Six Mile Hill Protected Area

Management Plan

Final Public Review Draft

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BRITISH COLUMBIA | BC Parks

Six Mile Hill Protected Area

Management Plan

Approved by:

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Date

Management Vision

This vision statement describes the future state and management that is desired for Six Mile Hill Protected Area. The park vision provides long-term direction for park managers while aiding them in making decisions regarding current issues.

First Nations and BC Parks work collaboratively to manage Six Mile Hill Protected Area. They have a continuing presence here, continuing to use the area for traditional activities that include gathering of food and ceremonial purposes.

Six Mile Hill Protected Area continues to protect hot, dry grassland and ponderosa pine ecosystems, with their associated species. Mule Deer utilize the protected area for their seasonal movements, coming to winter in the lower elevation area close to Kamloops Lake.

A limited level of non-motorized recreational use takes advantage of the protected area, staying in specific areas, such as rock climbers, or on designated trails used for hiking or horseback riding. Six Mile Protected Area is mainly experienced by the travelling public who stop and enjoy the scenic vista of Kamloops Lake from the highway rest-stop.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of Six Mile Hill Protected Area.

This management plan:

- articulates the key features and values of Six Mile Hill Protected Area;
- identifies appropriate types and levels of management activities;
- determines appropriate levels of use and development;
- establishes a long-term vision and management objectives for the protected area; and
- responds to current and predicted threats and opportunities by defining a set of management strategies to achieve the management vision and objectives.

1.2 Planning Area

Six Mile Hill Protected Area is 151 hectares in size overlooking Kamloops Lake. It lies between the City of Kamloops, 30 kilometres to the east, and the town of Savona 6 kilometres to the west (Figure 1).

The protected area (Figure 2) is separated into two sections by the Trans Canada Highway. The Six Mile rest stop on the Trans Canada Highway is on the northwestern border of the protected area. This rest stop is the only highway access to the protected area.

The lower, northern section of the protected area is the largest, and extends down through cliffs and steep grassland slopes to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) right-of-way, which forms the northern boundary of the protected area and essentially prevents public access to Kamloops Lake from the protected area. The area to the southwest of this section is the Tobiano residential and golf course development.

Land abutting the protected area to the northwest is managed as a grazing lease. The upper, southern section of the protected area rises steeply from the highway, over slopes and hilltops that are covered in open ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest.

1.3 Legislative Framework

This protected area was recommended through the Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) process and was formally established as Six Mile Hill Protected Area on March 30, 2001 by Order-in-Council 355/2001 under Section 7(1 and 2) of the *Environment and Land Use Act.*

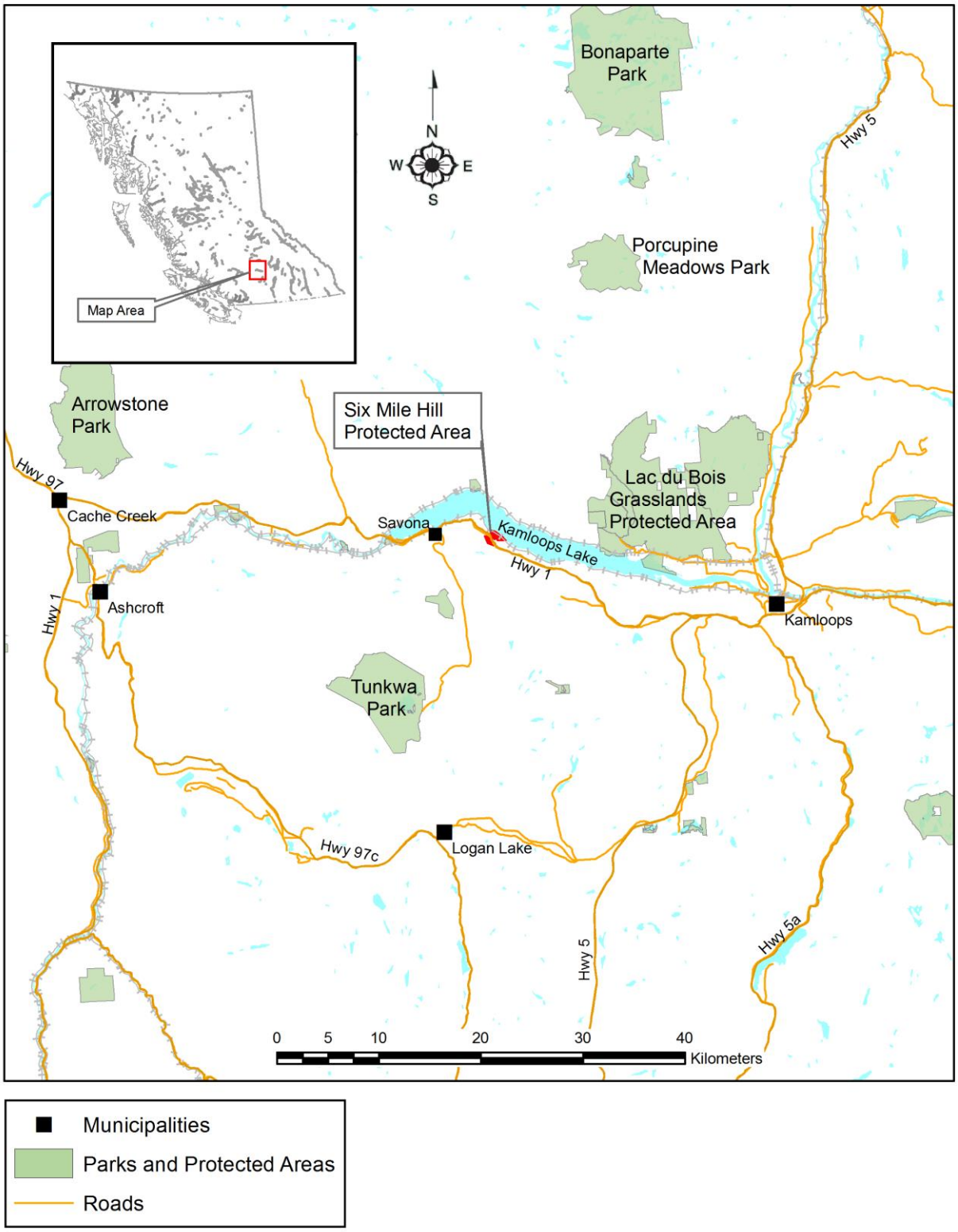

Figure 1: Context Map for Six Mile Hill Protected Area

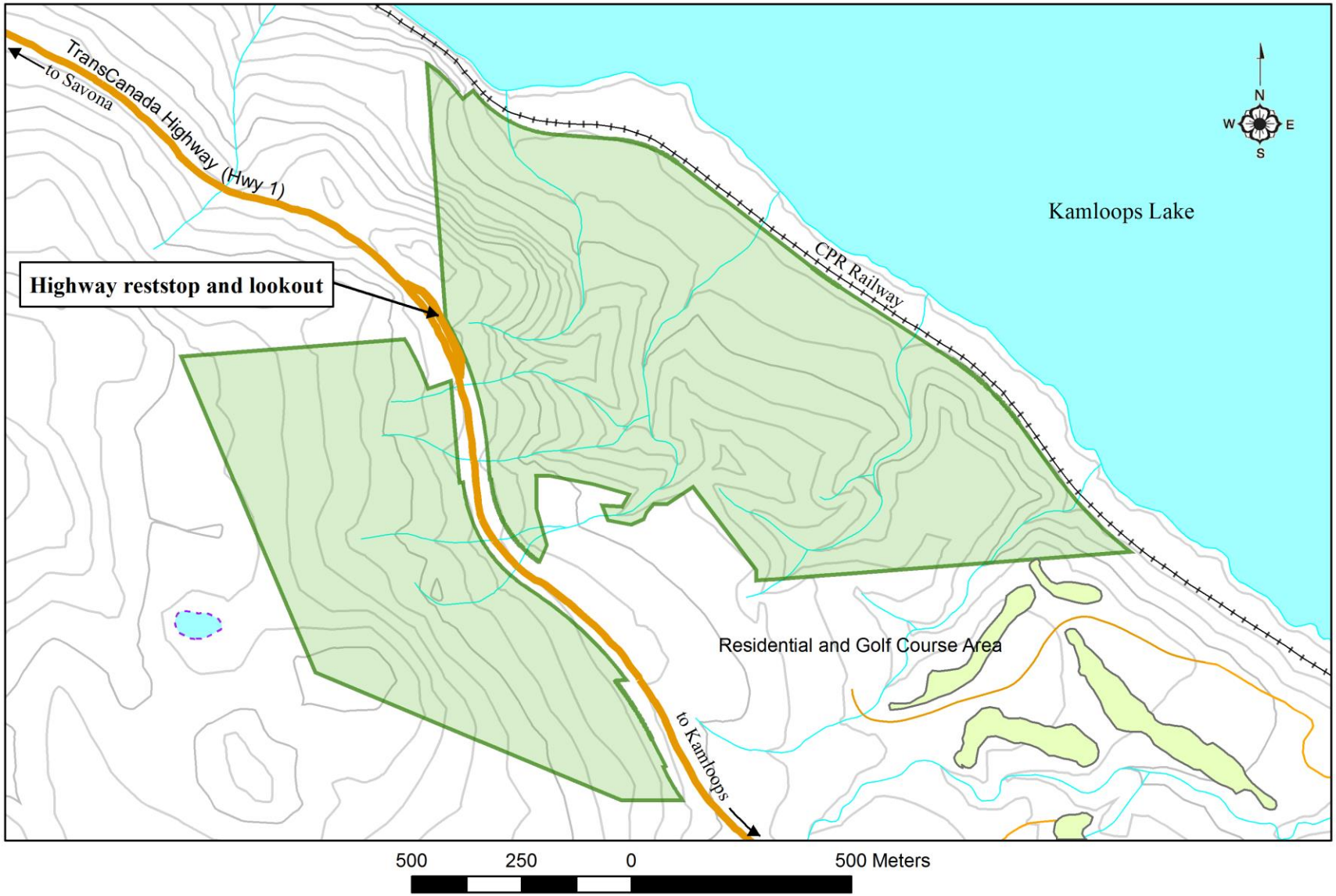

Figure 2: Map of Six Mile Hill Protected Area

In protected areas established under the *Environment and Land Use Act*, usually at least one activity that is not normally allowed in a park is permitted (e.g., a proposed industrial road, pipeline, transmission line, or communication site). Allowable activities are determined when the area is established, and authorization for the activity is provided in the establishing order in council.

1.4 Adjacent Land and Marine Use

The Tobiano Resort development lies immediately east of the protected area. Along with maintaining traditional cattle ranching operations, Tobiano has diversified its business on land adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the protected area to include a large golf course complex and associated residential development and marina on Kamloops Lake. Grazing by the ranch operation occurs primarily on the southern portion of the protected area. Outside of the protected area, public recreational access will be allowed through the grazing lease to Six Mile (Pat) Lake that is located south of the protected area, with public foot access to the protected area permitted from Six Mile Lake. The Tobiano Resort development was key to the creation of Six Mile Hill Protected Area by allowing the designation on their grazing lease. Tobiano has also contributed to biodiversity and angling opportunities in the adjacent area by funding the

creation of wetlands immediately to the south. In establishing the protected area, there was an understanding that a water tank and associated pipeline may have to be placed within the south portion of the protected area to serve the upper levels of the housing development.

1.5 Management Commitments/Agreements

This management plan, future management plans, and all resulting management actions will follow the intent and criteria set out by the Kamloops LRMP for protected areas. The Kamloops LRMP identified protection of grasslands and old-growth forest as the primary purpose of the protected area.

This protected area was situated within a grazing lease that historically has been associated with the owners of the Six Mile Ranch fee simple lands. Grazing is to be continued as an allowable activity by the ranch. Since the late 1800s, this site has been used for summer and fall grazing by the Six Mile Ranch cattle operations and is an integral grazing pasture for the successful operation of the ranch.

Six Mile Ranch and its associated grazing lease and range tenures have, since 1986, been the focus of several regional and provincial government agricultural and tourism integration proposals. In a 1998 Cabinet decision, several Six Mile Ranch agricultural tourism proposals were deemed in the "Provincial Interest", resulting in Orders-in-Council 717, 718 and 719, allowing an integrated agricultural tourism resort development to proceed.

As a primary component of the negotiations relating to the approvals for the Six Mile Ranch Development, a Six Mile Economic Benefits and Settlement Agreement was signed on March 12, 2001 by the Skeetchestn Band, the Provincial Government, Kamlands Holdings Ltd. and Pagebrook Inc (the owners of the Six Mile Ranch at that time). The agreement affirmed the continued historical cattle grazing uses, the intended resort recreation and tourism uses, and identified specific wildlife and natural vegetation attributes that the signatories desire to preserve. The agreement led to the establishment of Six Mile Hill Protected Area with a number of conditions, including:

- "Skeetchestn and the Province will develop a management plan for the Protected Area to reflect the involvement of Skeetchestn, the Developer's grazing interests and the values outlined in the Kamloops LRMP all in accordance with the process set out in Schedule B. The parties recognize that different parts of the Protected Area will have differing levels of use, which will be outlined in the management plan, but that all uses will be consistent with the values outlined in the Kamloops LRMP."
- "The purpose of the order-in-council (creating the Protected Area) will be to protect the natural environment of the Protected Area. Priority shall be given to the protection of the environmental values. However, some grazing will be allowed to

continue but only as it may be consistent with the policy set out in the Kamloops LRMP and, in particular, Appendix 9 thereto".

- Agreement to amend the grazing lease over the protected area in several ways including:
  - Allowing public access to the protected area; and,
  - Providing for the modification of the grazing management plan for the lease to take into account the objective of minimizing and avoiding conflict with the protection of the natural environment in the protected area.

This management plan is the management plan referred to in the Six Mile Economic Benefits Settlement Agreement, which was developed through the co-ordination of a Technical Working Group comprised of representatives of the Skeetchestn Band, provincial government ministries, and through consultation with the developers of the Tobiano Resort and other stakeholders.

1.6 Management Planning Process

The management planning process began in 2003. First Nations were invited to participate in the management planning process, with the Skeetchestn Indian Band being the primary contact. Following completion of a draft management plan, agency, and stakeholder review of this management plan was undertaken and revisions made as necessary. A review was also done in conjunction with the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation.

2.0 Values and Roles of the Protected Area

2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

Six Mile Hill Protected Area makes a significant contribution to the provincial protected areas system by protecting representative hot, dry ponderosa pine and grassland ecosystems. The protected area also contributes to the scenic setting for tourists stopping at the popular rest stop along the Trans-Canada Highway between Kamloops and Savona, and protects high First Nation cultural and traditional use interests.

2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values

The primary role of Six Mile Hill Protected Area is the protection of grasslands and old-growth ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. It forms part of a system of protected areas and conservation lands, including Painted Bluffs Park, Lac du Bois Grasslands Protected Area, Steelhead Park and the Dewdrop-Rosseau Wildlife Management Area, which together

represent the dry grasslands and forested habitats and landforms of the Thompson Basin, and maintain much of the natural setting of Kamloops Lake.

Most of the protected area is in a reasonably natural condition, with some evidence of cattle grazing and isolated patches of weeds. Grasslands in a portion of the lower east slopes, below the highway, are in early seral condition. Several of the gully slopes have old cattle trails that are now re-vegetating.

The protected area falls within the Thompson Basin Ecosection. A total of 6.21% of this ecosection is represented by 21 protected areas and about 0.1% of this is contributed by Six Mile Hill Protected Area.

Upper portions of the protected area have old-growth ponderosa pine within the Ponderosa Pine Very Dry Hot Subzone Variant (PPxh2) of the Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification, consisting of open stands with a mix of old-growth Douglas-fir. Most ponderosa pine has been killed by mountain pine beetle but are now regenerating. Only 2.5% of this subzone variant is represented within the protected areas system. Six Mile Hill Protected Area contributes 1.5% to the amount represented in the protected areas system.

Lower elevation grasslands are representative of the Bunchgrass Very Hot Dry Subzone Variant (BGxh2), with a diversity of early to mature seral stages and grassland types, including:

- bluebunch wheatgrass at mature seral stages at many locations;
- three-awn grassland (uncommon) on upper slopes;
- needle grass on the lower bench;
- sand-dropseed grassland on sandy exposed soils; and,
- large sage below the cliffs.

About 4.1% of the BGxh2 subzone variant is captured in the protected area system. Six Mile Hill Protected Area contributes 3.4 % to the amount of this subzone variant represented in the protected area system.

The protected area maintains a natural wildlife habitat linkage from upper forests to the grassland slopes above Kamloops Lake and is important Mule Deer winter range. There is one confirmed western rattlesnake den found within the protected area.

The protected area displays an interesting array of land formations, from steep rock cliffs to elevated silt bluffs and gullies. The silt arose during ice age events when ice dammed the valley's outlet and meltwater accumulated against decaying glacial ice, forming deep, silty depositions on the margins. The silt bluffs are an impressive series of hoodoos and cliffs that were formed through erosion of peri-glacial lake deposits, and provide important nesting habitat for some birds.

2.3 Cultural Values

Six Mile Hill Protected Area is within the asserted territory of the Nlaka'pamux and Secwepemc Nations. This includes the following Bands:

- Neskonlith Indian Band
- Bonaparte Indian Band
- Tk'emlups Band
- Skeetchestn Indian Band
- Coldwater Indian Band
- Cook's Ferry Indian Band
- Siska Indian Band
- Nooaitch Indian Band
- Lower Nicola Indian Band
- Lytton Indian Band
- Oregon Jack Creek Indian Band

The Tk'emlups Band and Skeetchestn Indian Band have been especially active and involved in management of the protected area. Six Mile Hill Protected Area is of spiritual significance to the Secwepemc First Nation.

A variety of plants found in the protected area, such as Saskatoon berries and pitch, and Ponderosa pine are valued for food, medicine and ceremonial activities.

The secondary role of the protected area is to support First Nations interests in protecting spiritual areas, natural environments and winter/spring deer range values. .

2.4 Recreation Values

General use of the protected area for recreation is limited, with visitors using the highway stop entering for a short hike or to take in the views of Kamloops Lake. However, it is a well known and popular rock climbing destination for local climbers in the Kamloops area. It also has intrinsic values associated with aesthetics and appreciation of natural landscapes and habitats of the Thompson Basin. Steep slopes, easily disturbed soils and plant communities pose limitations for active recreation use. The protected area, particularly in the southern portion, does offer other opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and nature viewing/study. The protected area is a natural area adjunct to the Six Mile Ranch, maintaining wildlife and biodiversity elements, landscape characteristics and a visual backdrop to benefit tourism enjoyment and use of the general Six Mile Ranch area.

The protected area provides the opportunity to view, appreciate and learn about old-growth ponderosa pine forests, grasslands, and the landscapes of the Thompson Basin.

The protected area is accessed from the Trans Canada Highway at a key rest-stop facility east of Savona. The highway rest-stop and the hill above the highway, which can be accessed from Six Mile (Pat) Lake, afford scenic views of Kamloops Lake, the lower grassland slopes, forested gullies and hoodoos, and the visually interesting Dew Drop

area across the lake. There is informal use of the hilltop to the north of the highway rest-stop as a viewpoint overlooking Kamloops Lake. The cliff face beneath the hilltop to the north of the highway rest-stop is a popular rock climbing site.

There is potential public trail access through a portion of the grazing lease land from Six Mile (Pat) Lake to the south.

The protected area also contributes to the attraction and setting of the adjacent Tobiano Resort development but the presence of the railway constrains the consideration of commercial recreation opportunities that may use Kamloops Lake as an attraction.

2.5 Development and Use of Natural Resources

A grazing tenure covers the entire protected area. Grazing will continue to be managed by the relevant provincial government agency, and new opportunities will require authorization under park use permit. The tenure holder has a preference to graze the south rather than the north side of the park and will attempt to do so within abilities and sustainability.

2.6 Climate Change

In British Columbia, climate change effects vary by region. Six Mile Hill Protected Area falls within the Thompson-Nicola Regional district. Predictive modelling indicates that, from 2040 to 2069, mean annual temperature, annual precipitation, frost-free days and growing degree days will likely increase substantially; whereas snowfall and summer precipitation will likely substantially decrease. These climatic changes will likely result in changes to ecosystem composition and function across the landscape.

Water is the major limiting factor in grassland ecosystems. Any changes in precipitation patterns would likely have the greatest impact. Changes may result in a lower water table, impacting existing streams within the already dry ecosystems within Six Mile Hill Protected Area. This in turn could affect vegetation and wildlife.

Six Mile Hill Protected Area is relatively small, providing less potential for resistance to climate change effects. However, depending upon the degree of climate change, the grassland associated species are likely to persist and possibly expand.

3.0 Management Direction

3.1 Management Objectives and Strategies

Management Context	Management Objectives and Strategies
The grassland and open forest ecosystem is the primary value in the park. There are potential impacts from recreational uses on sensitive soils, ecosystems and wildlife.	**Management Objective:** Protect the natural, cultural and recreational values of the protected area. **Management Strategies:** • Sign the protected area boundary at strategic locations. • Prohibit use of motorized vehicles and mountain bikes, and only allow horses and hiking on designated trails. • Integrate activities and uses from the Tobiano Resort adjacent development with the protected area's natural values. Public access and use may be discouraged or restricted to seasonal use and to designated trails in all or portions of the protected area to protect sensitive environments and minimize disturbance to wildlife. • Strictly control dogs and other domesticated animals to prevent disturbance to wildlife. • Co-ordinate with the relevant provincial government agencies and the grazing lease holder to control weed infestations in the protected area.
Distribution of plants and wildlife, movement corridors and location of critical habitats is largely unknown, limiting implementation of management actions to protect protected area values. The high traffic speeds on Highway 1 may have an impact on the wintering Mule Deer population.	**Management Objective:** Increase knowledge of natural values. **Management Strategies:** • Co-operate in any studies, inventories and monitoring of wildlife use in the protected area, particularly relating to wintering mule deer, and red and blue-listed plants and animals. • Work with other agencies and First Nations to find solutions to any impacts on wildlife. • Monitor long-term conditions within the protected area, concentrating on grassland health and impacts from recreational activities.

Natural disturbance cycles have been modified through fire control, resulting in tree in-growth within the grassland area.	**Management Objective:** Maintain natural ecosystem processes. **Management Strategies:** • Develop a fire management plan for the area. The long-term intent may be to allow for prescribed fires in some portions of the protected area where there is sufficient knowledge of the protected area's natural and cultural resources.

There is demand for recreational activities from local residents and the public that access the protected area from the highway and adjacent Tobiano Resort development. There are unrealized opportunities for exploration, such as hiking and viewscapes, and education of the public on natural values. Existing trail access, especially at the highway lookout, is largely user developed and has not taken potential values into consideration. Rock climbing is a regular activity that may have impacts due to access and high intensity use in a small area.	**Management Objective:** Provide for low profile access and recreation use of Six Mile Hill Protected Area. **Management Strategies:** • Recreation access and use of the protected area is considered of low regional priority. Promotion of recreation in the protected area by BC Parks will be low-profile. • Co-ordinate with the relevant provincial government agencies regarding access from the highway rest stop. • Long-term use of the protected area will be potentially linked with the use and demand of the adjacent development. Co-operative opportunities with the adjacent development could include: South of the highway - Trail access from Six Mile (Pat) Lake to the hilltop viewpoint within the protected area. This is the only viable and safe option to allow people to access and view old-growth ponderosa pine stands on the southern section of the protected area. North of the highway - Long-term, limited public access may potentially be possible to the lower grasslands (northern) portion of the protected area through development of a trail in conjunction with the Tobiano Resort development. • Durable trails would be required to protect sensitive soils and grasslands. Public access will be strictly controlled and limited to use of the designated trail(s). Public use may also be seasonally restricted to minimize disruption to winter/spring deer use of the protected area. • Assess existing trails leading from the highway lookout for potential impacts and adjust as necessary. • Interpretation of natural and cultural values, through trail head information signs, may be appropriate. • Develop an ongoing dialogue with Tobiano Resort to discuss issues pertaining to protection of values and the resort. • Only activities that are compatible with the key values of the protected area will be acceptable - low intensity, passive activities, such as guided nature walks, etc. will be appropriate. However, access to and use of the rock-climbing site will continue, with periodic monitoring to assess potential impacts on natural values. Modification of use or mitigation measures may be required by users if unacceptable impacts occur.

Cattle grazing has an impact on ecosystems and wildlife.	**Management Objective:** Manage grazing levels with respect to wildlife requirements. **Management Strategies:** • Due to the grazing lease, the protected area will be managed and administered in close co-ordination with the appropriate government agencies and leaseholder and follow the grazing policy set out in the Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan. Opportunities to redirect grazing to avoid sensitive areas will be considered.
The area is important to First Nations. These traditional values and uses must be recognized.	**Management Objective:** Honour and protect First Nations interests in the protected area. **Management Strategies:** • Development and management of the park will be done collaboratively with the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation to incorporate First Nations interests. • Participate in any multi-agency meetings with the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation. Protection of First Nations use and interests in the protected area will be integral to any management decisions.
There is a minor boundary conflict between the protected area and the Tobiano Resort development that needs to be resolved.	**Management Objective:** To have a common-sense boundary based on natural values between the Tobiano Resort and the protected area. **Management Strategies:** • Arrive at an agreeable boundary in the eastern corner of the protected area where it overlaps with the Tobiano Resort golf course.

3.2 Zoning Plan

In general terms, a zoning plan divides a protected area into logical management units within which certain activities/uses are permitted and a particular set of management objectives apply. Zoning is often used to physically separate incompatible activities or uses within the protected area and provides visitors and managers with a quick visual representation and appreciation of how a particular protected area is managed. Zones are designed to reflect the physical environment, existing patterns of use and the desired level of management and development in a given management unit.

The protected area is zoned entirely as Nature Recreation. The objective of this zone is to protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. Emphasis is placed on the protection of natural ecosystems, while allowing for appropriate recreational use.

4.0 Plan Implementation

4.1 Implementation Plan

BC Parks will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement high priority strategies. Specific projects will be evaluated for priority in relation to the overall protected areas system.

As part of the collaborative relationship, BC Parks will ensure that public interest groups, individuals and stakeholders are consulted where appropriate in various follow up management planning processes.

4.2 High Priority Strategies

The following strategies have been identified as high priorities for implementation:

1. Participate in any multi-agency meetings with the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation . Protection of First Nations use and interests in the protected area will be integral to any management decisions.
2. Development and management of the park will require ongoing consultation with the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation to incorporate First Nations interests.
3. Sign the protected area boundary at strategic locations.
4. Develop an ongoing dialogue with Tobiano Resort to discuss issues pertaining to protection of values and the resort.

4.3 Plan Assessment

In order to ensure that the management direction for Six Mile Hill Protected Area remains relevant and effective, BC Parks staff will ensure that the management plan is assessed by BC Parks staff on a regular basis (i.e., at least every 5 years). Minor administrative updates may be identified and completed at any time (e.g., correct spelling errors, update protected area details where needed), and will be documented according to BC Parks guidelines.

If an internal assessment reveals that the management plan requires updating or substantial new management direction is needed, a formal review by BC Parks and the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation may be initiated to determine whether the plan requires an amendment or if a new plan is required.

The management plan amendment process or development of a new plan includes an opportunity for public input.

Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table

The following table summarizes existing and potential future uses in Six Mile Hill Protected Area that are and are not appropriate in each zone. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all uses that may be considered in this protected area in the future.

Please note that many appropriate uses are geographically restricted (i.e., only allowed in certain areas of Six Mile Hill Protected Area) or are only appropriate at certain times of the year. Please ensure that you are well informed of any use restrictions as indicated in the table. It is a good idea to review relevant sections of the management plan where indicated in the table.

Appropriate Use Table Legend		
N	**Not an appropriate use**	The use is not appropriate in the indicated zone. If the use currently exists but the management planning process has determined that the use is no longer appropriate in all or part of the protected area, the management plan will include strategies for ending the activity (e.g., phasing out, closing).
Y	**May be an appropriate use**	Some level or extent of this use may be appropriate in the zone(s) indicated. If the activity/use already exists, the management plan provides guidance on the appropriate level of use and may address specific restrictions or planned enhancements (e.g., capacity, designated areas for a particular activity, party size, time of year, etc.). For new or expanded uses, this symbol indicates that the use may be considered for further evaluation and approval. The appropriateness of some activities may not be confirmed until a further assessment (e.g., BC Parks Impacts Assessment Process) or evaluation process (e.g., park use permit adjudication) is completed.
Y1	**Appropriate use as per section 30 or 31 of the *Park Act***	Indicates that the use is not normally appropriate in a protected area but was either occurring pursuant to an encumbrance or Crown authorization at the time the protected area was designated, or was authorized by BC Parks prior to July 13, 1995, and is allowed to continue.
N/A	**Not an applicable use in this zone**	Indicates where it is not feasible for the use to take place in this zone (e.g., mooring buoys in a terrestrial zone).

Activity/Facility	Nature Recreation Zone	Comments
Activities/Uses		
Aircraft access	N	
Camping – vehicle accessible	N	
Camping – backcountry	Y	In association with commercial recreation activity by the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation only.
Camping – motorised boat accessible	N	
Camping - no trace (backpacking)	N	
Camping - other (at approved/designated* sites)	N	
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	N	
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	Y	By the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation only.
Cultural Tourism	Y	
Insect/Disease Control	Y	
Filming (commercial)	Y	
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	Y	
Fire Management (prevention)	Y	
Fire Management (suppression)	Y	
Forest Insect/Disease Control	Y	
Grazing (domestic livestock)	Y	
Guide outfitting	N	
Guide outfitting (hunting)	N	
Guide outfitting (nature tours)	Y	By the Stk'emlupsemc Secwepemc Nation only
Hiking/Backpacking/Walking	Y	
Horse use/pack animals (not exotic)	Y	Horseback riding on designated trails only.
Hunting	N	
Mechanized Off-road Access (non-motorised – i.e. mountain biking)	N	
Motorised Off-road Access (not snowmobiles – i.e., 4x4, motorcycles, ATV)	N	
Noxious Weed Control	Y	
Off-road access (mechanical activities)	N	
Off-road access (non-mechanical: dog sleds, horse sleds)	N	
Off-road access (motorised)	N	
Pack animal Use	N	
Rock climbing	Y	
Scientific Research (assessment)	Y	
Scientific Research (manipulative	N	

Activity/Facility	Nature Recreation Zone	Comments
activities)		
Skiing (downhill and cross-country track based)	N	
Skiing (helicopter or cat-assisted)	N/A	
Snowmobiling	N	
Trapping	Y1	
Administrative buildings and compounds	N	
Backcountry huts	N	
Campgrounds (other)	N	
Campgrounds and picnic areas (vehicle access and serviced)	N	
Communication sites	N	
Emergency shelters	N	
Interpretation and information buildings	N	
Fixed Roof Accommodation	N	
Roads and parking lots	N	
Trails (hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking)	Y	Hiking and horseback riding only.
Utility corridors (power/transmission lines and other rights-of-way)	N	
Water control structures	N	
Water Sampling Structures	N	