and automobile ownership continued to increase; the total number of vehicles registered in Alberta grew from 92,334 in 1945 to 424, 217 in 1965.⁵⁴ The Banff to Jasper highway was completed in 1939⁵⁵ and the construction of the Trans Canada from 1950 to 1962 greatly facilitated travel and tourism.⁵⁶

Alberta's road-building projects were made possible in large part because of a significant development in the provincial economy. The emergence of a new staple industry, oil and gas, also changed the structure of the society as a whole. Oil was first discovered in Turner Valley in 1914⁵⁷ but the oil and gas industry expanded greatly in 1947 when Leduc No. 1 blew on 13 February. Even before this momentous discovery the Social Credit government had recognized the importance of the conservation of the province's oil and gas resources. In 1936 premier Aberhart had created the Petroleum and Natural Gas Conservation Board, in part to fix production quotas, but also to prevent waste.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁵ Palmer, 228.

⁵⁶ Bella, 109.

⁵⁷ John J. Barr, "the Impact of Oil on Alberta: Retrospect and Prospect" in *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945* ed. A.W. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984) 97.

⁵⁸ Larry Pratt, "The Political Economy of Province-Building: Alberta's Development Strategy, 1971-1981" in *Essays in the Political Economy of Alberta* ed. David Leadbeater (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1984) 197.

The modern Alberta economy emerged in this period; one based not solely on agriculture, but increasingly on oil and gas as well. Employment in the agricultural sector, for example, dropped from 40% of the labor force to 26% in the period from 1946 to 1956.⁵⁹ In 1947 the oil and gas industry generated only 5% of Alberta's personal income, but ten years later this figure had risen to 45%. During the same period income from farming fell from 78% to 41%.⁶⁰ In the decade following the discovery at Leduc the government collected total revenues of \$1, 540 million, of which \$625 million, or 40%, came directly from the petroleum industry.⁶¹

This economic growth was also accompanied by a corresponding improvement in personal incomes. In the decade after 1947 personal disposable income in Alberta doubled and was one of the fastest growing rates in Canada.⁶² In 1954 Albertans had a per capita income 3% above the national average. The prosperity of both the Alberta government and Albertans themselves had always been tied to the relative demand for Alberta's primary exports on world markets.⁶³ First the war increased the demand for agricultural products, then the discoveries in the oil and gas sector allowed Alberta to compete in an entirely new industry.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 98.

⁶¹ Mason, 25.

⁶² Ibid., 26.

⁶³ Ibid., 27.

Natural resource revenues contributed greatly to the modernization and urbanization of Alberta society. A new social class of middle class, well-educated people emerged in the urban centers and the demand for university-educated employees changed the makeup of the labor market.⁶⁴ This dramatic change in Alberta's economy also brought about rapid urbanization and almost tripled Alberta's population from 803,000 in 1946 to 2,238,000 in 1981; the urban gain alone for this period was 1,374,000.⁶⁵ In 1941 68% of Alberta's population was rural. Thirty years later, in 1971, 73% of Albertan's lived in cities. New urban centers were created and existing towns such as Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Grande Prairie became increasingly important and prosperous.

The above developments created an environment in which provincial parks were desired and supported. Advances in transportation combined with the family's increased financial ability to travel led to a rush of domestic tourism from the end of the First World War to the 1970's.⁶⁶ An increasing number of people traveling to the countryside (combined with a loss of land due to either agriculture or oil and gas development) led to a decrease in the amount of private land available for recreation, but an increase in demand. In turn, this translated into increased pressure upon public land and a greater need for provincial parks. It also becomes clear that following World War II, Albertans

⁶⁴ Barr, 100.

⁶⁵ Mason, 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 33.

increasingly recognized leisure and recreation as important gauges of an acceptable standard of living, and more families were willing to spend their newfound income on "fun."⁶⁷

A marked increase in tourism in the province followed the Second World War as a war-weary population tried to rebuild a sense of normalcy. By the late 1950's tourism brought in an estimated \$63 million per year. That figure increased to \$224 million in 1969 and \$1 billion in 1978⁶⁸ as the province witnessed an increase in demand for outdoor recreation due to advances in technology and an increased realization of the benefits, economic and otherwise, of outdoor recreation.⁶⁹ The creation of the Alberta Travel Bureau in 1945, and the Department of Industry and Tourism in 1968, also indicated the increased importance of tourism to the Alberta economy.

The Provincial Park System Expands

The first legislation specifically related to the provincial parks was the Provincial Parks and Protected Areas Act passed on March 21st 1930, which identified the three main purposes of provincial parks and protected areas.⁷⁰ They were to exist for the propagation, protection, and preservation of wildlife and vegetation; for the recreation and general benefit of Albertans; and for the

⁶⁷ Wetherell, 38.

⁶⁸ Mason, 29.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 1.

protection of objects of geological, ethnological, historical, or other scientific interest.⁷¹

The Act also created a provincial park board to oversee the entire provincial park system, under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works.⁷² In addition, local boards of management were constituted for the control and management of each individual park or protected area. The relationship between the parks board and local boards of management was not clearly defined but in effect, the local boards looked after the day-to-day operation and maintenance of their respective parks.⁷³ The provincial parks board itself controlled all matters related to expenditure and revenue. This dual method of administration continued well into the 1960's. Unfortunately it contributed to the confusion and mismanagement of the burgeoning park system.⁷⁴

Based on American models, the board adopted a three-tier park classification system: Class A parks were "large areas of scenic beauty, historic and scientific importance" but not many were envisioned because the National parks served that purpose. Class B parks consisted of "recreational areas of which the main feature is a bathing beach, together with other recreational facilities." They were chosen on factors such as accessibility, scenic attractiveness of area, and cost of

⁷¹ Kenneth Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System: A Look At Its Development" *Park News* Fall 1980, 8.

⁷² O.C. 563/30, PAA, Acc. 71.712, file GSE, Box C.

⁷³ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 9.

⁷⁴ Mason, 57.

obtaining the land. Class C parks were auto parks, picnic grounds, beauty spots, or natural beauty viewpoints; the objective of which was the enhancement of the enjoyment of the motorist.⁷⁵

Once an area was brought to the attention of the Board, it underwent a comprehensive inspection to determine the physical characteristics of the area, the availability of water, accessibility, and proximity to population centers.⁷⁶ If the land was vacant public land a park could then be established under an order-in-council and an advisory committee formed. On November 21, 1932 order-in-council 986/32 established Aspen Beach on Gull Lake as Alberta's first official provincial park. Other parks organized at this time included Sylvan Lake, Gooseberry Lake, Ghost River, Park Lake, Hommy, Lundbreck Falls, and Saskatoon Island.⁷⁷

During the 1930's and 1940's, however, many other areas in the province operated as parks without ever having been formally established as such through order-in-council. Advisory committees were in place, which carried out volunteer work, and sent reports to the Board all without official park status being conferred. In some cases advisory committees were appointed before an area had been designated a provincial park, or they were formed years after.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 9.

⁷⁶ Mason, 62.

⁷⁷ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 9.

⁷⁸ Mason, 82.

Confusion was created by the dual nature of park management – the provincial board and local committees sharing responsibility – as well as by the fact that these two bodies could not keep on top of the demand for new parks and park upgrades. Learning as they went, the Department of Public Works (and later the Department of Lands and Forests) remained chronically under-funded, which made an already haphazard situation substantially worse.

Numerous new areas came under the Board's control during this period through a "haphazard method of land annexation."⁷⁹ The public continued to demand more and more provincial parks and recreation opportunities despite the UFA, and then Social Credit, government's precarious financial position during the 1930's. Most sites under consideration for park status were sites already frequented by users who hoped to have them reserved as provincial parks. Often their suggestions came accompanied with requests for funds to develop or maintain the area.⁸⁰

While the government was not in a financial position to grant these requests, the local advisory committees did commendable volunteer work that allowed the parks system to stay afloat during these difficult years. Without adequate provincial funding, private citizens maintained their local parks. In short, "the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 72.

money, labor and materials" critical to park maintenance and development was almost entirely gathered from the community.⁸¹

The duties of the provincial parks board at this time included the reservation or purchase of land, the appointment of local advisory committee members, and all financial matters regarding the parks. The board collected fines and lease payments from cottage developments and individuals operating refreshment stands and boating operations in the parks.⁸² Despite this aspect of the board's operations, the parks brought in little revenue and were not viewed as profit generating. Many lease requests were refused and development within the parks strictly controlled and limited.⁸³ The financially-strapped Parks Board was simply incapable of anything more than ad-hoc measures at this point.

Until the 1935 establishment of Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park, provincial parks were chosen based on their recreation potential and almost all were centered on lakes. Initially identified as a picnic area, further inspection of this groundbreaking park, near the Montana border, revealed Aboriginal pictographs etched into the hoodoos lining the Milk River. Writing-On-Stone deviated substantially from the accepted park model.⁸⁴ It now became the largest park managed by the provincial board, was a rare Class A park, and did not possess a

⁸¹ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 9.

⁸² Mason, 80-81.

⁸³ Ibid., 81.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 85-86.

beach, but instead features of historic significance such as Aboriginal pictographs and several North West Mounted Police post buildings. Writing-on-Stone marked an important practical commitment by the board to more completely fulfill the 1930 Parks and Protected Areas Act's mandate to protect areas of historical significance.

In April 1951 a new Provincial Parks Act was passed and responsibility for the provincial parks transferred from the Department of Public Works to the Department of Lands and Forests.⁸⁵ In 1958 Provincial Parks was established as a separate branch of Lands and Forests. The board's financial situation also improved greatly beginning in the winter of 1957-58, when a federal-provincial agreement was reached called the Winter Works Campgrounds and Picnic Areas Program. After the first federal-provincial tourist conference in late 1957 the Federal Government provided financial assistance to the provincial governments for the creation and improvement of campgrounds and picnic areas. This program created winter employment as well as assisted the provinces in keeping pace with the rapidly increasing demand for campgrounds and picnic sites. The program ran until 1963 and provided the provincial government with 50% of its provincial park funds during this period.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 9.

⁸⁶ Mason, 101.

At this point a separation of planning and operations responsibilities occurred within the Parks Branch. This development, along with the transfer from the Department of Public Works to a separate branch of the Department of Lands and Forests, indicated a professionalization of the parks administration. While not made officially obsolete until 1974 it was also becoming clear that the local advisory committees made less and less sense in this modernizing, and better funded, park system.⁸⁷

Thanks to greater leisure time and longer vacations, visitor numbers greatly increased in the 1950s.⁸⁸ Not only were visitation numbers up but the nature of parks also changed as well. Several new types of recreation areas were created that affected park development. Historic sites came under the Provincial Parks Board's domain and by 1964 nineteen Provincial Park Historic Sites existed.⁸⁹ On April 7 1959, the Wilderness Provincial Park Act created a 3,200 square kilometer Wilderness Provincial Park near Grande Cache, which later became the Willmore Wilderness Area. Two years later the Siffleur and White Goat areas bordering Banff National Park were created under the same act as well.⁹⁰

In the late 1950's the shortcomings of the early informal organization of provincial parks management became evident. On account of the failure to

⁸⁷ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 10.

⁸⁸ Mason, 108.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 111-112.

⁹⁰ Kenneth E. Morrison, "Outdoor Recreation Programs in Alberta," *Park News* Fall 1981, 3-9, 7.

secure orders-in-council for their creation, many provincial parks were, in actuality, illegal parks.⁹¹ Confusion regarding the process necessary to formally establish a park had resulted in eight areas being "neither legally established nor legally reserved."⁹² An order-in-council was necessary to amend this mistake. This confusion indicates the general disorganization and amateur environment in which Alberta's park system was born and continued to operate into the 1960s. Despite constant expansion the Department of Lands and Forests remained under funded and lacked the manpower and expertise to do little else but put out fires.

By the end of 1960 Alberta had 37 provincial parks covering approximately 268 square kilometers; almost 200 highway campsites operated by the Department of Highways comprising approximately 850 acres; an estimated 25,000 acres made up of urban, municipal, and rural parks; 10 provincial game reserves; 5 bird sanctuaries; 3 forest reserves occupying approximately 1496 square kilometers; 1 wilderness park and 2 wilderness areas containing a combined total of almost 4480 square kilometers; and 6 historical sites covering 116 acres.⁹³ While professionalization was occurring it could not keep pace with the rapid expansion of the parks system, a fact that in 1964 resulted in the

⁹¹ Mason, 119.

⁹² Ibid., 120.

⁹³ Ibid., 122.

creation of a separate Provincial Park Division within the Department of Lands and Forests.⁹⁴

In the last years of the Social Credit administration, the provincial government expanded the system. The Conservatives, upon coming to power in 1971, built it up still further. Twelve new parks were established between 1964 and 1973 and many existing parks enlarged. New historic sites were added as was a third wilderness area, the Ghost River Wilderness area.⁹⁵ Additionally, five new natural area parks were created between 1968 and 1970. The purpose of these areas was "to preserve the area or feature in the natural state for viewing and interpretation in an appropriate manner."⁹⁶ As during the previous phase of development, visitation to provincial parks from the ever-increasing urban areas of Alberta grew. Over three million people visited the aforementioned parks, wilderness areas and natural parks in 1966 and 1967 and over five million did the same in 1970-71.⁹⁷ Within the Parks Division the budget jumped from one million dollars in 1964-65 to 3 million in 1972-73 and by 1973 the Division employed 158 parks staff. Park management had matured from providing picnic tables and campgrounds to creating park management policies and more a

⁹⁴ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 10.

⁹⁵ Morrison, "Outdoor Recreation Programs in Alberta," 7.

⁹⁶ Mason, 128.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 129.

sophisticated approach to park planning.⁹⁸ Also changed was the nature of the parks in that areas of natural significance took precedence over resort-style developments indicative of the early years.

In the 1960s a new mentality was emerging toward the environment, really the first major stirring of conservationism since the demise of the Commission on Conservation in 1921. The "National Resources for Tomorrow" conference, which met in Montreal in October 1961, raised environmental concerns. As historian Morris Zaslow has written of the conference at which a total of eighty papers were presented, "the conservationist and environmentalist viewpoints were raised as never before."⁹⁹ Environmentalism was emerging in Canada distinct from economically motivated conservationism. Another important conference, held at the University of Calgary in October 1968 raised important issues about national parks and protected areas.¹⁰⁰

All of the organizational changes and increased use called for a clear, comprehensive parks management policy statement. The Provincial Park Policy Statement of 1967 "defined the various categories of parks...[and] set out planning, management and operational guidelines."¹⁰¹ The policy identified the Division's responsibilities: first, to determine the recreational needs of Albertans,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 129.

⁹⁹ Morris, *The Opening of the Canadian North 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971) 268.

¹⁰⁰ J.G. Nelson, *The Canadian National Parks: Today and Tomorrow* (Calgary: National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada Conference at the University of Calgary, 9-15 October 1968).

¹⁰¹ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 10.

present and future; second, to make judgments on the suitability of suggested locations; third, to make recommendations on locations; and "establish, develop, and manage parks" to meet the demands of Albertans while ensuring those parks can also be enjoyed by future generations.¹⁰²

The policy indicated a new, more sophisticated approach to Park planning. Activities not compatible with park values included grazing, mining, and oil and gas extraction. The new policy advocated development be kept to a bare minimum, including highways, town sites and artificial recreational developments. It also stressed the importance of protecting plant as well as animal life.¹⁰³ Thought was given to sustainability and future recreation needs as well as scientific research and education of the public.¹⁰⁴

Despite the positive effects these steps had on individual parks, the Division's budgetary and time restrictions precluded a comprehensive strategy for the system as a whole. The management of the system, while definitely an improvement on the early days, remained quite ad hoc. New parks were rarely suggested from within the Division. Instead requests came from the public and the Division reacted to those requests by adding more and more parks to an under-funded and still poorly organized system.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *Statement of Alberta's Park Policy March 1967*, PAA, Acc. 81.312, box 1, file 7, 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Mason, 133.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

In theory, the late 1960's and early 1970's witnessed important changes in the development of provincial parks in Alberta. The Social Credit administration established an Ecology Corps that gave unemployed students employment and also created the powerful Department of the Environment.¹⁰⁶ The Parks Branch had been upgraded to a Division in 1964. The Social Credit government accepted the 1967 Parks Policy. Subsequently, professionals were hired, resource inventories were undertaken and the value of conservation was slowly being realized.¹⁰⁷ In reality, however, among politicians the opinion continued to persist that "the more visitors to the greater number of parks, the better the park system." Quantity over quality meant that visitation statistics were the most important factor in determining the success of the system.¹⁰⁸

Lougheed's Progressive Conservatives came to power in August 1971 and inherited the province's rapidly growing parks system.¹⁰⁹ As an urban-based party they reflected urban dwellers' interest in more park land. The shift of political power from rural to urban Alberta now gathered momentum. The new Conservative administration addressed the challenges faced by the Parks Division in Position Paper Number 13, May 1973 and prompted a new phase in

¹⁰⁶ John J. Barr, *The Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of Social Credit in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974) 187.

¹⁰⁷ Mason, 144-145.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰⁹ Larry Pratt, "The Political Economy of Province-Building: Alberta's Development Strategy, 1971-1981" in *Essays in the Political Economy of Alberta* ed. David Leadbeater (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1984) 203.

park development, in which Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial Park were created.

This paper encouraged public involvement and stated that "recreation experiences contribute to individual development." The document's policy with respect to provincial parks stated that "a complementary, comprehensive, multi-level integrated system of parks or recreation areas should be developed and managed to meet the recreation needs and desires of residents and visitors to the province of Alberta."¹¹⁰ The document stressed cooperation of concerned parties including all levels of government as well as the public. The importance of long-term management strategies and overall a less haphazard method of administration was recognized.¹¹¹ This administration must include a commitment by government to obtain as much land with high recreation potential as possible, and make that land available for public use.¹¹² Government must also "encourage and enable" the private sector to become actively involved in providing leisure services.¹¹³ Suggested governmental responsibility also applied to providing "leisure education" programs,¹¹⁴ providing access to

¹¹⁰ *A Leisure Land Use Policy for Alberta, Recommendations from the Sub-Committee on a Parks and Leisure Land Use Policy to the Alberta Government Recreation Committee, May 1973, PAA, Acc. 91.270, box 24, c13.46, vol.1, introduction iv.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

recreation for the physically disabled,¹¹⁵ providing opportunities for public involvement in planning and development,¹¹⁶ and managing tourism so that it was compatible with long-range resource planning.¹¹⁷

Other areas the document addressed included conservation and management of wildlife, plants, rivers and lakes "so as to retain the maximum number of alternative uses" for generations to come.¹¹⁸ It also addressed the question of land-use conflict and recognized that the need to extract resources such as oil and gas would only increase but should not be pursued at the expense of other equally valuable resources and that vigorous reclamation efforts would be necessary to bring resource extraction sites back into usefulness for recreation.¹¹⁹

Economic conditions in the 1970's gave the Alberta government the opportunity to greatly increase government expenditures. This meant that the provincial government's commitment to parks reached the highest level in their short forty-year history.¹²⁰ An assessment completed in the early 1970's identified seven areas the government felt required attention. In 1973 a position outlined the policies and direction the government wished to take. First, the parks system should be expanded through land acquisition, upgrades, and new

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁰ Mason, 150.

development. Second, the parks should emphasize the opportunity for outdoor recreation and preserve the ecological character of the park. Third, parks needed to be accessible to Albertans. Fourth, resource development would come second to recreation. Fifth, the private sector was encouraged to develop campgrounds outside of the parks while the parks emphasized day use activities. Sixth, provincial parks should be larger. Lastly, a more comprehensive planning process was to be undertaken that took into account factors such as national parks, tourism promotion, cultural heritage programs, and many other recreation options.¹²¹ These suggestions were integrated into the new 1974 Provincial Parks Act.

The 1970's saw the most extensive growth in the parks system as the provincial coffers overflowed with oil and gas revenues. The area doubled and government's financial support soared. New parks were created and existing parks upgraded. Administration was decentralized, and new concepts such as urban parks found a receptive audience.¹²² The prosperity from oil and gas resources was reflected in the creation of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund in the mid 1970's. The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act passed in 1976 called for 30% of Alberta's annual non-renewable resource revenue to be

¹²¹ Morrison, "The Alberta Provincial Park System," 10.

¹²² Mason, 177.

transferred to this trust fund. By the end of the first year, in March 1978, the fund contained \$2.2 billion.¹²³

The creation of Kananaskis Country in 1978 was the culmination of nearly forty years of developing a system of parks in this province. It integrated numerous government departments and was preceded by a previously unseen number of land use studies and resource surveys. It attempted, more than ever, to truly reconcile recreation, resource development, transportation, and commercial development.

The newly created wilderness areas and natural parks provided planners with something on which to model Kananaskis Country. The leisure land use study of 1973 and the new Provincial Parks Act of 1974 also supplied planners with clear guidelines regarding the future of Alberta's provincial parks system. Initially Kananaskis Country planners adhered to these guidelines and were applauded for creating an innovative addition to Alberta's park system. Accommodating multiple user demands, however, would mean abandoning a number of the ideals discussed in these documents.

The following chapter takes a close look at the history of the Kananaskis Valley itself. From its aboriginal inhabitants to early explorers and industrialists the valley was a transportation corridor and temporary home. The twentieth-

¹²³ Ibid., 26.

century also saw the valley increasingly used for recreation as well as resource extraction. The importance of the valley for the stream flow regulation of Western Canada's water supply, as well as the increasing level of recreation and resource use, led the government to develop a long-term land use plan for the area. This paved the way for the creation of both Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial Park.

CHAPTER TWO

The Kananaskis Valley to 1973

Aboriginal Occupation

Humans occupied the Kananaskis Valley for roughly ten thousand years before it was set aside as a recreational area. First Nations groups traversed the valley, followed in the nineteenth century by European traders, missionaries, explorers, and government officials. In the early twentieth century ranching and logging was carried out. Recreational use of the valley has been a relatively recent development, increasing dramatically only in the 1950's. Since that decade it has been the dominant activity in the Kananaskis Valley.

Archaeology and Aboriginal history indicates that the portion of the front ranges of the Rocky Mountain foothills, now known as Kananaskis Country, has been inhabited for thousands of years. There is a great deal of debate surrounding when the first people inhabited North America, but most archaeologists agree it was at least 15,000 years ago.¹ Because the Eastern Slopes area of the Rockies, in which Kananaskis Country is located, was one of the last areas to be glaciated and the first to be ice free it was an advantageous location for human beings to establish themselves. Water, firewood and shelter were

¹ Barbara Huck and Doug Whiteway, *Seeking the Spirit of the Land; In Search of Ancient Alberta* (Winnipeg: Heartland Associates Inc., 1998) 29.

abundant and hunting was relatively easy as animals utilized the ice-free corridor as well.²

Alberta's earliest Aboriginal groups followed a seasonal migration pattern. Small family-based groups followed bison and other ungulates to areas such as the Kananaskis Lakes in the spring and summer, and to the lower Kananaskis Valley in the fall. They congregated in larger multi-family groups for the winter. The valley provided these groups with shelter as well as materials for tools and weapons. They transformed stone into projectile points, knives, scrapers, and larger butchering tools. Stone found at Kananaskis archaeological sites indicates that these inhabitants also traded with groups in the southern Rockies and Kootenay lakes area of what is now British Columbia.³ Like their descendants these groups relied heavily on the bison for sustenance, shelter, tools, and clothing.⁴

On the eve of European contact, in the early eighteenth century, the Kananaskis Valley was within the hunting territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy. By the nineteenth century the Blackfoot Confederacy consisted of four distinct nations: the three Blackfoot speaking nations; the Siksika, Blood, and Peigan; and the Sarcee (Tsuu T'ina), an allied Athapaskan group. In their

² Ibid., 188.

³ Oltmann, 6.

⁴ Liz Bryan, *The Buffalo People: Prehistoric Archaeology on the Canadian Plains* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1999) 32-33.

Algonquian language, the Blackfoot called themselves *Soyitapi*, or "prairie people."⁵ Blackfoot territory extended from the present-day Alberta-Saskatchewan border to the Rocky Mountains and from the North Saskatchewan River south to the Missouri. Common language, customs, and intermarriage kept open warfare between the groups minimal. However, surrounding groups in the early and mid-nineteenth century clashed with the Blackfoot: the Kootenay and Salish to the west; the Crow, Shoshoni, and Dakota to the south; and Plains Cree and Assiniboine (Stoney) to the north and east. The valley was also visited by the Kootenay, who frequently crossed the Rockies into the Kananaskis area to hunt bison, and the Assiniboine (Nakota or Stoney).⁶

From the mid-nineteenth century forward, the Stoney became the dominant Aboriginal group in the Kananaskis Valley. They called the lakes in their valley *Ozada Imnae* or simply, Valley Lakes and the Kananaskis river *Minnee-znee-ozada* or Tributary of the Cold Water (Bow River).⁷ They typically traveled to the plains to hunt in the spring and fall but returned to the foothills once they made sufficient bison kills. In 1840 Methodist missionary Robert T.

⁵ Donald Ward, *The People: A Historical Guide to the Aboriginal of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba* (Altona: Fifth House, 1995) 24.

⁶ Hugh A. Dempsey, *Indian Tribes of Alberta* (Calgary: Glenbow – Alberta Institute, 1979) 7.

⁷ T. Sadler & M. Gray, *A History of the Kananaskis Valley*, Unpublished (Calgary: Environmental Sciences Centre, University of Calgary, 1973) 1.

Rundle traveled to the Stoney territory and found them receptive to his message. They quickly adopted Christianity.⁸

By the mid-nineteenth century, many northwestern Plains Aboriginal groups' lives revolved around the buffalo hide trade; their seasonal migrations became centered on the movement of the bison as well as the location of trading houses.⁹ Along with this came the devastating effects of the trader's most effective lure; alcohol, a trade good enjoyed when near the trading posts. This became particularly acute after the American Civil War, and the influx of whisky traders from Montana.¹⁰ This devastation led the Blackfoot to seek assistance from the North-West Mounted Police in the mid-1870s in halting the liquor trade. In 1877 the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Stoneys (or Nakota in their language) signed Treaty Number Seven, the transfer of southern Alberta to the Canadian government.¹¹ After the signing of the treaty the Stoney located themselves at their reserve at Morley, midway between Calgary and Banff, before the front range of the Rockies.

These Aboriginal groups hunted in the Kananaskis area but their environment was more than just a source of sustenance. Religion was "woven throughout" all the facets of Aboriginal life and elements of the environment –

⁸ Dempsey, 50.

⁹ Peter Fidler, *Encounters with the Inhabitants of 'Alberta' in 1792-1793 as Recorded by Peter Fidler*, Survey ed. Mary Eggermont-Molenaar, *Yumtzilob* 12.1-2/2000, 7-56, 8.

¹⁰ Hugh Dempsey, *Firewater; The Impact of the Whisky Trade on the Blackfoot Nation* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2002).

¹¹ Dempsey, *Indian Tribes of Alberta*, 17-18.

animals, rivers, trees – were integral to both survival and spirituality.¹² In an article titled “Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and Ecos” Jack D. Forbes draws some useful generalizations for North American Aboriginal groups and their relationship to the land. He argues that the Creation stories of these groups construct a “living universe in which a kinship exists between things.”¹³

At the time of European contact, Aboriginals of diverse cultures occupied North America and their modification of the landscape varied in degrees that ranged from most to least invasive; agriculture, cultivation, encouragement, protection, and gathering.¹⁴ As migratory First Nations living for much of the year in the foothills the Aboriginal groups of the Kananaskis area did not practice agriculture or cultivation until they settled on reserves, but they certainly practiced gathering as well as hunting and trapping.¹⁵ Aboriginal groups also used deliberately set fires with a great deal of sophistication to clear routes for easier travel, stimulate the growth of certain grasses and shrubs to facilitate stalking prey, improve horse grazing, clearing sites for camps and, through smoke signals, as a form of communication.¹⁶

¹² Chief John Snow, *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places; The Story of the Stoney Indians* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1977) 2.

¹³ Jack D. Forbes, “Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and Ecos” *Daedalus* 2001 130(4), 283.

¹⁴ Thomas R. Vale, ed. *Fire, Native Peoples, and the Natural Landscape* (Washington: Island Press, 2002) 19.

¹⁵ Snow, 6.

¹⁶ Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire: A Brief History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001) 49.

Euro-Canadian Exploration and Utilization

European explorers had a more antagonistic and profit-driven relationship with the land than did Aboriginals. Many of the aboriginal groups in North America were not agriculturalists and thus did not conform to European ideas regarding land possession. Europeans believed that for a land to be truly possessed, or owned, it had to be cultivated. This naturally led to conflict between Aboriginals and European newcomers regarding land use rights and land ownership as neither group recognized the logic of the other's beliefs.

In *Wilderness and the American Mind* historian Roderick Nash explores how the tenets of Christianity also served to create an antagonistic relationship between people and nature.¹⁷ Europeans believed they were superior to nature. They held that God had provided the plants and animals for human consumption. God had chosen humans to dominate the rest of creation. Nature was also viewed as a corrupting influence that needed to be tamed and controlled. Settlers sought to create the order of the Garden of Eden out of the desolation of Satan's wilderness in both spiritual and temporal actions. They saw the wilderness of North America as "horrible, hideous, terrible, dangerous, and devilish" – abounding with dangerous animals and hostile aboriginals.¹⁸ Many also believed that plentitude was God's will and he would not permit the

¹⁷ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

¹⁸ Christopher Vecsey, "American Indian Environmental Religions" in *American Indian Environments* ed. Christopher Vecsey (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980) 33.

disappearance of his bountiful resources. This belief contributed to the mistaken notion of 'super-abundance'¹⁹; the theory that Canada's resources were infinitely abundant and ultimately indestructible. This theory was later enshrined in John A. Macdonald's National Policy and continued to dominate Euro-Canadian thought until well into the twentieth century.

Euro-Canadian explorers and entrepreneurs sought out the riches of the West. However, upon arriving in the Kananaskis valley in the mid-1800's they found little big game and few Aboriginal groups in the valley. After the early traders some of the earliest Euro-Canadians to arrive in the area were Methodist missionaries. Reverend Robert Rundle began his work among the Stoney in the 1840's, followed by the Reverend Thomas Woolsey in the 1850's, and Reverend George McDougall and his son John in the 1870's.²⁰

Other early European visitors included men of science and exploration. One such early visitor was the University of Edinburgh educated James Sinclair, the son of a Scottish father, and Metis mother.²¹ In mid-August 1854 Sinclair left Edmonton House intending to escort a group of settlers over the Rocky Mountains and into Oregon. He had likely planned to take his party of 100

¹⁹ Nash.

²⁰ C.L. Kirby, "Information Report NOR-X-51: The Kananaskis Forest Experiment Station, Alberta (History, Physical Features, and Forest Inventory)" (Edmonton: Northern Forest Research Centre, Environment Canada Forestry Service, 1973) 1.

²¹ E.J. Hart, *Exploring the Heritage of the Banff-Bow Valley; The Place of the Bows, Part I, to 1930* (Banff, E.J.H. Literary Enterprises Ltd., 1999) 50.

people along with their carts and oxen over Whiteman's Pass, a route he had previously traveled. Mackipictoon, the Cree guide he had employed for that expedition claimed to know of a different route through the Rockies, one previously untravelled by white men.²² At the confluence of the Bow and Kananaskis rivers the party camped in preparation for the arduous journey over the Rockies.²³

The journey proved much more difficult than any Sinclair had previously made. The ground was covered with deadfall, they encountered vast swampy areas, high narrow trails and were forced to abandon their carts.²⁴ The stock suffered greatly, only being able to cover eleven to twelve kilometers a day, and many were lost along the way.²⁵ Mackipictoon eventually admitted he had become lost and it was not until October 1854 that the group finally found their way over the upper Kananaskis Pass into the Kootenay region and on to their destination in Oregon.²⁶

Another important explorer, John Palliser, was commissioned by the Imperial government to inventory the resources of the west. During his expedition from 1857 to 1860 he became the second known visitor to traverse the

²² Geneva Lent, *West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963) 252.

²³ *Ibid.*, 254.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 255.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 256.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.

Kananaskis Valley. Palliser named the pass Kananaskis after a legendary Cree whom it was told miraculously recovered from an axe blow to the head.²⁷

Another legendary Kananaskis figure who lived in the area in the twentieth century was George W. Pocaterra, a native of Italy, fluent in German, Spanish, Italian, English and eventually Stoney. Pocaterra came to Canada in 1903 and soon moved west to High River to work at the Bar D Ranch and later the Buffalo Head ranch in Eden Valley.²⁸ He did some trapping in the Valley during the winter of 1906–1907 with a number of Stoney companions.²⁹ Pocaterra also carried out unsuccessful mining explorations in the Kananaskis Valley.³⁰ Several natural and man-made features were later named after him including “Pocaterra Creek” and later “Pocatera Dam” on the Lower Kananaskis Lake. Ironically, Pocaterra had adamantly opposed the dam’s construction^{31, 32}

Lumbering and hydroelectric development followed these early adventurers. The Eau Claire and Bow River Lumber Company out of Wisconsin commenced operations in 1886. Lumber drives began on the Kananaskis River the next spring and continued every spring until 1944.³³ The dangerous drives

²⁷ Sadler, 1 & 3.

²⁸ Oltmann, 21.

²⁹ Sadler, 4.

³⁰ E.J. Hart, *Exploring the Heritage of the Banff-Bow Valley: Part II; 1930 to 1985, The Battle for Banff* (Banff: E.J.H. Literary Enterprises Ltd., 1999) 85.

³¹ Bruce Patterson, “Valley Rich in Resources Attracted Rugged Breed” *Calgary Herald*, 3 March 1979.

³² Sadler, 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, 63

took up to two months and required the labor of up to forty men. Six men lost their lives in the first one.³⁴ The mill in Calgary shut down in 1945, their main camp was dismantled and in 1952 a campground was built on the site.³⁵

In the early twentieth century hydroelectric developments came to the Kananaskis Valley. The Calgary Power Company Limited arrived in the valley in 1912. Its Kananaskis Falls plant at the junction of the Bow and Kananaskis Rivers was completed in 1914.³⁶ A federal report the same year dismissed the Upper Kananaskis Lake as a storage possibility because of the high cost involved. The report also perceptively noted that the area had the natural potential to some day become a "summer resort."³⁷ Nonetheless, this advice was disregarded and in 1932 work started on the spillway to raise the water level of the lake, increasing its storage capacity. Ten years later Calgary Power heightened the dam further, which increased storage to 100,000 acre-feet. In 1945 work began on the Barrier plant along the Kananaskis River. The potential of this area to one day become a recreation area seemed temporarily forgotten. Barrier Lake was created by flooding 673 acres of land that had been cleared of timber by prisoners of war held in the valley at the time.³⁸ On July 18, 1947, the plant began operations with a capacity of 12,900 kw and reservoir storage of

³⁴ Oltmann, 30.

³⁵ Sadler, 6.

³⁶ Ibid., 9.

³⁷ Ibid., 9.

³⁸ Oltmann, 43.

20,000 acre-feet. Another reservoir was begun in 1954 at the Lower Kananaskis Lake entering into operation as the Pocatererra Plant the next year. It had a capacity of 14, 900 kw and storage of 50, 000 acre-feet.³⁹ The Interlakes plant on the Upper Kananaskis Lake with a capacity of 5,000 kw and storage of 100,000 acre-feet, was also completed in 1955.⁴⁰

Mining exploration also occurred in the twentieth century. Although geologic surveys were done by the Palliser expedition of 1857-60, significant coal exploration only began following the publication of geologic maps of the Ribbon Creek area by D.B. Dowling of the Geological Survey of Canada in 1903-1904. George Pocatererra, mentioned earlier, also prospected in the early years of the twentieth century. He explored the areas eventually known as Pocatererra Creek and Evans-Thomas Creek but the lack of railway transportation in the area precluded any development of the coal seams discovered.⁴¹

Martin Nordegg was also important in exploring the coal resources of the Kananaskis.⁴² Nordegg came to Canada from Germany in 1906 and headed west in the hopes of finding coal in the eastern slopes of the Rockies. He hoped to supply the transcontinental railway through the Yellowhead Pass and with D.B.

³⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

⁴² For further information on Martin Nordegg please see Nordegg's memoirs *The Possibilities of Canada are Truly Great: Memoirs 1906 – 1924* edited by T.D. Regehr (Toronto: MacMillan, 1971).

Dowling's help discovered coal in 1907 on Mount Allan.⁴³ Nordegg continued to be active in the exploration of the Mount Allan coalfield in the Kananaskis, forming the company Brazeau Collieries Ltd. along with the owners of the Canadian Northern Railway.⁴⁴ At this point the Kananaskis Valley seemed slated to become simply another area to be exploited for its natural resources. There were some, however, that recognized the area's natural importance.

In the early years of the twentieth century scientific research began in the valley. The Kananaskis Forest Experiment Station was created in 1934 when just over 160 km of forestland located 8 kilometers south of the confluence of the Kananaskis and Bow Rivers was returned to the federal government.⁴⁵ The Dominion Forest Service chose the site as it was most representative of the Rocky Mountain Eastern Slopes' forests. Unemployed men developed the site under the administration of the Department of National Defense. The men cleared trees and built a road from Seebe to the station as well as constructed buildings and strung telephone line.⁴⁶ Research began in 1936 and consisted of "nursery work, planting of exotic species, experimental thinning, measurements of tree

⁴³ W. John Koch, *Martin Nordegg: The Uncommon Immigrant* (Edmonton: Brightest Pebble Publishing Co., 1997) 77-80

⁴⁴ *The Days After Yesterday: Rocky Mountain House/Nordegg and Area History* (Rocky Mountain House: The Rocky Mountain House Reunion Historical Society) 513-515. See also Anne (McMullen) Belliveau's *Small Moments in Time: The Story of Alberta's Big West Country; Upper North Saskatchewan River Corridor, Shunda Basin, Brazeau Collieries and Nordegg* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1999) 71-178.

⁴⁵ Kirby, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

volumes and identification of soils." Beginning in 1939, climatological research and fire hazard monitoring was carried out as well.⁴⁷

During the Second World War, the station served as POW camp #130 and initially housed civilian internees.⁴⁸ The Department of National Defence issued Regulation 25 on September 3 1939, which gave power to the Registrar General of Enemy Aliens to intern any enemy alien as a POW. They wasted no time exercising this power and the first prisoners arrived the same month.⁴⁹ Most of the early internees were German leaders of the Canadian branch of the NSDAP (Nazi party) or suspected saboteurs. Other detainees included were people who encouraged non-compliance with the war effort, as well as Italians and Japanese.⁵⁰ The men played football and cards, gardened and built models. Many also took courses in agriculture, geology, animal husbandry, and animal and plant nutrition offered by several universities.⁵¹ They also built the accommodation huts at the camp as well as a 12,000-watt power station.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.

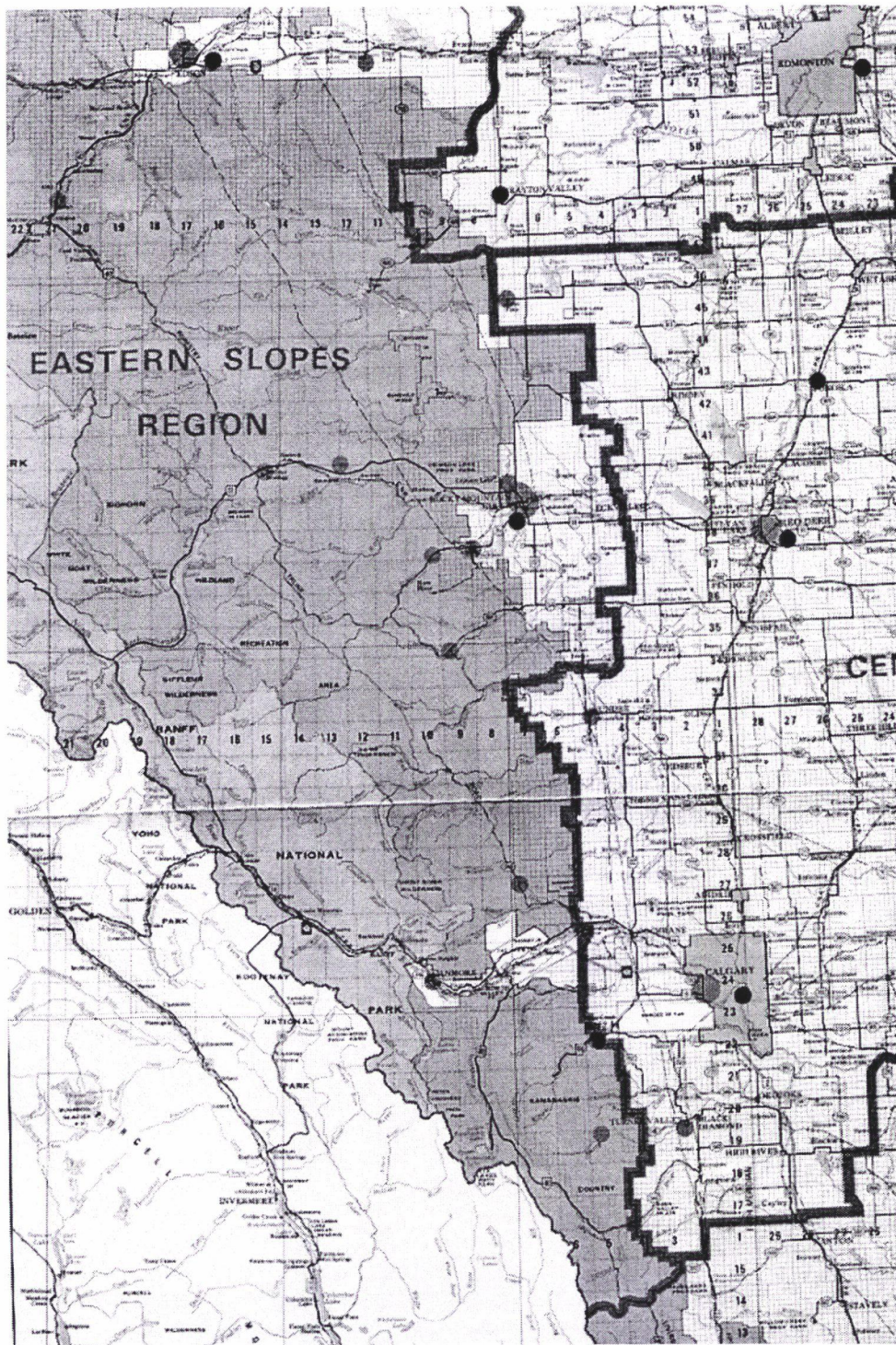
⁴⁸ John Melady, *Escape from Canada: The Untold Story of the German POWs in Canada 1939-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981) 28.

⁴⁹ David J. Carter, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire* (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press Ltd., 1980) 63.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁵¹ Oltmann, 76.

⁵² Carter, 73.



Map 2: Provincial Base Map; Public Lands General Classification

Source: Alberta Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, January 1991

A double fence, illumination, guard towers and patrols detracted from the camp's idyllic mountain setting. The guards were usually older men, veterans too old to enlist.⁵³ As mentioned earlier the men worked clearing the land for the Barrier dam project. They also salvaged timber from the Ribbon-Creek area, the site of a major forest fire in 1936.⁵⁴ The station housed some 35,046 POWs and internees throughout its operation.⁵⁵ In 1952 forty-seven square kilometers were removed from the station and returned to the province. In 1961 the station was reduced to sixty-two square kilometers.⁵⁶

In 1966, the University of Calgary (up until then the University of Alberta's Calgary campus) established its Environmental Sciences Center on the Kananaskis Forest Experiment Station site. The precursor to the Center had initially been established in 1962 under the auspices of the Eastern Slopes Watershed Research Program.⁵⁷ At first the Center served as a field research station for the University of Alberta and offered courses in environmental sciences such as geography, geology, chemistry and biology.⁵⁸ Work at the station included research on the impact of oil spills, forest harvesting, air quality,

⁵³ Melody, 32.

⁵⁴ Sadler, 7.

⁵⁵ Melody, 34.

⁵⁶ Oltmann, 63.

⁵⁷ D.L. Golding, 1970 Research Results from Marmot Creek Experimental Watershed, Alberta, Canada. 397-404 In *UNESCO Results of Research on Representative and Experimental Basins, Proceedings of the Wellington Symposium*, December 1970, Publication No. 96 & 97, UNESCO Studies and Reports in Hydrology.

⁵⁸ Oltmann, 63.

the Chinook phenomenon and reservoir storage. The Center undertook progressive research into recreation and its relation to quality of life.⁵⁹ In 1968 the University erected new buildings on the site, including laboratories, office space and one-story, chalet-type buildings for personnel at a cost of \$240,000. The center's annual budget grew from \$150,000 in 1963 to \$750,000 in 1968; most of the funding for the center came from the provincial and federal governments as well as industry.⁶⁰

The early 1950's proved a significant period for the valley as what had for so long been a wilderness accessed by few was opened up to be explored by many. The Kananaskis-Coleman Road, built in 1952, allowed more and more recreationalists into the valley. Calgary's increasing population of a quarter-of-a-million took advantage of this increased accessibility. The completion of the Trans-Canada Highway in 1962 made the general area accessible to an ever-increasing influx of tourists. The Canadian Youth Hostels Association (CYHA) also saw the recreational potential in the Kananaskis Valley. In 1961 the association established a site in a former schoolhouse building from the old Ribbon Creek village site.⁶¹ Recreation demands also led to the creation of the Snowridge ski facility below Fortress Mountain. Work began in 1968 and was

⁵⁹ Ihor Osakiwsky, "Scientists probe mysteries at Rockies," *Calgary Herald*, 12 August 1978.

⁶⁰ "Old POW Camp Reverts to Forestry Research Role," *Calgary Herald*, 06/04/68.

⁶¹ Sadler, 14.

completed in 1969 but the facility went bankrupt in 1971. In 1974 the hill reopened as Fortress Mountain Resort and remains in operation today.⁶²

Although home to a multitude of activities the valley lacked a unifying management plan. After World War Two preliminary attempts were made to co-ordinate developments in the eastern slopes. But, in an era of a small provincial civil service with a limited budget, the effort remained modest until the late 1960s.

Steps Toward Kananaskis Country

In 1948 the Alberta government divided the province into three zones; white, yellow and green. The future Kananaskis Country was part of the Eastern Slopes, in the green zone, which took up half of the province. The green zone consisted primarily of Crown land in which all future provincial parks would be established. Excluded from settlement and agriculture, it could not be sold. Although it permitted forestry, recreation, and grazing the green zone was to remain in essentially a wild state.⁶³

The provincial government at this time included the Eastern Slopes area in the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve. The Reserve had been established in 1910

⁶² Oltmann, 103-104.

⁶³ Edgar L. Jackson and Anne D. Dhanani, "Resources and Resource-Use Conflict" in *Environment and Economy: Essays on the Human Geography of Alberta* ed. B.M. Barr and P.J. Smith (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984) 80.

primarily to save the area from rapidly encroaching settlement.⁶⁴ Prior to 1929 the Dominion Forestry Service, a division of the Department of the Interior, managed this Reserve. After Alberta gained control of her Crown Lands with the Natural Resources Transfer Act of 1930, the Alberta Forestry Branch was formed within the Department of Lands and Mines. It became the body responsible for the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve; in total over 259,200 square kilometers of forest.⁶⁵ The Dominion Forestry Service and the Alberta Forestry Branch worked together to build trails and telephone lines, lookout towers, stopover cabins, roads and ranger headquarters. Logging, grazing and recreation were permitted and fire detection was of prime importance.⁶⁶

Attention was paid to the long-term needs of the Forest Reserve. The provincial authorities recognized its importance for timber, stream-flow, game and fish conservation, as well as recreation.⁶⁷ During the Depression unemployed men from Calgary constructed fire lines along roads and trails, disposed of slash and did some reseedling of previous burns.⁶⁸ The Prairie Fires Act, now under the Forest Service's jurisdiction, also prohibited the use of fires for land clearing

⁶⁴ Hanson, 5.

⁶⁵ Peter J. Murphy, *History of Forest and Prairie Fire Control Policy in Alberta* (Edmonton: Alberta Energy and Natural Resources Forest Service, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Alberta, 1985) 228.

⁶⁶ Hanson, 6.

⁶⁷ Murphy, 231.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

or brush disposal except under permit, which remained difficult to obtain.⁶⁹ Other fire deterrent steps included controlling and registering users of the Reserve, as well as building designated campgrounds and fire pits, and widening the railway rights-of-way cleared through hazardous sections of the Forest Reserve.⁷⁰

Despite these steps a large and destructive fire, the Pocaterra fire, burned in the Kananaskis Valley in 1933. Sections of the Reserve still remained extremely isolated which contributed to the fire's severity. Fire-fighting crews needed four days to get to the area, which allowed the fire to gain ground.⁷¹ The problem of access still had not been solved by 1936 and several fires caused further damage during this season as well. Carelessness in the use of fire as well as insufficient funds and staff contributed to the precarious situation.⁷²

From 1948 to 1973 the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board, which operated under joint federal-provincial legislation, managed the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve. The idea of establishing the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board was born during the bleak years of the Depression when neither the provincial nor the federal governments could afford to monitor the area alone. The Board's main priority was to provide a watershed management

⁶⁹ Ibid., 230.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 234.

⁷¹ Ibid., 239.

⁷² Ibid., 237.

policy for the area, regarded as the critical headwaters region for the prairie provinces.⁷³ The Reserve contained the Saskatchewan River's headwaters. Concern arose that the glaciers that fed the river for centuries were disappearing.⁷⁴ The Board was officially constituted by both federal and provincial governments in April 1948. It was to exist for twenty-five years at which point either party could dissolve it with one year's written notice.⁷⁵

The Board included a chair and two members who ran three divisions: Office Administration, Engineering, and Forestry. The Engineering Division received most of the funds for road construction, communications and fire protection. The Forestry Division looked after forest protection planning, including fire protection, and forestland management planning for the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve.⁷⁶ This immense area consisted of three forests – Crowsnest, Bow River, and Clearwater – almost equal in size to Jasper and Banff National Parks combined.⁷⁷ The Alberta Forest Service supplied the Board with most of its staff, which eventually led to the dissolution of the Board in 1973 and the assumption of its duties by the Alberta Forest Service itself.

⁷³ Alberta Energy and Natural Resources, "A Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes" (Edmonton: Alberta Energy and Natural Resources, 1977) 3.

⁷⁴ Lyn Harrington, "Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Project," *Canadian Geographic Journal* Vol. 48 No. 4 April 1954, 133.

⁷⁵ Hanson, 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁷ Harrington, 129.

The Board was responsible for: the management of the necessary physical facilities; protection of the forests from fire, insects, and disease; and management of the forests for watershed protection purposes.⁷⁸ The various resources of the area called for the development of a multiple-use resource and land management plan.⁷⁹ When conflicts arose, priority was given to that which would benefit the greatest number of people, without harming the water resources.⁸⁰ Half a century later this multi-use philosophy continues to dictate activities in the area and forms the basis of Kananaskis Country policy planning.

As mentioned, fire protection remained of paramount importance. The Alberta Forest Service saw this as one of the most important steps toward more effective management.⁸¹ Poor communication methods and the difficulty transporting men and equipment to fires were the most immediate problems. To combat this, the province, now increasingly better funded, thanks to growing oil and natural gas revenues, constructed an extensive road network and established a better communication network.⁸² A trunk road system running from Coleman to Nordegg was completed in 1956.⁸³ Mapping and aerial photography was undertaken in order to get a better idea of the layout of the forests and to

⁷⁸ Hanson, 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁸¹ Murphy, 247.

⁸² Harrington, 136.

⁸³ Murphy, 253.

determine the most effective spots for fire lookouts.⁸⁴ Several large fires had previously raged through the Kananaskis Valley in the twentieth century. In particular, one in 1910 that covered 1600 square kilometers, the Pocaterra fire of 1933, and a 1936 fire that destroyed 900,000,000 board feet of timber.⁸⁵

The improved road system made the Eastern Slopes, and in particular, the Kananaskis Valley, much easier to access. Although the trunk road was constructed to speed firefighters into the area, it also opened up the Eastern Slopes to an increasing number of big-game hunters, fishers, and recreationalists.⁸⁶ A system of campgrounds was built in order to concentrate campers in areas that were covered by the fire detection system and where fighting a fire could be done more easily.⁸⁷ The province also built a ranger station at the beginning of the trunk road. Here tourists filled out a form to allow rangers some idea of those entering the area. The forms also helped to identify missing travelers and pin down responsibility for fires.⁸⁸

Use of the area increased and despite these attempts environmental degradation followed close behind. Ignoring the established campgrounds, people continued to camp randomly, leaving "pizza boxes and disposable

⁸⁴ Hanson, 13.

⁸⁵ Oltmann, 112.

⁸⁶ Harrington, 137.

⁸⁷ Hanson, 26.

⁸⁸ Harrington, 138.

diapers" behind.⁸⁹ The eastern slopes grew more and more accessible as 4x4 and snowmobile trails cut muddy scars across the land. Not only did the land suffer, but as hunters and fishers pushed further into the wilds of the eastern slopes, wildlife numbers dropped as well. Too limited in number rangers could not always effectively control the situation. To counter the effects of increased use of motorized vehicles in the eastern slopes some suggested expanding and increasing existing campgrounds as well as constructing a series of hiking paths. They also called for legislation restricting the use of motorized vehicles in the backcountry.⁹⁰ All of these issues would begin to be addressed in the early 1970's in a series of hearings by the Environment Conservation Authority and led to the establishment of Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial.

Petroleum recovery also proved to be a larger problem than the Board originally anticipated; in 1948 there were no producing wells in the forest reserves and very little exploration.⁹¹ However, by 1955 demand had increased. Several wells began production in the area and by 1973, the area was inundated: pipelines, access roads and seismic lines laced the hills. There were also two processing plants within the Board's management area, and others adjacent.⁹² The Board spent much of its time attempting to minimize the damage done to the

⁸⁹ Laureen Ridsdel, "Kananaskis Controversy," *Calgary* Oct/79, 47.

⁹⁰ Jim Wiebe, *Calgary Herald*, Friday 22 June 1973.

⁹¹ Hanson, 25.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 25.

area. They designed methods of restoring damaged watersheds, drafted regulations for legislative action, and negotiated with individual companies as well as the Canadian Petroleum Association. It took years, however, to draw up an effective control mechanism. The creation of a Forest Land Use Branch in 1973 helped with this. A land-use officer had also been appointed for each of the three forest units within the Eastern Slopes area. Legislation requiring preventative procedures and reclamation by operators was put in effect, and a program for reclaiming damaged land created.⁹³

Coal mining proved another challenge for the Board. While strip operations in some areas posed no threat to the watershed in the Eastern Slopes, others inflicted serious damage. Water from spring melts and summer storms passed through piles of slack coal and carried it into creeks and lakes. Water was also contaminated by coal blowing or falling from trucks.⁹⁴ But companies were reluctant to improve conditions and often improvements were done haphazardly and to little practical effect.⁹⁵ Regulation was difficult because many of the coal leases superseded the Board and it had little control over the actions of companies. Jim Wiebe, a fisheries technologist expressed concern over coal mining development in the Kananaskis in an article in the *Calgary Herald* in June 1973. He argued that coal extraction posed a "very real threat" to the

⁹³ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 41.

recreational potential of the eastern slopes and that the area of land affected by strip mining was far greater than the area actually mined. The damage done to the watershed would have repercussions across the province.⁹⁶

Research into watershed management was one of the most important activities carried out in the Eastern Slopes area. Weather stations were established at the ranger headquarters and precipitation gauges were placed in valleys, on slopes, and mountaintops.⁹⁷ Precipitation levels were measured and stream flows recorded and testing was done of erosion control methods.⁹⁸ Varying methods of reforestation were attempted and to further protect the watershed many grazing leases were discontinued or relocated.⁹⁹ Any action was taken cautiously as the science of watershed management was still in its infancy during the period the Board was in operation.¹⁰⁰

By the early 1970s concerns began to be raised about the environmental protection of this precious wilderness area, increasingly open to outside intervention. These concerns helped to bring about the development of Kananaskis Country in 1978.¹⁰¹ Growing concerns about the pressure of huge numbers of visitors on Banff National Park also contributed. Finally, in the early 1970s the federal government made known that it opposed the further

⁹⁶ Jim Wiebe, *Calgary Herald*, Friday 22 June 1973.

⁹⁷ Harrington, 142.

⁹⁸ Hanson, 28.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32, 35.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰¹ Hanson, 43.

development of Banff National Park. This decision influenced the Alberta government to consider the development of the Eastern Slopes, in particular, the Kananaskis Valley, as an alternative recreation destination.¹⁰²

The Kananaskis Valley has witnessed thousands of years of human activity but has only been significantly modified in the last century. It has been used for a multitude of activities over the past hundred years: mining, lumbering, ranching, hydroelectric power, science and recreation. It has also changed hands a number of times: from Aboriginal occupation, to federal and now provincial ownership. The following chapter will look more in depth at the period from roughly 1970 to 1978 when the process of creating Kananaskis Country began in earnest. It will discuss the controversies that plagued the provincial government as well as its successes. It is a critical examination of the motivations and actions of a multitude of concerned parties.

¹⁰² E.J. Hart, "The Great Divide: Conservation vs. Development in Alberta's National Parks, 1905-2005, an Historical Overview" unpublished Centennial lecture, Department of History, University of Calgary, 20 January 2005.

CHAPTER THREE

Reconciling Recreation & Resources: 1970 to 1978

Three individuals in particular deserve credit for the creation of Kananaskis Country: Peter Lougheed, Clarence Copithorne, and Bill Milne. In addition, the prosperity caused by the rise of oil prices in the mid-1970s also facilitated its creation. The announcement in October 1978 of the Alberta government's Policy for Recreation Development of Kananaskis Country signaled a great achievement. It was the bringing together of a diversity of provincial government departments to create a multiple use facility that would be nationally recognized. It was also innovative in that it was the first creation of its kind - a recreational buffer zone that solved the issue of border control in provincial parks. While talk had begun about creating another provincial park in the valley as early as 1974, Kananaskis Provincial Park was formally announced in 1977 and officially created the next year, in 1978.¹

Lougheed, Copithorne, and Milne

Peter Lougheed's lifelong political involvement with parks in the Rockies began when he "was a young and politically-ambitious" lawyer in the mid 1960s. He worked on the unsuccessful campaign to secure the 1972 winter Olympics for

¹ Joel Christensen, "Kananaskis Country: From Vision to Reality (25 years)" *Alberta Connections*, Spring/Summer 2003, 7.

Banff.² During the summer of 1970 Lougheed, then Opposition Leader, called on the government to refuse tenders for natural resource development on lands under consideration for Wilderness Area designation, as the Kananaskis area was. He requested that the government hold off on taking tenders until a Wilderness Area bill could be passed in the spring of 1971.³ Lougheed followed this with a strongly worded letter to the Honorable A.R. Patrick, Minister of Mines and Minerals, reiterating his request that natural resource development be suspended until a decision was made regarding the Kananaskis area. He voiced his strong support for the Kananaskis Valley being set aside as some sort of protected area in light of not only its beauty, but also because of the overcrowding of Alberta's national parks, particularly Banff. Lougheed also deplored the absence of a land use policy that clearly established the relationship between wilderness protection, recreation, and resource development values. He expressed his hope that the government would not designate the area only after resource exploration and development had already completely eroded its recreational possibilities.⁴

The establishment of Kananaskis Country owes a great deal to Peter Lougheed. Diversifying Alberta's economy was a vital part of his ambitious

² Hart, 201.

³ "Land Savers Win Plea," *The Albertan*, 19 August 1970.

⁴ Letter from Peter Lougheed, M.L.A. to Hon. A.R. Patrick, Minister of Mines and Minerals, "Natural Resource Development in the Kananaskis Lake Region," undated, AWA Archives, Land Use-AB-SES Kan 1971-1985 Correspondence.

program for Alberta's future. By opening up the Kananaskis Valley to a number of profit-generating activities he hoped to earn revenue for the province, yet still protect a great deal of undeveloped wilderness. The non-renewable resources such as timber and oil and gas were supplemented with the substantial revenue generated from tourism. Like Premier Brownlee in the thirties, Lougheed recognized the integral importance of Alberta's natural resources to the economic strength of the province. By protecting Kananaskis Country from being overrun by industry he was ensuring its continuing viability as a tourist destination.⁵

Lougheed believed that his plan for Kananaskis country would not satisfy all users but provided a reasonable compromise. It allowed for backcountry use as well as permitted less adventurous tourists outdoor recreation opportunities.⁶ He envisioned facilities for golf, tennis, baseball and other sports co-existing with undeveloped wilderness for hikers free of the drone of recreational vehicles and snowmobiles. Lougheed also felt Kananaskis Country was first and foremost a recreation area for Albertans and wished to discourage promotion outside of Alberta.⁷

⁵ For more information on Peter Lougheed see Allan Tupper's article in *Alberta Premiers of the 20th Century* ed. Brad Rennie (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre University of Regina, 2004), 203-228. Also see David Wood's biography *The Lougheed Legacy* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1985) and Allan Hustak's biography *Peter Lougheed; A Biography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1979).

⁶ "Kananaskis Park Plans Announced" *Edmonton Journal*, 7 October 1977.

⁷ *Honorable Peter Lougheed, Joint Development Plan for Kananaskis Valley*, 26 April 1977, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol I.

The former premier himself credits two others for also recognizing the recreational importance of the Kananaskis Valley. Bill Milne, a Calgary architect and original member of the Kananaskis Country Advisory Board, and Clarence Copithorne, rancher and Banff-Cochrane MLA, both discussed the valley's potential as a recreation area with Lougheed.

While information on the direct involvement of these two men remains limited, one source indicates that the initial idea originated with Copithorne and not with Lougheed, but that Lougheed almost immediately endorsed it wholeheartedly. Copithorne became Lougheed's minister of Highways in 1971 and approached the premier about his idea to develop the Kananaskis as a recreation destination shortly thereafter.⁸ Bill Milne corresponded with Lougheed for a number of years preceding the opening of Kananaskis Country discussing a number of ideas regarding village and trail development. He expressed a great deal of concern regarding the continued environmental degradation in the area.⁹ In short, it seems fair to conclude that Kananaskis Country was the creation of a number of individuals and Premier Lougheed, as the most visible member of this trio, has received the lion's share of the accolades.

⁸ Larry Boyd, "Longview Resident Investigates Kananaskis History, *Eagleview Post*, 2 November 1987.

⁹ *Various Memos between members of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, Alberta Department of Lands and Forests concerning Milne's proposals as well as correspondence between Milne and Lougheed, 1974-1977, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol. I.*

Environmental Planning

As mentioned in chapter two, the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board was dissolved in 1973 and the Alberta Forest Service assumed its duties. In the same year the Environment Conservation Authority (ECA) conducted hearings into land use and resource development in the Eastern Slopes, including the Kananaskis Valley. The ECA had been created as an "independent advisor" for government, focusing on controlling pollution, protecting the environment, and conserving natural resources.¹⁰ Increasing land use pressure in the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains led the government to conduct a number of studies designed to create a comprehensive land use plan for management and development that went beyond the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board's scope. This increased concern for the Eastern Slopes was a critical prerequisite for the creation of Kananaskis Country. The Alberta government was taking steps toward protecting a valuable resource of the province and at the same time appeasing as many concerned parties as possible.

The government recognized the necessity of clarifying the priorities for land use in the region before further unplanned development occurred.¹¹ They believed that in order to best-utilize and manage the myriad of resources in the

¹⁰"Even the Fiercest Critics Admit Kananaskis Park Proposal Has Merit" *Calgary Herald*, Saturday October 15 1977, A7.

¹¹ Alberta Lands and Forests, "The Foothills Resource Allocation Study" (Alberta: Alberta Lands and Forests, 1973) 11.

area, a comprehensive regional planning program needed to be implemented. The 1973 Foothills Resource Allocation Study of the Kananaskis-Spray district, an initiative that resulted from the ECA hearings, discussed the resource potential of this area of the Eastern Slopes. It recommended, by way of zoning, what uses should be permitted in the area.

The study identified high potential for outdoor recreation, coal, petroleum and mining. However, the study insisted that where the development of nonrenewable resources conflicted with recreation, wildlife, or water quality the latter would take precedence.¹² Exploration and mining was discouraged especially above 6,000 feet because of the difficulty in replacing the vegetation at that altitude and the negative impact it would have on elk and bighorn sheep populations.¹³ Resource development in general, including lead, zinc, coal and oil and gas extraction, was discouraged if it interfered with wildlife.

The policy resulting from this study focused on public recreation and watershed priorities.¹⁴ The ECA hearings recognized the importance of preserving, as well as utilizing, the Eastern Slopes in such a way "as to retain the whole region as a renewable resource for the province."¹⁵ Recreation was seen as

¹² Ibid., 12.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Alberta Energy and Natural Resources, "A Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes" (Edmonton: Alberta Energy and Natural Resources, 1977) 2.

¹⁵ *The Kananaskis Development*, PAA, Acc. 87.303 Box 1, November 18 1974.

one of the primary uses of the valley, in large part to relieve the increasing pressure on the national parks and in particular, Banff National Park.

To accommodate a multitude of uses in the valley, the province divided the Eastern Slopes area into zones that identified appropriate uses for specific regions. These zones provided resolution of land use conflicts and were based on an evaluation of the physical environment, the existing resources, present land use, and public interest. Planners believed that zoning maximized the benefits derived from the region while minimizing the resource conflicts.¹⁶ Any pre-existing land uses that were not compatible with the zoning would be phased out after government commitments to the activity were fulfilled.¹⁷ In short the purpose of zoning was to utilize "the full range of available resources within a multiple use context without adversely affecting watershed or environmental conditions in the long term."¹⁸

A number of zoning priorities were identified, including recreation and aesthetic quality, wildlife habitat protection, and the protection of naturally significant landscapes. Resources were to be developed consistent with conservation and environmental protection principles, priority given to renewable resource management over non-renewable. As well, service centers would be built in defined areas, and Crown lands in the Eastern Slopes retained

¹⁶ "A Policy For Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes" 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸ Ibid. 9.

in public ownership. Watershed management was given priority above all and could not be addressed "by establishing a separate zone"; it took precedence throughout the area.¹⁹ The zoning system set aside areas for wildlife and wilderness protection, agriculture, industry, recreation, and commercial development throughout the Eastern Slopes.

Kananaskis Country is located in the bottom third and narrowest part of the Eastern Slopes and contains the Kananaskis, Opal, Misty, and Highwood mountain ranges. The most important resources in this area are the extraordinary mountain scenery, wildlife, and watershed. The government also recognized that the area had high Provincial Park potential. The previous Social Credit administration had created Bow Valley and Bragg Creek Provincial Parks in 1959 and 1960 respectively.²⁰ Recreational activities in the area included hiking, scenic viewing, fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, and cross-country skiing. High demand was also placed on this area for grazing, logging, coal mining, quarrying, and natural gas development. This demand resulted in the southern portion of the Eastern Slopes having the most complex zoning system of the entire area.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁰ Joel Christensen, "Kananaskis Country: From Vision to Reality," *Alberta Connections* Spring/Summer 2003, 7.

²¹ "A Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes" 12.

The Kananaskis-Elbow-Sheep area was a particularly significant Prime Protection Zone. The purpose of the Prime Protection Zone was to "preserve the environmentally sensitive terrain and the valuable aesthetic resource." This zone contained the high-elevation forests and steep, rocky slopes that produced much of the steam flow in the Eastern Slopes. Rare and fragile landscapes were protected, as well as the critical wildlife ranges of the bighorn sheep and mountain goat. Recreation here consisted primarily of dispersed activities such as hiking, fishing, and hunting. Serviced camping was banned and low-impact camping was restricted.²² Ski facilities would be considered as this zone contained the only suitable terrain and snow conditions in the Eastern Slopes. However, accommodations and associated facilities would not be permitted in the zone and would have to be developed in adjacent zones. In fact, a large number of land use activities were disallowed, including mineral development, oil and gas development, commercial timber operations, domestic grazing, industrial development, residential development and off-highway vehicle activity. Existing resource developments would continue until the extraction was complete at which point the land would be allowed to return to a natural state.²³

²² Ibid., 5.

²³ Ibid., 6.

This area also contained various Critical Wildlife Zones and grazing was thus carefully managed, as the aim of this zone was to protect wildlife habitat. Animals found in the area include mountain goat and sheep, elk, deer, moose, grizzly bear and cougar. However, to control populations, the provincial government did permit hunting and trapping in this area.²⁴ Uses not permitted here included off-highway vehicles, serviced camping, agriculture, mineral development, commercial, industrial, or residential development.²⁵

There were several General Recreation Zone areas throughout the Kananaskis. These areas provided access corridors and service for people using the Prime Protection and Multiple Use Zone areas.²⁶ General Recreation Zone areas provided outdoor activities with some limitations; off-highway vehicles were limited to certain trails and hunting was carefully controlled. Activities not allowed included agriculture, domestic grazing, petroleum, natural gas or mineral development, and industrial or residential development.²⁷

Industrial development was confined to the Industrial Zones and consisted of coal mining at Tent Mountain, Racehorse Creek and Canmore as well as limestone and shale quarries in the Canmore Corridor.²⁸ Proposals for further industrial development were scrutinized with environmental, social, and

²⁴ Ibid., 6.

²⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁶ Ibid., 13.

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 13.

economic considerations in mind.²⁹ The Facility Zones accommodated tourists using the adjoining zones for recreation purposes and included such developments as hotels, gas stations and restaurants.³⁰ Residential development was permitted, but permanent residency was not.³¹ Facility as well as Industrial Zone property was obtained by 50-year leases rather than by outright sale.³² Hunting, trapping, logging, and mineral development were not permitted in the Facility Zones.³³

The provincial government announced that the above zones would be subject to ongoing research and modification, as further information and knowledge became available. It was hoped these zones would provide "flexible, positive and orderly direction" for the management of the Eastern Slopes area.³⁴

Yet, as public knowledge regarding government plans for the area increased, so did public outcry. Various concerned groups and individuals felt that this zoning system remained too flexible and too easy to alter. It made too many concessions to industrial and commercial interests.

Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial Park

Over the years Alberta's wild areas, forests, and parks had become an area of great public, and thus political, interest. The provincial government's

²⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁰ Ibid., 13.

³¹ Ibid., 17.

³² Ibid., 17.

³³ Ibid., 11.

³⁴ Ibid., 18.

financial commitment by way of funds allocated from the newly created Heritage Savings Trust Fund indicated the optimism politicians had in the Kananaskis Valley's potential to be an important part of Alberta's park system. The future Kananaskis Country was envisioned by many – in terms of the variety of facilities and of outdoor recreational opportunities for a heavily urbanized and industrialized province – to be one of the preeminent wilderness area developments in North America."³⁵ It was the first time that park planners were able to design an area from the beginning that paid attention to the fragility of the environment while still providing year-round recreation for the citizens of Alberta, and profit for government and industry alike. Kananaskis Country was also innovative in that it provided a buffer zone for the provincial parks and wilderness areas within it. This was meant to prevent activities unacceptable in provincial parks from taking place immediately adjacent to them, which had been an area of concern for some time.

Environment and wilderness interest groups, however, remained vigilant. They had also expressed their concern over the future of this spectacular region. The National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada was very active

³⁵ Mason, 171.

throughout the history of Kananaskis Country's development. They had been one of several groups to present briefs to the ECA hearings in 1973.³⁶

The Alberta Wilderness Association had already suggested a plan in the late 1960's to have 560 square kilometers of the Kananaskis Valley designated a wilderness area.³⁷ At that point it still effectively remained a wilderness administered by the Alberta Forest Service as an underdeveloped protection forest. The AWA and other environmental groups were pleased by the provincial government's recognition of the ecological importance and sensitivity of the region. They vigorously endorsed the decision to make the Elbow-Sheep area of Kananaskis Country a Wilderness Area in much the same manner they had suggested years earlier.³⁸

The intention to create a provincial park in the Kananaskis area was formally announced in the 1974 throne speech.³⁹ Alberta park planners for Alberta Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife began surveying the area in the summer of 1974 to inventory the potential of the valley for a possible provincial park. The planners identified numerous outstanding features worthy of the creation of Alberta's first mountain provincial park: large alpine lakes, ice caps and glaciers as well as waterfalls and canyons. The wide variety of landscape – from icy

³⁶ Newsletter of National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada Edmonton Chapter, Number 1 16/10/72 Volume IV, PAA, 73.99 SE.

³⁷ A.J. Fromhold, "Alberta's Kananaskis Wilderness Area," *Canadian Geographic* 97:3:40-45 Dec 1978/Jan 1979, 40.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁹ "Kananaskis: Alberta's Answer to Jasper & Banff" *Saint John's Calgary Report* 14-15, Oct. 14 1977.

glaciers to verdant alpine meadows – hosted a plethora of wildlife including marmot, pika, bighorn sheep, elk and moose. The spectacular scenery and its proximity to Calgary made the Kananaskis valley an ideal place for a provincial park.⁴⁰ The Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife envisioned the valley as a recreation corridor running north to south through the foothills where Albertans could pursue activities like wildlife watching, hiking, and canoeing.⁴¹ Kananaskis Country was the fulfillment of this vision.

This new recreation area that encompassed various provincial parks and wilderness areas was also intended to alleviate the increasing pressure on Banff and Jasper National Parks.⁴² The area was closer to Calgary and offered the same spectacular scenery without the crush of tourists typical of Banff or Jasper National Parks.⁴³ Calgarians getting out of the city for the day or weekend fighting bumper-to-bumper traffic to reach packed campgrounds and an endless stretch of hikers on well-worn trails would now have alternate destinations in Kananaskis Country.⁴⁴ Reducing visitation to the National Parks would also help to alleviate the looming threat of irreversible environmental degradation.

⁴⁰ Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Kananaskis Provincial Park* pamphlet, 1977, PAA, 91.270, Box 34, E-15-3, Vol I.

⁴¹ A.J. Fromhold, "Alberta's Kananaskis Wilderness Area" *Canadian Geographic* 97:3:40-45 Dec 1978/Jan 1979, 41.

⁴² Fromhold, 42.

⁴³ Bypassing Banff Tourist Trap" *North Hill News*, Oct. 18 1977.

⁴⁴ "Kananaskis Country: Developing the Wilderness for Recreation" *Alberta Motorist* May/June 1979, 13.

Planners identified seven main benefits to adding another provincial park in the Kananaskis and further developing the entire area. They were: the intelligent utilization of an under-used asset; the creation of a potential \$25,000,000 a year tourism and recreation industry; employment opportunities for two thousand workers; opportunities for family run operations; justification of the Kananaskis road for non-commercial use; the blending of private and public enterprise; and recreation opportunities for all levels of income groups.⁴⁵ Subsequently the government claimed the overall objective was to provide the greatest range of recreational activities compatible within the capacity of the resource base; to ensure the protection and perpetuation of resources while educating users about their importance; and to provide day use and camping sites for users.⁴⁶

In reality, recreational or conservation objectives for the Kananaskis Valley still could not stand alone. Many of the 'benefits' recognized by the provincial government seemed to be economic; utilizing an "under-used" asset. While government pamphlets and publications promoted the area as a wilderness retreat for all Albertans, in reality, there was a great deal at stake economically as well.

⁴⁵ *The Kananaskis Development*, PAA, Acc. 87.303 Box 1.

⁴⁶ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Ministerial Briefing Material on Kananaskis For Meeting with Mr. Milne*, 7 September 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol. I.

The boundaries of Kananaskis Provincial Park were chosen with economic concerns in mind. The boundaries chosen were those with minimal land use conflicts and thus more easily managed.⁴⁷ There were only minor conflicts, such as cottage subdivisions, petroleum, natural gas, and coal leases as well as timber stands – all of which could either be cancelled or otherwise overcome. Dave Perraton, Acting Head of the Resource Assessment and Management division of the Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife Branch, for example, allowed a timber lease of ninety-six acres to be cut after the formation of the park, given that the company abide by various guidelines. These included clearing debris so that movement of ungulates through the area was not affected and that the edges of cut patches are gradual rather than abruptly ended. Park staff would then determine the reforestation program based on the needs of the entire park.⁴⁸ Several oil, gas, and coal leases also existed within the park boundaries, as it was suggested that the process of expropriating the leases under The Expropriation Act would be “time-consuming and...expensive business” and that unless the companies were willing to voluntarily negotiate the transfer of their leases to the Crown the leases should be allowed to operate until such time as they expired.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Minutes of December Kananaskis Briefing Meeting January 21 1977*, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol I.

⁴⁸ Dave Perraton, *Disposition of Timber Lease B2-L15*, Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 17 Nov 1977, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

⁴⁹ Department of Energy and Natural Resources, *Mineral Dispositions in Kananaskis Provincial Park*, 22 April 1977, PAA, Acc. 91.270, Box 30, E15-3, Vol II.

So while Kananaskis Provincial Park had few conflicts, development was allowed to proceed relatively unhindered in the buffer zone of Kananaskis Country. In short, both planners and politicians seemed eager to "have their cake and eat it too." They created a provincial park that avoided areas of commercial or economic importance but surrounded it with Kananaskis Country, a recreational buffer zone, that permitted a wide range of resource extraction. They gave Albertans their park, and retained profit from industry as well.

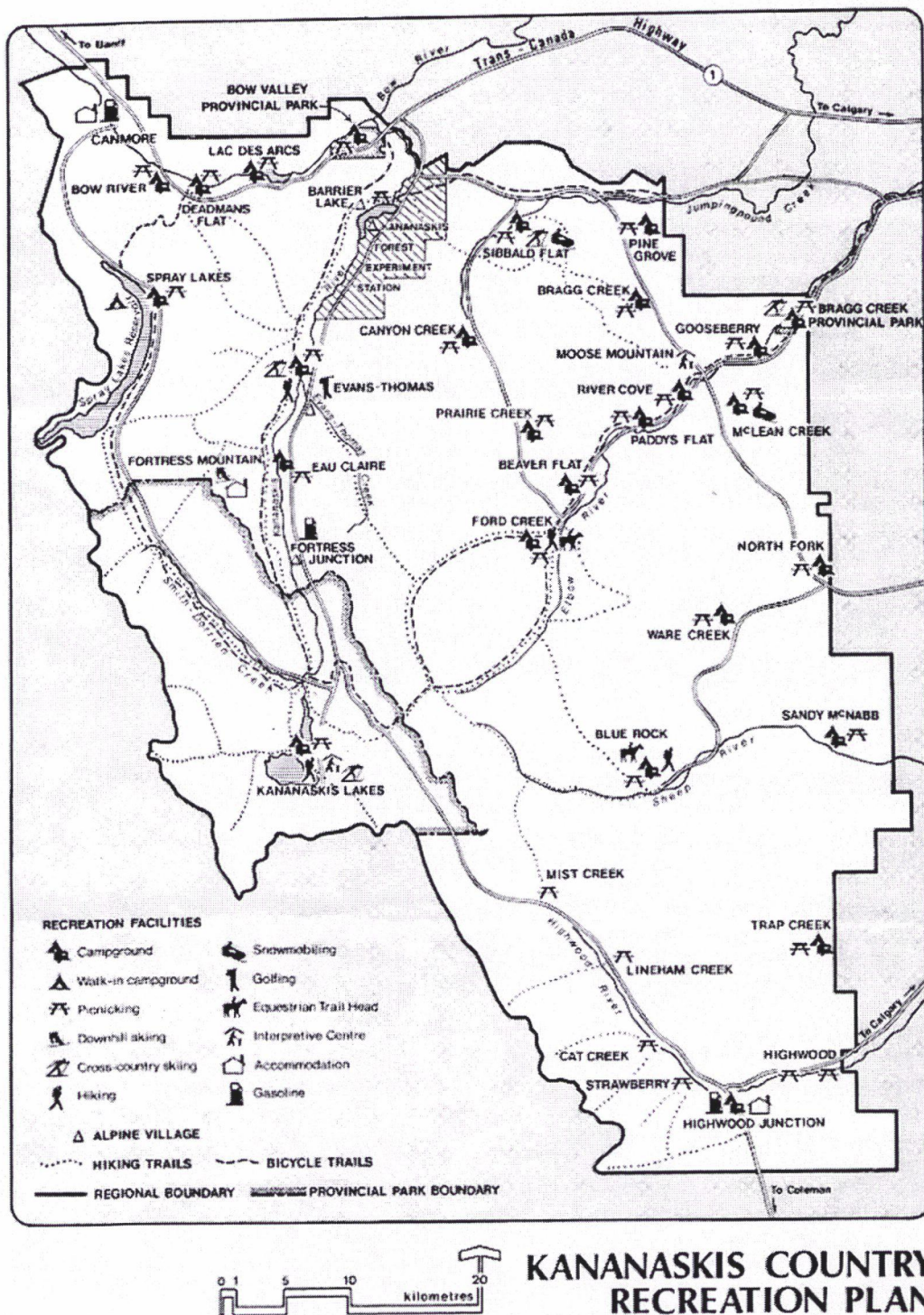
Pre-Planning

In 1976 the Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife received \$500,000 for pre-planning Kananaskis Country. Resource inventories studied the geology, soils, wildlife, hydrology and archaeology of the area. There was also a water/sewage study. The Department developed a general management plan outlining resource management, interpretive plans, visitor use and operations. Planning, design, and engineering was done for a major camping facility to be begun in 1978. A public information program was designed and implemented. Another \$383,000 was budgeted for the acquisition of operational and maintenance equipment; the establishment and operation of a temporary administration complex; the construction of an information booth; and facility

and services maintenance.⁵⁰ The projected capital development commitment for 1978/78 was \$700-750,000.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Fact Sheet Re: Kananaskis Provincial Park*, 23 June 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115 Box 3, Vol 1.

⁵¹ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Minutes of December Kananaskis Briefing Meeting*, 21 January 1977. PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol. I.



Map 3: Kananaskis Country Recreation Plan

Source: Alberta Department of Recreation and Parks, 1988

Other projects in the 1976/77 season included aerial photography, mapping, hiring staff and consulting with diverse groups including Calgary Power, the RCMP, the Province of British Columbia and the Canadian Youth Hostel Association.⁵² All planning and design work was to be undertaken by the Parks Division, save for certain projects requiring expertise not necessarily available in the department. Some of the resource inventories and water/sewage feasibility studies mentioned above were done through consultants to ensure the highest level of quality, for example.⁵³

In the planning stage of Kananaskis Country planners took their environmental responsibilities seriously. A June 1976 letter to Canadian Nature Tours from J.E. Potton, then assistant deputy minister for parks, illustrates this well. Potton cautioned the group, then planning a tour in Kananaskis, that "much of the backcountry is very fragile and not suitable for group use." They were directed to designated campsites on the east side of the Kananaskis Lakes, instructed to only use designated fire pits. The assistant deputy minister gave them contact information for the heads of the Planning Section, Resource

⁵² Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, *Kananaskis Task Force Meeting*, 15 March 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3.

⁵³ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Ministerial Briefing Material on Kananaskis For Meeting with Mr. Milne*, 7 September 1976. PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol I.

Assessment and Management Section and for the Parks District Superintendent, should they require further information.⁵⁴

Park planners conducted archaeological investigations throughout the valley. One archaeological survey undertaken during the 1976-77 field season identified over sixty sites of historical or archaeological significance.⁵⁵ The Calgary Regional Planning Commission's year long, five volume study of Alberta recreation and recreation areas recommended that further archaeological digs be conducted in the Exshaw and Lac des Arc valleys as well as the "Indian Flats" in the Canmore area before any development occurred as the commission identified a number of sites in these areas. Besides these campsites, archaeologists found pictograph sites and stone quarries in the valley.⁵⁶

The environmental integrity of Kananaskis Provincial Park required placing limits on certain key activities – such as fishing, trail riding, snowmobiling and camping. If, or when, intervention was required, the Parks Department prepared to implement controls and rehabilitation measures to maintain or rejuvenate affected resources and areas. Some environmentally sensitive steps taken included establishing a campground on the old Canyon Creek gravel pit rather than clearing more land elsewhere; closing the Highwood

⁵⁴ Correspondence, J.E. Potton (Assistant Deputy Minister – Parks) to Canadian Nature Tours, 10 June 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

⁵⁵ Second Annual Report of Alberta's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, 1976-1977, 33.

⁵⁶ "The Kananaskis: 5,000 Years of Camping" *Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1977.

Pass at certain times of year to protect wildlife; and building bridges over streams to protect the watershed from damage by 4x4's and snowmobiles.⁵⁷ In the mid 1970s planners intended to maintain 70% of the Eastern Slopes region in its natural state.⁵⁸

Planners recognized the long term benefits of more educated users and implemented "a well planned outdoor interpretive and environmental education program."⁵⁹ Consequently the Kananaskis visitor center was slated for construction during the summer 1979.⁶⁰

Aware that a great deal of back-country use would be undertaken in Kananaskis, planners felt it important to develop back country use control programs that addressed issues such as back-country shelters and cooking fires.⁶¹ Backcountry users would be required to register upon arrival and checkout before leaving. This would ensure that park personnel could verify backcountry users were equipped with proper gear and were aware of park regulations.⁶²

For the less adventurous designers recommended various campgrounds with easy access off the Kananaskis highway, despite the constant flurry of road

⁵⁷ Laureen Ridsdel, "Kananaskis Controversy" *Calgary*, Oct/79, 52.

⁵⁸ Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Ministerial Briefing Material on Kananaskis For Meeting with Mr. Milne*, 7 September 1976. PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Volume I.

⁵⁹ Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Memorandum: Provincial Parks Proposed Recreation Area – Upper Kananaskis*, 7 September 1976. PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Volume I.

⁶⁰ *Visitor Exhibit Design Kananaskis Park*, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Volume I.

⁶¹ Department of Recreation, Parks & Wildlife, *Meeting Report of the Kananaskis Review Meeting*, 21 December 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Volume 1.

⁶² *Fact Sheet Re: Kananaskis Provincial Park*, 23 June 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

construction in the valley. Even before Kananaskis Country opened visitors heading out on the weekends already had a number to choose from, including the Evans-Thomas campground next to Evans Thomas creek and the Eau Claire campground in a quiet bend on the Kananaskis River. There was even a guidebook available at the hostel that listed several area hikes.⁶³

Naturally many questions and concerns arose regarding the well-being of wildlife in the Kananaskis valley. A meeting between the representatives of the Parks and Fish and Wildlife divisions in July 1976 was one of many that focused on hunting, faunal and wildlife resource management. G. Thompson of the Fish and Wildlife division pointed out that the Upper Kananaskis River Valley remained without road access. The official recommended the lakes be maintained in good condition by restricting road access to this area.⁶⁴ It was also decided at this meeting that hunting in the park could continue for the time being, but, as it was ultimately incompatible with the policy set out for the provincial park, the decision would be reviewed on a continual basis.⁶⁵ The following month the Fish and Wildlife Division resolved that signing must be established as soon as possible to alert users that hunting was going on in the

⁶³ Diane Hill, "Kananaskis Offers Good Camping, Fishing If You Can Get Past Construction Zones" *Calgary Herald*, 11 June 1977, Glenbow Archives file "Kananaskis country."

⁶⁴ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Wildlife considerations in Park Planning*, 18 August 1976 PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol I, 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

area.⁶⁶ The Parks Division refused to accept hunting in the park as an acceptable practice and felt they had both a legal and a moral obligation to take this stand.⁶⁷ Despite this, following the provincial park formation, cabinet passed an order in council that contained no termination date for hunting in the park. Compromise was the order of the day even in the early stages of the park's development.

Fish and Wildlife staff maintained that hunting and other recreational activities could co-exist within the park. But many within the Parks Division argued the park could not accommodate activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing as well as hunting, which posed "serious management," as well as safety, problems.⁶⁸ There was also concern that wildlife levels were not sufficient to support hunting and still offer tourists the opportunity to actually view wildlife in the park. Additionally, hunters were using hiking trails while carrying 22 rifles to shoot small game – rabbits, wolverines, and coyotes for example. At the time, a big game license allowed hunters to hunt wolves, wolverine, coyotes, and rabbits year round.⁶⁹ At all stages of the planning phase, debates raged about Kananaskis Park policy, not only between the provincial government and other users, but amongst government departments as well.

⁶⁶ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Kananaskis*, 18 August 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Hunting in Kananaskis Provincial Park*, 29 Dec 1977, PAA, Acc. 86.115, box 3, vol. I,1.

⁶⁹ "Kananaskis Workers Not Holding Breath For Park Word" *Lethbridge Herald* Sept. 19 1977.

Public Input, or Lack Thereof

While the Alberta government announced that Kananaskis Country was for Albertans, in fact, the public had little say in its planning, despite government assurances following the 1973 Eastern Slopes hearings that major developments would be preceded by public discussion.⁷⁰ By 1976 it had been decided that the planners would "seek comments only" and that the purpose of a public participation program would be solely to provide information to interest groups.⁷¹ Premier Lougheed dismissed the idea of seeking input because the public had already been given an opportunity to present their proposals, concerns, and suggestions at the Eastern Slopes Hearings.⁷²

Originally, a greater deal of public participation had been intended. A questionnaire was to be distributed to the public following the announcement of Kananaskis Country that identified the opinions and attitudes of Albertans. Key outdoor recreation groups such as the National Provincial Parks Association would distribute these. Following their collection government had initially planned to meet with the groups to discuss the results. If the plans obtained general acceptance, further public review was felt unnecessary. However, in the end, the bureaucrats and politicians did not consult the public to a degree that

⁷⁰ "Kananaskis Country: Some Answers Needed Before the Proposal Becomes Law" *Calgary Herald* Dec. 2 1977.

⁷¹ Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Meeting Report of the Kananaskis Review Meeting* 21 December 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

⁷² "Kananaskis Country" *Foothills Wilderness Journal* Sept/Oct 1977.

satisfied anyone but the government.⁷³ In effect, the provincial government appears to have perceived that too many conflicting interests existed for an effective lengthy public discussion.

Much of the public agitation that did arise surrounded the contentious topic of roads. A statement released by the Alberta Department of Highways prior to the construction of the Kananaskis highway stated that "the foothills of Alberta...are the only areas not currently accessible by paved highway." Many felt this inaccessibility was a good thing. It protected the Kananaskis wilderness from overuse. The Department of Highways, however, felt that correcting this would allow tourists from all over Canada to experience "our beautiful foothills region." They reassured readers that the Kananaskis Highway was not designed to be a "superhighway" and that speed limits would not be as high as 110 kilometers per hour (which they eventually were) because that would create a danger for the public. However, ample shoulders would be built to provide motorists the opportunity to pull over and observe wildlife without endangering their fellow drivers.⁷⁴ The department also argued that the gentle, wide slopes of the proposed highway were necessary to allow for winter snow removal.⁷⁵

⁷³ *Visitor Exhibit Design Kananaskis Park*, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol I.

⁷⁴ Press release from the Department of Highways, "Kananaskis: The Valley and the Highway," *Edmonton Journal*, 28 November 1972. Glenbow file "Kananaskis Country."

⁷⁵ Peter Walls, "Kananaskis Still For Tourists" *Calgary Herald* 6 August 1974. Glenbow file "Kananaskis Country."

Most agreed with the Department's assessment that roads in the valley be paved to improve public safety, but the road design proved an issue of debate. Environmentalists and conservatives wanted roads paved as secondary roads, with a design standard of 80 kilometers per hour, which would create a narrower, winding road requiring much less forest clearance. Despite this concern, most roads eventually became wide, straight "transportation corridors," that allowed higher speed; not recreational roads.

The construction itself seemed careless to environmental concerns, with unnecessary forest clearance done. In many cases, the right-of-way being cut for roads through K-Country were double that of roads in the national parks.⁷⁶ In the case of the upgrades to the forestry road – originally opened in 1952⁷⁷ – the upgraded road was actually brand new in sections, cutting a different route entirely than the existing road.⁷⁸ Because detailed plans were not released prior to construction public concerns were not addressed until the damage had already been done; as one civil servant stated, "we can't put up the trees again."⁷⁹ Many argued that the wide clearance and straighter routes were to accommodate future industrial use, such as logging or hauling trucks. While denying this was the reason for such wide clearance on the roads, officials did state that timber

⁷⁶ Paul Grescoe, "We Can't Put Up the Trees Again," *The Edmonton Journal* 23 June 1973. Glenbow file "Kananaskis Country."

⁷⁷ Harrington, 135.

⁷⁸ "Devastation in Kananaskis Felt Not Worth New Speedway" *Calgary Herald* 29 May 1972. Glenbow file "Kananaskis Country."

⁷⁹Grescoe

and mining leases on the Eastern Slopes would be "extremely expensive to buy back."⁸⁰

It was not until 1978 that the provincial government established the Kananaskis Country Citizen's Advisory Board to "act as a liaison" between Albertans and the government. It was meant to outline "recommendations on the provision of information to the general public, based on concerns expressed by them."⁸¹ The provincial government intended "to ensure that the needs and desires of the public are served" and that the public would also "be involved in setting development standards for the region."⁸² Among others, the first board consisted of a high school principal, a gallery owner, a member of the U of C senate, the owner of a building company, and architect Bill Milne, one of the original Kananaskis Country advocates.⁸³ Over the next several years notices inviting input from the public could be found in various publications throughout the province.⁸⁴ While some lauded this board as an important part of the planning process, some felt it lacked real significance, as the planning was basically complete and any public input would be politely received, but ignored.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Walls

⁸¹ *Alberta Wilderness Association newsletter* 8(1) Fall 1978.

⁸² Government of Alberta News Release, Oct. 7 1977, AWA Archives.

⁸³ "Calgarian Head of Kananaskis" *The Albertan*, 08/09/78.

⁸⁴ For example, *Calgary Herald* July 28 1979 and *Cochrane Times* January 14 1981.

⁸⁵ *The Calgary Herald*, "Belated Park Consultation," Oct 12 1977.

The Alberta Wilderness Association also found fault with this system. In a 1979 letter to Premier Lougheed, Richard P. Pharis, the president of the association, communicated the association's concerns to the premier; "although the Kananaskis Country staff were very receptive to suggestions from the public...the staff were constrained...from coming back to the public for reaction to their planning proposals." He noted that, while the association generally approved of the "sensitivity" with which development was preceding, a critical step in the public input phase was missing: public consultation. Although invited to comment on the development, Pharis noted that Kananaskis Country planners simply noted the public's suggestions without any real consideration of them. What he suggested was a system of "continued constructive input" and dialogue between planners and the public.⁸⁶

Calgary Power received much more attention than did the general public in terms of requests for input. J.E. Potton, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Parks sent a letter on June 10, 1976, to Mr. Peter Roxburgh, the Director of the Energy Resources Planning section of Calgary Power Ltd. eagerly initiating a "fruitful and long lasting liaison" between the Parks department and Calgary Power. He stated the department wished to accommodate the aims of both parties and hoped to "obtain inputs and reactions to...proposed programs and plans,"

⁸⁶ AWA Archives, *Land Use-AB-SES Kan 1971-1985 Correspondence*, November 1979.

including road maintenance and safety and water regulation programs.⁸⁷ Planners recognized that in order to avoid costly and time-consuming complications down the road they needed the support and cooperation of the industrial and commercial interests already present in the valley.

Despite some concerns on its part, the AWA and the National and Provincial Park Association (NPPA), officially endorsed the plan, in light of the provincial government's commitment to separate development and backcountry use. While not directly consulted, groups such as the Sierra Club also supported it. The Club, as well as many others, had lobbied for development of backcountry use outside of the national parks for years. While the situation did not fulfill all of the Club's hopes, it was certainly a step in the right direction.⁸⁸ The Kananaskis Country buffer zone surrounding the Kananaskis Provincial Park was seen by the environmental organizations as playing an important part in keeping the wilderness largely "wild."⁸⁹

But not all interested groups were satisfied with the plans, even amongst recreational users. Snowmobilers were concerned and upset regarding the governments' desire to ban this activity in Kananaskis Provincial Park. Government concern centered on environmental damage as well as noise

⁸⁷ Correspondence, J.E. Potton (Assistant Deputy Minister-Parks) to Peter Roxburgh (Director – Energy Resources Planning Calgary Power), 10 June 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3.

⁸⁸ "Even the Fiercest Critics Admit Kananaskis Park Proposal Has Merit" Saturday October 15 1977, A7.

⁸⁹ "Environmentalists back Kananaskis Plans" *Calgary Herald* Oct. 8 1977.

pollution. Snowmobilers insisted that they be given the same consideration as other recreational users. They argued that snowmobiles should not be included in the Off-Highway Vehicle Act that grouped them with four wheel drives and motorcycles, claiming that snowmobiles "do not cause the environmental damage typical of these vehicles."⁹⁰

In the end park officials confined snowmobilers to two areas in Kananaskis Country: McLean Creek, 65 kilometers west of Calgary and Sibbald Flats, 70 kilometers west of Calgary. However they included two additional areas outside Kananaskis Country: Waiparous Creek, 100 kilometers north-west of Calgary and Cataract Creek, 12 kilometers south of Highwood-Longview junction. Despite snowmobiler protests, ninety-percent of people who responded to the Eastern Slopes hearings felt snowmobiling needed to be confined and limited.⁹¹

Announcement is Made

1977 was a year filled with activity with planning well underway and the final preparations being made for the unveiling of what would become Alberta's pride and joy.⁹² Order-In-Council 1041/77 legally created the 304 square

⁹⁰ Kathryn Warden, "Snowmobilers in flurry over 'endangered' sport" *Calgary Herald* 31 October 1977.

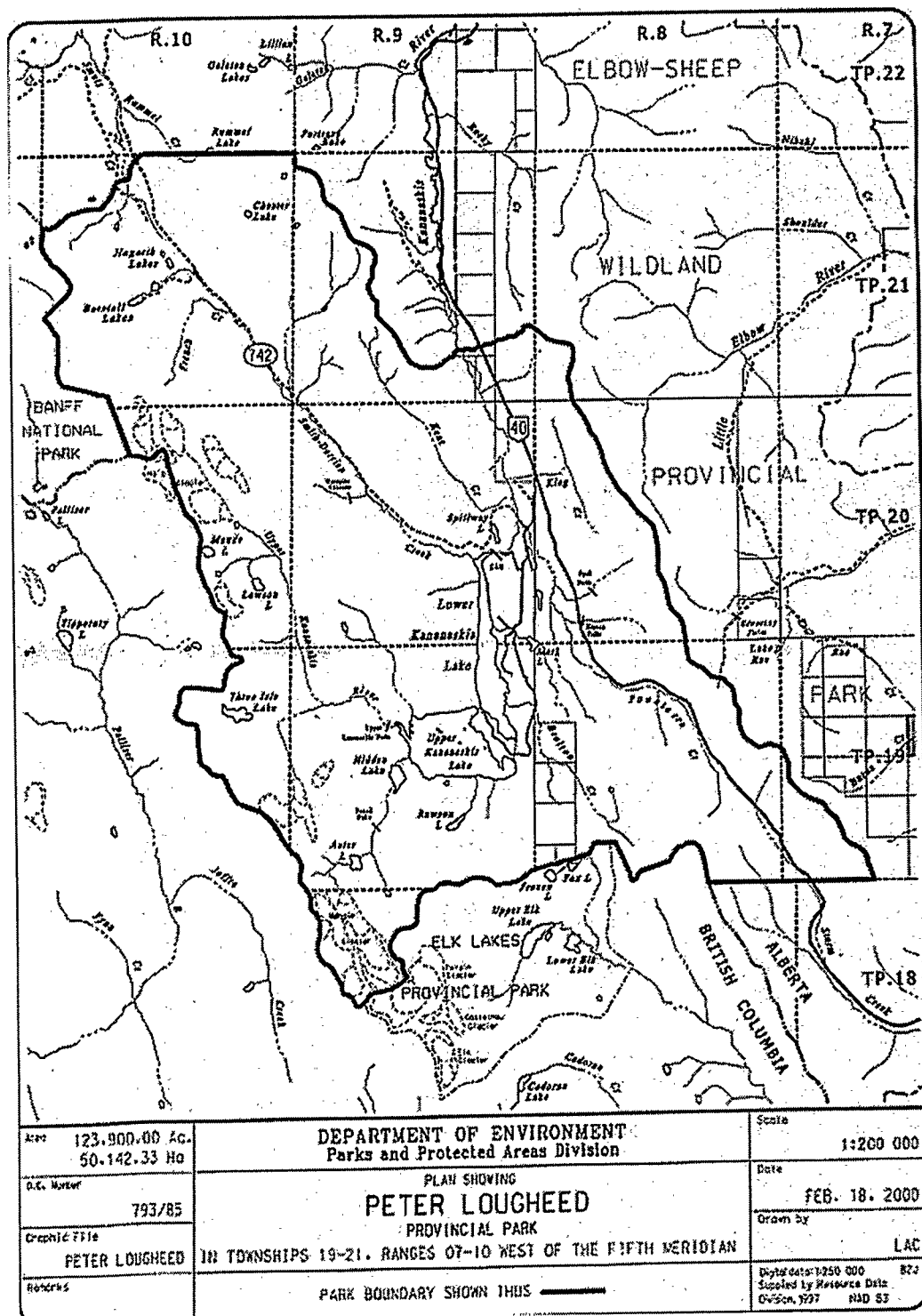
⁹¹ "Snowmobiles banned in Kananaskis," *SouthSide Mirror*, 10 November 1977.

⁹² Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, *Minutes of December Kananaskis Briefing Meeting*, January 21 1977, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol I.

kilometer Kananaskis Provincial Park on Friday October 7 1977.⁹³ The \$40 million recreation plan for Kananaskis Country, a 3,200 square kilometer multi-use buffer zone surrounding the park, was also unveiled on the same day. When Kananaskis provincial park officially opened on September 22, 1978, it became the province's largest provincial park as well as the first Alberta provincial park situated in the Rockies.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Kananaskis Provincial Park Description* O.C. 1041/77, PAA, Acc. 88.610, Box 7.

⁹⁴ Government of Alberta News Release, Oct. 7 1977, AWA Archives.



Map 4: Peter Lougheed Provincial Park

Source: Alberta Department of Environment; Parks and Protected Areas Division, 18 Feb 2000.

The funds for Kananaskis Country would be drawn from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The expenditure would go toward creating some 3,000 new campsites, 1,000 day use sites, and 750 kilometers of backcountry trails. Recreational activities were to include picnicking, camping, fishing, canoeing, and climbing. Fortress Mountain ski area was given preliminary approval for a \$10 million expansion and plans were also announced for 250 kilometers of cycling trails. Snowmobilers would be restricted to 217 kilometers of snowmobile trails in the McLean Creek and Sibbald Flats areas.⁹⁵ Horseback riding was also restricted to an area in the center of the park⁹⁶ and camping was to be strictly controlled and limited to designated areas.⁹⁷ Several "alpine villages" were also planned as well as a golf course, swimming pools, squash, tennis, and handball courts.

Villages were planned for the Barrier Lake, Fortress Junction, and Evans-Thomas areas. Although chalets in the villages would be available as vacation homes, year-round occupancy would not be allowed.⁹⁸ This idea was based on a European concept "which focuses on smaller units instead of large-scale

⁹⁵ *Alberta Motorist*, "Kananaskis Country: Developing the Wilderness for Recreation," May/June 1979, 13.

⁹⁶ *Calgary Herald*, "New Kananaskis Park – Primitive, but Useable," Oct. 8 1977.

⁹⁷ *Saint John's Calgary Report*, "Kananaskis: Calgary's Answer to Jasper & Banff," 14-15, Oct 14 1977.

⁹⁸ *Alberta Motorist*, "Kananaskis Country: Developing the Wilderness for Recreation," May/June 1979, 13.

development." This proposal attempted to avoid the congestion typical of the Banff and Jasper town sites.⁹⁹

A highlight of Kananaskis Country that was directly attributable to Premier Lougheed was a special cabin that would provide "outdoor living opportunities" for the elderly and handicapped of Alberta.¹⁰⁰ The Recreation Development Division of Recreation, Parks & Wildlife went to great lengths to study and improve upon the recreational opportunities for the elderly and disabled in Alberta. Projects were undertaken such as the 1975-76 study "A Report on the Survey of Recreation Services for the Disabled in Alberta,"¹⁰¹ and the 1978-78 seminar series "Do the Disabled Have a Right to Recreation Services?"¹⁰² The department also assisted disabled athletes financially. The Canadian International Disabled Ski Meet was given a grant of \$31,300.00 in 1976-77; forty disabled athletes were given a total of \$23,283.44 for the 1976 Olympiad for the Physically Disabled¹⁰³; and \$53,604.00 was allotted to the Canadian Games for the Physically Disabled in 1978-78.¹⁰⁴ In 1978-1979 the

⁹⁹ *Saint John's Calgary Report*, "Kananaskis: Alberta's Answer to Jasper & Banff," 14-15, Oct 14 1977.

¹⁰⁰ Government of Alberta News Release, Oct. 7 1977, AWA Archives

¹⁰¹ First Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1975-1976, 10.

¹⁰² Third Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1977-1978, 16.

¹⁰³ Second Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1976-1977, 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ Third Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1977-78, 16.

departments co-sponsored, along with the Alberta Advisory Board on Recreation for the Disabled, a Western Canadian Conference on Integration in Recreation.¹⁰⁵

By 1978 a group within the division was devoted to providing special groups with recreation services.¹⁰⁶ Seniors were included in this group. Research was done on fitness for seniors¹⁰⁷ and programs were developed to train leaders in the area of recreation for seniors.¹⁰⁸ Pioneer Courses were offered to introduce seniors to outdoors skills and leadership¹⁰⁹ and a Senior Citizen Sports and Games Manual was even printed.¹¹⁰ All of these developments were "a logical part of the philosophy" of providing recreational opportunities for all Albertans.¹¹¹

The province also announced that access to and in Kananaskis Country would be improved through the allocation of \$12 million for road upgrades including the extension of the Kananaskis Highway over the Highwood Pass to

¹⁰⁵ Fourth Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1978-1979, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Fourth Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1978-1979, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Second Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1976-1977, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Third Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1977-1978, 17.

¹⁰⁹ Fourth Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1978-1979, 25.

¹¹⁰ Fourth Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1978-1979, 26.

¹¹¹ Bruce Patterson, "Special-user Lodge Popular," *Calgary Herald*, 30 September 1986. Glenbow Archives file "Kananaskis Country."

Longwood.¹¹² Travelers would be able to travel from Calgary to Canmore, south to the Highwood Pass then east to Turner Valley and back to Calgary.¹¹³

Alberta Transportation completed a review of the road system in the valley and concluded that most of the roads would need some work to be safe for increased traffic. Many roads experienced washouts in heavy rain and most were improperly signed. The existing roads were rated according to their recreational potential and scenic quality. In most cases Alberta Transportation recommended upgrades rather than creating new routes. Steps such as signage, paving, and widening were suggested as the most cost-effective and environmentally sensitive options but reconstruction was carried out as well. The cost of upgrades on specific roads ranged from \$250,000 to \$2,200,000.¹¹⁴

Premier Lougheed promised, however, that although existing roads would require upgrading to handle increased traffic, no new roads into the area would be built, in order to protect the integrity of the Kananaskis wilderness.¹¹⁵ Actually several truck roads were identified for closure and reclamation.¹¹⁶ Despite these assurances it was obvious to most that even road upgrades would

¹¹² "Kananaskis Park Plans Announced," *Edmonton Journal* 7 October 1977.

¹¹³ "A Few Hours Drive From the City it's Kananaskis Country," *Calgary Herald* Oct. 8 1977, A10.

¹¹⁴ Alberta Transportation, *Kananaskis Regional Recreation Plan*, memo from M.J. Dolinsky (Assistant Deputy Minister Planning and Research) to Bill Henwood (Parks Master Planner Recreation, Parks and Wildlife), 14 July 1977, PAA, Acc. 86.115, box 3.

¹¹⁵ "Kananaskis: Alberta's Answer to Jasper & Banff," *Saint John's Calgary Report*, October 14 1977.

¹¹⁶ Government of Alberta News Release, Oct. 7 1977, AWA Archives

increase the volume of traffic and would have "profound consequences" for the Kananaskis Valley.¹¹⁷

Although planning had begun at least two years earlier, reconciling land use issues made this a lengthy and complicated undertaking.¹¹⁸ Between \$3 and \$4 million had already been spent before Kananaskis Country was even officially announced¹¹⁹ and park workers had been employed in the Kananaskis area for years without official status as provincial park employees. An official announcement was expected several times. A "Kananaskis Provincial Park" sign, in fact, stood at the entrance to the new park long before the park was announced. It was eventually removed when the announcement failed to materialize.¹²⁰

By 1976 use of the Kananaskis Valley, soon to be Kananaskis Country, had increased and several problems plagued the area due to this additional use. However, because the boundaries of the provincial park had not officially been recognized through an order in council, Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife had no jurisdiction over the area and resolution of these problems was difficult.¹²¹ Activities such as illegal tree cutting and sewage disposal were damaging sensitive areas within K-Country and confusion existed as to exactly whose

¹¹⁷ "What's In Store for The Kananaskis Valley?," *Calgary Herald*, March 31 1977.

¹¹⁸ AWA Archives, *Land Use-AB-SES Kan 1971-85*, *Calgary Herald*.

¹¹⁹ "Plans for Kananaskis Almost Ready," *Lethbridge Herald*, Oct 4 1977.

¹²⁰ "Kananaskis Workers Not Holding Breath For Park Word," *Lethbridge Herald*, Sept. 19 1977.

¹²¹ Department of Recreation, Parks & Wildlife, *Kananaskis*, 18 August 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

responsibility this was.¹²² In the year before the official announcement of Kananaskis Country officials had considerable difficulty controlling snowmobile use in the park; at this point it had been decided that snowmobiling would only be permitted in the Smith-Dorrien area.¹²³ Illegal fishing and hunting as well as vehicular camping and improper garbage disposal was also harming the animal population and would eventually result in human-animal confrontation. Public safety was also an issue in terms of backcountry hikers becoming lost or injured or hunting accidents requiring search and rescue operations. In short, P.E. Skydt, Head of the Resource Assessment and Management Section, was concerned that activities incompatible with park values be curtailed before the problem became widespread and harmed the image of Alberta Provincial Parks.¹²⁴ Clear jurisdiction in these areas would not be realized until October 1977 when the area was legally designated a provincial park.

Post-1978 Difficulties:

Kananaskis Provincial Park was not officially dedicated until September 22, 1978¹²⁵; a year in which approximately 60,000 patrons used the park.¹²⁶ The optimism that accompanied this event has gradually been replaced by the reality

¹²² Paul Skydt (Head Resource Assessment and Management Section), *The Need for O.C. Status on Kananaskis*, 26 July 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

¹²³ Department of Recreation, Parks & Wildlife, *Meeting Report of the Kananaskis Review Meeting*, 21 December 1976, PAA, Acc. 86.115, Box 3, Vol 1.

¹²⁴ Skydt.

¹²⁵ Fourth Annual Report of Alberta's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, 1978-1979, 46.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

of continuing conflict between different groups of park users. At this time of abundant provincial government revenues, in the late 1970s concerns also arose over waste. While the government has certainly succeeded in creating a superb recreational environment for Albertans, the issues of overspending and over development continue to tarnish this success.

In 1981 opposition leader Bob Clark claimed that "massive" overspending was destroying the concept of K-Country. The previously estimated \$40 million recreation plan had by 1979 become \$60 million [and by 1981 a whopping \$213 million]¹²⁷ and development was not slated to finish until 1983. Road construction and improvement had absorbed a quarter of this money; it had been estimated that the roads program would cost about \$10 million, some \$104 million less than the 1980 revised estimate.¹²⁸ This costly road construction contributed to Clark's concern that the original concept of K-Country as accessible wilderness in Calgary's backyard was fast becoming a well-treed parking lot.¹²⁹

Many initially saw the creation of Kananaskis Country as necessary to save the area from overuse and the damaging effects of exhaustive resource extraction. It was also recognized however, that some development would be necessary, such as road upgrades and campgrounds, to allow recreationalists to

¹²⁷ "The Loss of a Legacy?," *AWA Newsletter*, Fall/Winter 1981.

¹²⁸ "Lougheed Explains Increase In Park Development Cost," *Calgary Herald*, September 6 1980.

¹²⁹ Kananaskis: Concept In Danger, Clark Says," *Calgary Herald*, November 1979.

use the area. Time went on and a concerned group of people watched as Kananaskis Country was filled up with tennis courts and golf courses; the type of urban recreation that many felt had no place in Alberta's wilderness. Instead of a provincial park with opportunities for outdoor recreation many believed Kananaskis Country had become a "facility-oriented recreational development," not at all what wilderness advocates had envisioned. The over development and overcrowding in the National Parks that Kananaskis Country was meant to alleviate was instead in danger of being duplicated.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ The Loss of a Legacy?, "AWA Newsletter," Fall/Winter 1981.

CONCLUSION

Kananaskis Country is both a product of its predecessors as well as an innovation. This thesis has illustrated that Alberta's provincial park system was not created out of concern for environmental protection or even recognition of natural beauty. Initially parks were recreation areas, largely for summer use, that featured extensively developed tourist facilities. Elements of this approach are visible in Kananaskis Country in its golf courses, hotel developments, baseball diamonds, tennis courts and swimming pools. That being said, Kananaskis Country remains overwhelmingly undeveloped. Low-impact recreation has been, and continues to be, the primary use of the area. For those who wish to use them the hotels, golf courses and tennis courts exist; for those who wish to avoid them, the canoe, fishing rod and sunshine beckon.

Kananaskis Provincial Park (now Peter Lougheed Provincial Park) and Kananaskis Country are unique in that they benefited from the increased environmental awareness of the 1960's and 70's. Few provincial parks or recreation areas prior to Kananaskis Country underwent the rigorous environmental study that preceded its creation. Countless studies were done on a multitude of issues, the Environment Conservation Authority hearings were held, and zoning was implemented.

A great many people worked diligently over decades, including those involved in the environmental investigation and planning just mentioned, to create Alberta's provincial park system. Despite the fact that Peter Lougheed Provincial Park now bears the name of one of its most important advocates, countless others have played important, but less well-known, roles in the development of the park and Kananaskis Country as a whole; Clarence Copithorne and Bill Milne were but two. Even before Lougheed, Copithorne and Milne became involved in the process, however, civil servants, environmentalists and concerned citizens recognized the importance of the Kananaskis Valley in terms of aesthetics, watershed management, wildlife habitat and resource provision. Environmental groups submitted briefs to the Environment Conservation Authority's hearings and numerous studies regarding resource management all contributed to a growing awareness of this unique area. In short, without the concern and action of groups and individuals over the past century the developments of the last three decades would not have been possible.

The development of Kananaskis Country and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park fulfilled several of the mandates outlined in the 1973 policy statement

discussed in chapter two. The addition of Kananaskis utilized a zoning system,¹ great pains were taken to ensure that development within the park limited the environmental impact as much as possible. Planners designed it to make it extremely accessible to Calgarians, located just 80 kilometers from that city.² Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, the first provincial park to be established in the Rockies, also became the province's largest park, at 124,315 acres.³ The park itself was part of a larger unit, Kananaskis Country, managed by an interdepartmental committee comprised of representatives from a variety of government agencies; including Tourism and Small Business, Transportation, Energy and Natural Resources, and of course Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife. This approach also conformed to the 1973 policy statement requiring greater cooperation among interested agencies.⁴ A subsequent study of the history of Kananaskis Country from 1979 to the present should be made to determine if the initial planners accomplished what they set out to in the long term.

Thirty years after its inception Kananaskis Country remains a valley of controversy, particularly in regards to development.⁵ Despite this controversy it is clear that it has already made a unique and valuable contribution to the

¹ Alberta dept of Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Provincial Parks Division Memorandum, "*Kakwa and Kananaskis Provincial Parks*," May 22 1975, AWA Archives Land Use-AB-SES Kan 1971-1985 Correspondence.

² Mason, 166.

³ Mason, 162.

⁴ Mason, 166.

⁵ Grady Semmens, "'Balanced' Future Pushed for Park; Province Would Allow New Projects," *Calgary Herald*, 4 Oct 2004.

physical and spiritual health of Albertans. It is a great gift but also a responsibility. Kananaskis Country, and all of Alberta's remaining wilderness areas, must be appreciated and protected if they are to continue to nurture and revitalize our society.

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