Chapter 11

Visitor Services Program Implementation

SAMPLE PAGES

Across the David Thompson Corridor

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Introduction

The David Thompson Corridor is important to the ecology of the province and is a growing destination for a wide variety of hard and soft outdoor recreation activities. Although Alberta Parks properties make up a tiny portion of the lands within the corridor, Alberta's Plan for Parks mandates Visitor Services staff to deliver programs within these sites and also outside their boarders. This chapter is aimed at district Visitor Services staff who will:

- coordinate the Visitor Services programs that take place in these properties to ensure that visitors traveling through the corridor take part in complementary programs at the various sites they visit rather than experience the same programs at each site
- develop and deliver information/orientation and interpretation programs outside Alberta properties as they travel along Highway 11

This chapter is supported by *Background Paper 2. Feature Inventory: Big Picture Aspects with Application to Visitor Services in two or more sites in the David Thompson Corridor,* which catalogues many of the natural and features, processes and viewpoints of the David Thompson Corridor plus some of the cultural features of the district. District Visitor Services staff will choose to interpret many of these features to travellers along Highway 11

The chapter is divided into seven areas of activity:

- Research
- Assisting Park Management
- Information Orientation and Interpretation
- Education
- Recreation
- Partnerships
- Tourism
- Marketing

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An Overview of the David Thompson Corridor

Importance of the David Thompson Corridor

Ecological Importance to the Province

The lands of the David Thompson Corridor are part of the upper North Saskatchewan River Watershed including two major features, the North Saskatchewan River and Abraham Lake. The forests, alpine and wetlands habitats are important components responsible for vital ecological goods and services. They maintain the water levels and high water of the North Saskatchewan River used by many Albertans for drinking water and irrigation.

Importance for Recreation

The western section of the David Thompson Corridor has some of the province's most spectacular mountain scenery. In its eastern section it has landscapes typical of foothills and boreal forest of Alberta. It is a camping and outdoor recreation destination for many Central Albertans. Also, many people from the rest of the province are discovering its many recreation opportunities including:

Soft Recreational Pursuits

- sight seeing
- camping
  - in provincial and private campgrounds
  - random camping on public land
- day hiking
- nature photography
- jet boating on the North Saskatchewan River
- snowmobiling and ATVing
- helicopter alpine skiing
- mountain biking day trips

Hard Recreational Pursuits

- multi-day back country hiking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing horse riding and dog sledding
- river canoeing on the North Saskatchewan River
- rock and ice climbing
  - according to Alberta Parks and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development staff in the district, the area west of Abraham Lake provides some of the province's finest ice climbing opportunities

Extractive Recreation

- hunting
- fishing

Natural Regions

The David Thompson Corridor is located within two Natural Regions:

- Foothills Natural Region
- Rocky Mountain Natural Region
  - front ranges of the Rocky Mountains
  - main ranges of the Rocky Mountains

This district visitor services plan includes at least one Alberta Parks property from each of these regions (see Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Location of Alberta Parks Properties in this Plan

Alberta Parks Property	Foothills Natural Region	Rocky Mountain Natural Subregion
Crimson Lake Provincial Park	✓	
Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area	✓	
Crescent Falls Provincial Recreation Area		✓
Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve		✓
Siffleur Wilderness Area		✓
White Goat Wilderness Area		✓
Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area		✓

Note that none of the Alberta Parks properties in this plan are located along Abraham Lake.

Features and Processes

A detailed review of the Natural and Cultural Features within the David Thompson Corridor can be found in *Background Paper 2. Feature Inventory: Big Picture Aspects.* This document can be used as a primary information source by Visitor Services staff who develop interpretive media featuring the David Thompson Corridor.

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Areas of Visitor Services Activity

Visitor Services activity in the David Thompson Corridor can take place in three areas:

1. **Within the Alberta Parks properties included in this Visitor Services Plan (see Table 11.1 for a listing of these properties).**
2. **At a variety of locations on public lands along the David Thompson Highway (Hwy 11)**
3. **Remotely to people at their homes**

Distribution of Effort

The David Thompson Corridor District has very limited staffing. As a result, Visitor Services staff must carefully distribute effort to cover this vast area effectively. Details of activities within Alberta Parks properties are covered in other chapters of this Visitor Services Plan.

Table 11.2 suggests the percentage of available staff time and resources that Visitor Services staff should allocate to delivery or coordination of delivery by partners and contractors in each of the properties or areas of responsibility covered in this plan.

Table 11.2:
Recommended Allocation of Visitor Services Effort to be Applied to Properties in the David Thompson Corridor

Alberta Parks Property	Percentage of Visitor Services Effort
1. Visitor Services in the main Park Properties	**85%**
Crimson Lake Provincial Park	50%
Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve	15%
Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area	10%
Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area	5%
Crescent Falls Provincial Recreation Area	5%
Siffleur Wilderness Area	5%
White Goat Wilderness Area	
2. David Thompson Corridor Outside the Boundaries of Alberta Parks	**10%**
3. Remote Non-Visitor Programming	**5%**

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1. Visitor Services Activities within Alberta Parks Properties

Introduction

At the district level, Visitor Services staff must coordinate and integrate the Visitor Services offerings delivered at Alberta Parks properties within the district. These programs will include both personal and non-personal media. They may be planned, developed, delivered and evaluated either by park staff, or by contractors and/or partners. If some or all programming is delivered by contractors or partners, Visitor Services staff time and resources will still be required to ensure a high standard of delivery and accurate, appropriate content.

Coordination of Programming

District Visitor Services staff must ensure that programming at all sites is appropriate for site visitors and if possible that programming at one sites is complementary to those at other sites. For example Crimson Lake Provincial Park staff may deliver an evening program about First Nations use of the medicinal plants in the western plains forest region the day before there is a program about the traditional use of the Kootenay Plains co-delivered by Alberta Parks staff and local elders at Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve. Staff at Crimson Lake could promote the upcoming Kootenay Plains program as an ideal extension of the first.

Programming in Major Alberta Parks Properties

For this plan, major Alberta Parks properties are those identified in the Request for Proposals for this plan. Properties include:

- Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- Kootenay {Plains Ecological Reserve
- White Goat Wilderness Area
- Siffleur Wilderness Area
- Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area
- Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area
- Crescent Falls Provincial Recreation Area

Approximately 85% of Visitor Services staff time and resources should be allocated to these sites (see Table 11.2). Details of programming at these sites is covered in following chapters of this plan.

Programming in Other Alberta Parks Properties

Although the properties are small, (see Figure 11.2 for their locations) they account for up to 30% of the camping use in the David Thompson corridor. However, this plan does not cover them. That said, it can be expected that District Visitor Services staff may promote interpretive programs and special events that take place at the major sites to visitors using these minor sites.

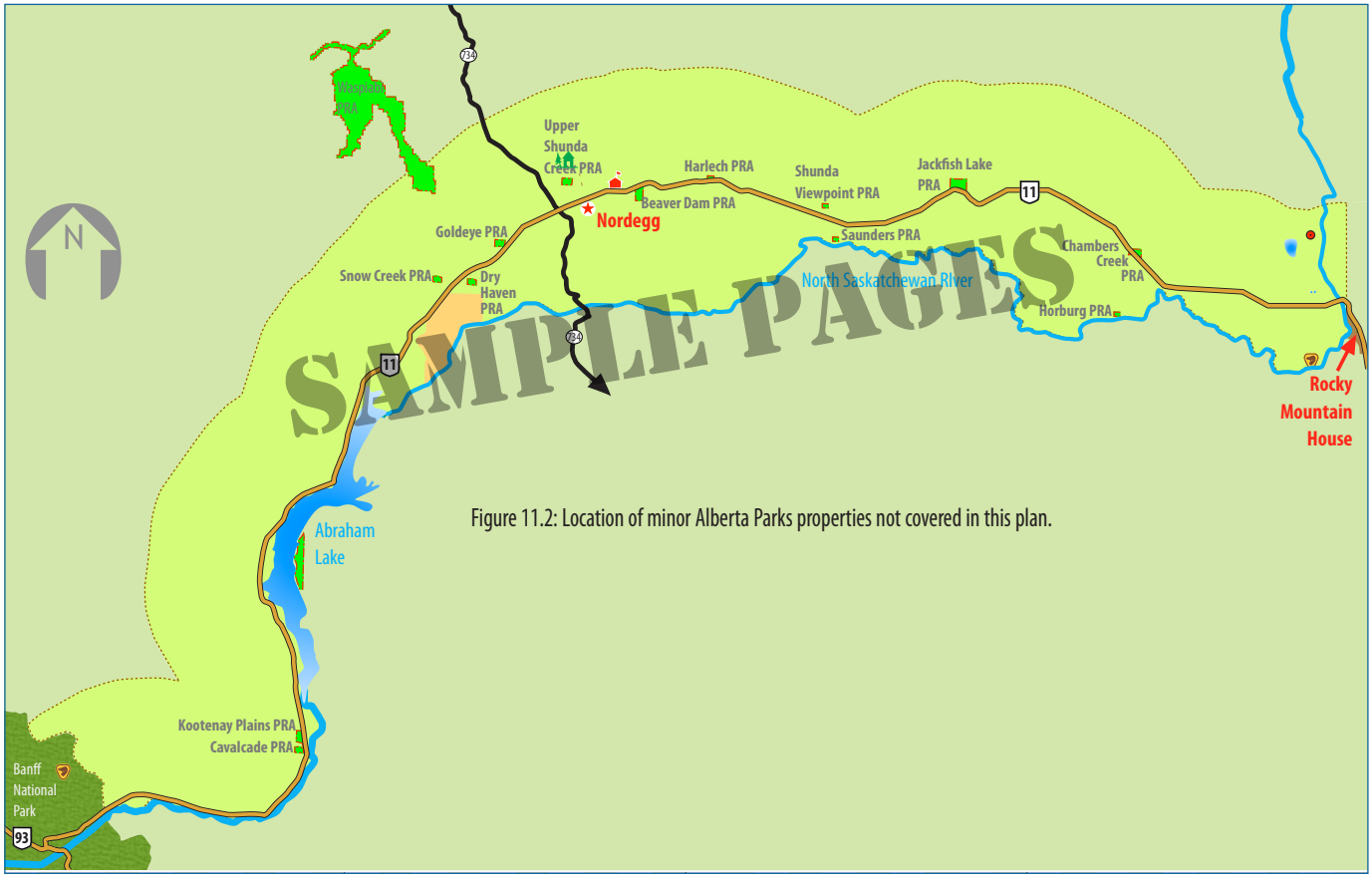


Figure 11.2: Location of minor Alberta Parks properties not covered in this plan.

SAMPLE PAGES

Figure 11.3: One of the trail maps from the Bighorn Backcountry Trail brochure (2011).

Figure 11.4: Rocky Nordegg Trail (red dashed line) is being developed by Clearwater County and volunteers as a multi-purpose trail mostly for snowmobiles and ATVs.

2. Visitor Services Activities Along The David Thompson Corridor

Most of the lands along the David Thompson Corridor are public lands not managed by Alberta Parks. The vast majority are under the jurisdiction of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). Many of the activity recommendations for this area of activity will require partnership and collaboration with SRD plus organizations and businesses that use these public lands.

Research

The development of Background Paper 2 (*Feature Inventory: Big Picture Aspects* uncovered a number of areas where further research is needed to assist Visitor Services staff to develop effective interpretation and information/orientation projects. These are described briefly below.

Natural Features

Roadside Geology

The David Thompson Corridor offers many magnificent views of geological features of foothills and mountain terrain. A review of *The Traveller's Guide to Geological Wonders in Alberta* (Mussieux and Nelson, 1998, Provincial Museum of Alberta) and the *Field Trip Road Log: David Thompson Highway from Windy Point to the Junction with the Banff-Jasper Highway* (Knipping, Rudy and Smith, 1965. Field trip of the Edmonton Geological Society) shows that the David Thompson Corridor has some excellent opportunities for engaging travellers in the art and science of reading the district's geological landscapes. Though full of valuable information, both these sources are incomplete.

Wildlife-Watching Sites

Wildlife-watching is an important activity along the David Thompson Corridor. There are wildlife hot spots such as the Kootenay Plains that support both large numbers of charismatic megafauna such as elk and bighorn sheep and smaller, rare species such as mountain bluebirds. However, there is no definitive catalogue of wildife-watching sites across the David Thompson Corridor that Visitor Services staff can use to develop a guide for visitors.

SAMPLE PAGES

Information About Recreationists in the David Thompson Corridor

Currently there is little detailed information about both hard and soft recreation enthusiasts in the David Thompson Corridor. It will be extremely valuable to know details about:

- where people go
- numbers of people engaged in specific activities
- levels of use of trails and other features (e.g., ice climbing sites)
- timing and duration of activities

This type of information will be invaluable for Visitor Services staff when developing information/orientation and interpretive materials. E.g., it will help them decide location, and content of interpretation material so that it will be located where people gather and be relevant to their needs and interests.

➥ Recommendations

District Visitor Services staff should ensure research efforts cover the entire David Thompson Corridor and lead or manage these efforts where appropriate.

Natural Features

1. Alberta Parks and Sustainable Resource Development staff should work with partners such as the Alberta Geological Survey and the Edmonton Geological Society to identify, describe and map key geological features that can be observed by travelers along the David Thompson Highway. This information can be incorporated into interpretation packaged recommended under the Interpretation section later in this chapter.

2. Alberta Parks and Sustainable Resource Development staff should work with partners such as Nature Alberta and local nature clubs to catalogue and map potential wildlife-watching sites in the David Thompson Corridor. In addition, all sites must be evaluated to determine their importance and potential danger to wildlife and to wildife-watchers. This catalogue can be used as a resource for developing a wildlife-watching program in the David Thompson Corridor.

Trails

The David Thompson Corridor would greatly benefit from a complete catalogue of trails on public lands that include accurate digital maps and detailed descriptions that include:

- length (distance in kilometres, estimated travel time)
- level of difficulty
- hazards (e.g., specific river and stream crossings subject to flooding during June snow melt)
- types of use permitted

This catalogue can be used to develop a comprehensive trail guide for the entire David Thompson Corridor.

1. Alberta Parks and Sustainable Resource Development staff should work with partners such as the Clearwater County, Alberta Geological Survey, the Alberta Snowmobile Association, and local hiking clubs (see the Alberta Hiking Association for a list of clubs — www.abhiking.ca/hikealberta/index.php?view=members) to catalogue and digitally map (using GPS equipment) all the trails that are located in the David Thompson Corridor.

SAMPLE PAGES

Information kiosks are located at Crimson Lake Provincial Park and Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area

A roadside label identifying Mount Ernest Ross

Figure 11.3
Examples of current information/orientation signs along the David Thompson Highway.

A roadside information sign identifying Mount Mitchener.

Interpretation and Information/Orientation

District-wide Coordination of Visitor Services

Visitor Services at Specific Sites

Table 11.2 (on page 11.4) suggests the relative proportion of Visitor Services effort that can be provided across selected Alberta Parks properties in the David Thompson Corridor. The table is based on current levels of staffing. If additional qualified Visitor Services staff become available, effort may be spread more evenly across district properties.

Types of Visitor Services activities at each site should focus on the types of visitors and the facilities available at each. Table 11.3 shows the recommended focus of Visitor Services at each site.

Current Conditions

District-Wide Information/Orientation Services

Currently, information/orientation and interpretation media is limited to:

- 2 information kiosks—one at Crimson Lake Provincial Park and one at Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area (see Figure 11.3)
- some random roadside labels identifying some of the mountains seen from the David Thompson Highway (see Figure 11.3)
- an ageing roadside information sign at a roadside pullout adjacent to Abraham Lake (see Figure 11.3)
  - there is no information on these structures indicating what government agency is responsible for them

Apart from the two information kiosks, there is no one-stop source of information about Alberta Parks properties and recreation opportunities on public lands in the David Thompson Corridor.

Sign Standards

In 2006, working with a world-class graphic design firm, Alberta Parks developed the Alberta Parks Sign Program. The resulting manual provides standardized designs for the broad range of signs used by Alberta Parks. The manual also includes step by step guidelines for developing evaluating and maintaining signs.

Reviews of signs used in the major parks and protected areas covered by this plan indicates that many current signs are not yet up to these new standards.

District-Wide Interpretation Services

Alberta Parks currently provides no personal or non-personal interpretation services outside park boundaries along the David Thompson Corridor.

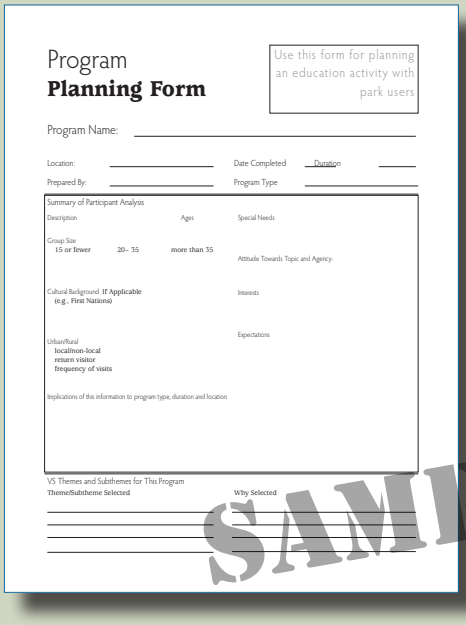
SAMPLE PAGES

An Interpretive Program Planning Form

Planning is central to developing effective Visitor Services. Program planning is a standardized process for developing new Visitor Services education and interpretation offerings.

A Program Planning Form Template

An interim Visitor Services program planning form based on current best practice was developed by EcoLeaders. It can be used as a template for planning personal and non-personal interpretation services (see the attachment: *Interpretive Program Planning Form* at the end of this chapter).



Program
Planning Form

Use this form for planning an education activity with park users

Program Name: _____

Location: _____ Date Completed _____ Duration _____

Prepared By: _____ Program Type _____

Summary of Participant Analysis

Description | Ages | Special Needs

Group Size
15 or fewer | 20– 35 | more than 35

Attitude Towards Topic and Agency:

Cultural Background If Applicable (e.g., First Nations)

Interests

Expectations

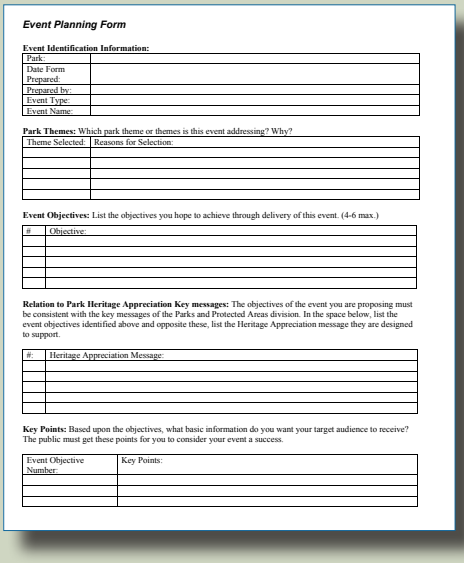
Urban/Rural
local/non-local
return visitor
frequency of visits

Implications of this information to program type, duration and location

VS Themes and Subthemes for This Program

Theme/Subtheme Selected | Why Selected

Or use a copy of older Alberta Parks event planning form that according to Alberta Park staff is still available but not in use across the province (a copy is also attached at the end of this chapter).



Event Planning Form

Event Identification Information:

Park:	
Date Form Prepared:	
Prepared by:	
Event Type:	
Event Name:	

Park Themes: Which park theme or themes is this event addressing? Why?

Theme Selected:	Reasons for Selection:

Event Objectives: List the objectives you hope to achieve through delivery of this event. (4-6 max.)

#	Objective:

Relation to Park Heritage Appreciation Key messages: The objectives of the event you are proposing must be consistent with the key messages of the Parks and Protected Areas division. In the space below, list the event objectives identified above and opposite these, list the Heritage Appreciation message they are designed to support.

#:	Heritage Appreciation Message:

Key Points: Based upon the objectives, what basic information do you want your target audience to receive? The public must get these points for you to consider your event a success.

Event Objective Number:	Key Points:

➥ Recommendations

Interpretation Program Planning Forms

1. Continue to initiate the use of program planning forms for all new personal and non-personal interpretation programs throughout the David Thompson Corridor.
   - start with the planning form templates provided at the end of this chapter
   - over the next five years, modify the form as needed to fit the realities of interpretive programming in the David Thompson Corridor but ensure that key areas of planning remain:
     - clear identification of target participants with detailed profile featuring what is known about their prior knowledge of the site and the interpretive theme(s)
     - identify participant learning outcomes (cognitive, skills, behaviour and attitudes)
     - make connections to the site's interpretive themes
     - risk analysis for participants and for park habitats, species, infrastructure and historic sites and how these risks will be addressed
     - identify how and when program evaluations will take place

Effective Interpretive Program Evaluation System

1. Current evaluation focuses mostly on delivery.

   Best practice in evaluation of interpretation programming on the following key areas:
   - are the learning objectives are met
     - this includes knowledge, behavioral and emotional objectives identified in the program plan
   - does the program reflects the site's interpretive themes and subthemes
   - are agency standards of procedures, conduct, dress etc. have been met
   - are presentation and activities are appropriate for the target participants
   - are content is accurate and that Alberta Parks and its partners are fairly represented and are cast in a positive light
   - is the program location safe and appropriate
   - is the presentation quality of a high standard

   District Visitor Services staff have undertaken to develop an effective program evaluation system for all Visitor Services programming: This action should be undertaken as soon as possible. Until this project is complete, Visitor Services staff should use the old event evaluation sheet (a copy is attached at the end of this chapter).

Use the Program Plan

A good program plan clearly lists what the program intended outcomes are. This is what should be evaluated. You should assess whether each objective was reached. If some were not, you should evaluate why, and make necessary improvements.

District-Wide Interpretation Performance Standards

1. Over the next three years, district Visitor Services staff should work with head office staff to develop performance standards for all aspects of Visitor Services in the David Thompson Corridor (except for signs standards which already exist).

   This could most easily be accomplished by starting with the *Heritage Interpreter Occupational Standards* available for free from the Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council at: http://emerit.ca/en/free_downloads/occupational_standards. Visitor Services staff can modify these standards to fit the realities of the David Thompson Corridor and the broader definition of Visitor Services used by Alberta Parks.

SAMPLE PAGES

District-Wide Interpretation Training

1. After Visitor Services performance standards have been developed, district Visitor Services staff should develop training programs to ensure that seasonal and new full-time staff are able to perform to the standards. An excellent model to follow is the Heritage Interpreter certification process available through the Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council (CTHRC) at: http://emerit.ca/en/products/all_products/heritage_interpreter). This fee-based certification includes a participants a learners' workbook and a certification review aimed at assisting participants in attaining Heritage Interpreter Occupational Standards. Sites with long-term expert staff that regularly train seasonal staff can also purchase a trainers guide.

   District Visitor Services staff may decide to forgo developing a district-specific performance standards and training material an use the CTHRC materials only.

Professional Development

Interpretation is a fast changing field incorporating new research on learning, and communication and incorporating new technologies as they are developed. To keep current, Visitor Services staff at the district and at the park level should be in contact with peers and experts in their field. This should be achieved by:

1. Each year, district and park-level Visitor Services staff should:
   - hold membership in a regional or national interpretation professional association such as Interpretation Canada
   - attend at least one on-line or face-to-face workshop or conference provided by a national or regional interpretation association

As well, staff should be prepared to deliver session at workshops and conferences and/or write articles in professional journals (e.g., *InterpScan*) about new cutting edge techniques that they are using in developing, delivering or evaluating personal and non-personal interpretation.

Information/Orientation Standards

1. Use The Alberta Parks Sign Program manual as a guide for developing all Visitor Services-related signs in the David Thompson Corridor.

   This will help to establish and maintain the Alberta Parks look and feel (branding) throughout the district.

2. Consider developing a David Thompson Corridor logo similar to that used by Kananaskis Country (see sidebar). This logo can be used to establish a David Thompson Corridor brand within Alberta Parks.

   This would require working with a professional graphic designer to develop a logo that clearly and simply represents the entire district.

Interpretation and Information/Orientation Packages for Travelers on Highway 11

1. Alberta Parks and Sustainable Resource Development staff should work together with partners such as:
   - Alberta Ministry of Transportation
   - Alberta Geological Survey and the Edmonton Geological Society
   - local guides, outfitters and resorts
   - provincial recreation clubs (e.g., snowmobilers associations)
   - local and provincial nature clubs, outdoor clubs and environmental groups

   to develop a trail and recreation guide to the David Thompson Corridor that includes significant information/orientation and interpretation content. This project could include any or all of the following:
   - a printed guide
   - a series of wayside exhibits strategically located along the David Thompson Highway and perhaps at selected Alberta Parks campgrounds
   - an ebook downloadable from an Alberta Parks or SRD website to a visitor's laptop computer, tablet computer, digital ebook reader, and/or smartphone
   - a smartphone/tablet computer application downloadable from the iTunes Store or an Android App store (see the Sidebar on page 11.14)

   Before choosing media and locations, Visitor Services staff should refer to research on visitors recommended in the Research Section of this chapter.

   Much of the information that could be included in the information/orientation and information initiatives can be found in Background Paper 2 *(Feature Inventory: Big Picture Aspects)*.

2. Interpretation/Information/Orientation projects could include:

   Interpretation
   - A Geology Tour of the David Thompson Corridor
     - identifying rocks, minerals and fossils and where you can see them
     - past and on-going geological processes and how to observe them
     - how to identify mountains and mountain ranges
     - where to see the remaining glaciers
   - mountain and foothills climate
     - aspect and microclimate
   - the North Saskatchewan River and its watershed
     - river ecology
   - Abraham Lake–history and ecology
   - wildlife-watching
   - how to read the landscape
   - habitats and special places
   - natural processes
     - fire and forest succession
     - insect populations and their impact on forests
     - ecological goods and services
     - biodiversity
     - invasive species
   - First Nations history and culture
   - mining and railway history

   Information Orientation
   - trails, back country campsites, viewpoints
     - location
     - facts (distance, level of difficulty, estimated time to travel, hazards and safety issues)
     - regulations, open and closed dates and emergency contacts
     - habitats, plants and animals that could be encountered
     - sightseeing opportunities

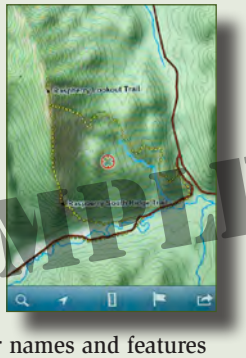
SAMPLE PAGES

Potential Models for Smartphone Apps Featuring Trails and Recreation Opportunities in the David Thompson Corridor

If considering developing a smartphone app, Visitor Services staff should review existing park-related apps on the market. There are several application developers who have produced iPhone applications featuring interactive maps that show trails, viewpoints, points of interest and information. Most of these focus on information orientation, however, some applications have connections with Facebook and other social media sites. Some field guide apps enable users to develop online journals and sightings lists for their personal use and to share with others online. These types of options could be incorporated into interpretive sections of a *Discovering the David Thompson Corridor* Application providing:

- suggestions, instructions and ideas for nature discovery activities
- opportunities for participants to record and share their observations
- connections with a combined Alberta Parks/SRD David Thompson Corridor Facebook site where they can share photos and experiences and ask questions to Visitor Services staff about what they have encountered

Kananaskis Trail Map App

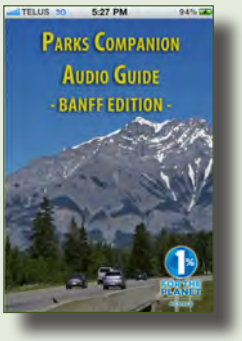


This application for iPhone and iPad is available on Apple's iTunes Store was developed by David Crawshay. It features a topographical map of Kananaskis Country.

Users can:

- search or browse the names of trails, mountains, lakes, rivers and backcountry campsites
- use the mountain finder to locate nearby mountains and learn about their names and features
- track their current location with their device's GPS receiver
- add flags on the map to mark important points and views they have encountered
- measure distance between points on the map
- get driving directions to specific locations

Parks Companion Audio Guide



This is a GPS Audio Tour for the iPhone available from Apple's iTunes store.

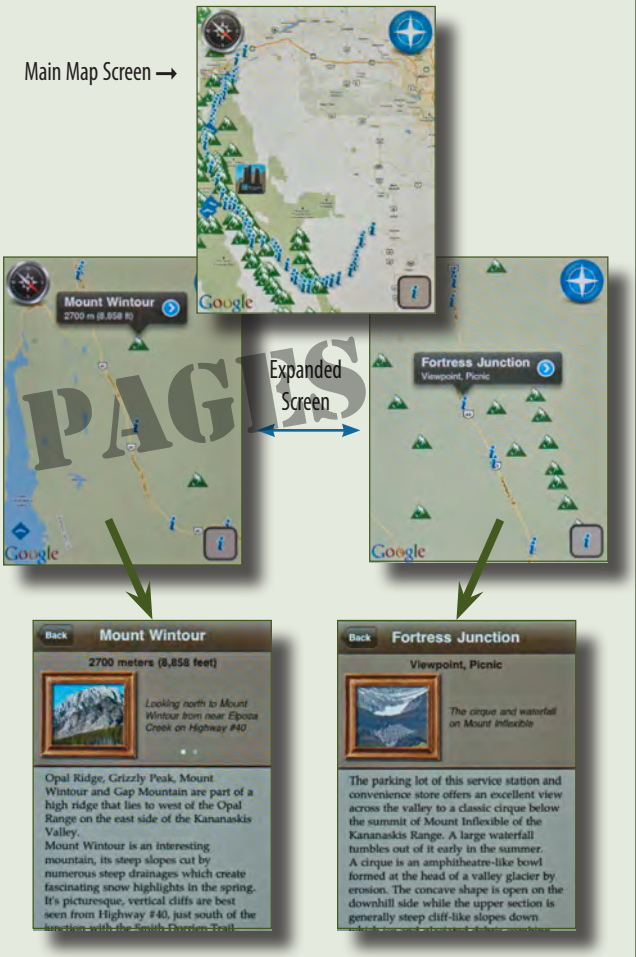
It contains almost 1,500 audio files (over 13 hours of content) presented to let users know where they are and what they are seeing at many locations from their vehicles.

The guide includes Banff Townsite, Lake Louise Drive, Moraine Lake Road, and many others.

Kananaskis Loop Drive App

This application for iPhone and iPad is available on Apple's iTunes Store was developed by Dave Birrell, a Canadian Rockies author and accredited professional guide with the Interpretive Guides Association. It features the lookouts, points of interest, mountains, lakes and picnic sites that can be observed on a loop drive through Kananaskis Country west of Calgary. This app makes use of the iPhone and iPad's built-in GPS hardware to locate the user's position on the road.

Screen Shots from Kananaskis Loop Drive App



Choice of platforms for this project will likely require research into what tablet computer and smartphone applications are most popular with target users.

SAMPLE PAGES

Recreation

Many Alberta Parks properties in the David Thompson corridor are located nearby important recreation sites located on public land. These sites include:

- trails that permit ATV/snowmobile, equestrian trails, hiking, dog-sledding and/or mountain biking. Some of these activities are currently not permitted on Alberta Parks properties
- ice and rock climbing areas
- viewpoints
- wildlife-watching sites
- North Saskatchewan River and Abraham Lake access points for boaters

➥ Recommendations

Alberta Parks and Sustainable Resource Development staff should work together to:

Immediately

1. Initiate the development of a detailed catalogue of trails and recreation sites within the David Thompson Corridor (see the Research section of this chapter).

Short Term

1. Visitor Services staff, using information gathered from the above cataloguing initiative, will ensure that visitors to Alberta Parks properties are aware of nearby recreation opportunities on public lands.

   This should include information available on-site and on-line via the sites' and the district's website and Facebook pages.

Long Term

1. Ensure that all Alberta Parks sites which have trails passing through them have detailed, accurate information about those trails for people who access these trails from the park.
2. Work with SRD staff to develop staging areas adjacent to park properties making access to existing ATV/Snowmobile trails and other recreation activities more accessible.

Partnerships and Sponsorships

Chapter 4 of this plan review potential partners and makes recommendations for collaborations with some. It is likely that district staff Visitor Services will be the best equipped to work out partnership and sponsorship agreements with Alberta government and non-government partners. Senior staff will have the authority and community connections required for developing partnerships with other government agencies, non-government agencies and community groups (see sidebar: Key Sponsorship Definitions on facing page).

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Sponsorship

Sponsorship is especially important in the David Thompson Corridor. Sponsorship is an investment by a partner, in cash and/or in kind, in return for access to exploitable business potential associated with an event or a highly publicized program. This is very different from corporate philanthropy. Sponsorships are an integral part of many company's marketing and promotional activities.

Companies use sponsorships to gain attention for their brand. To get a sponsorship, Visitor Services staff need to show that by supporting an Alberta Parks project, the company will be getting that exposure.

Like any business relationship, the successful sponsorship requires clear objectives on both sides, candor between the partners, and nurturing over time.

Why would a corporation want to sponsor Alberta Parks Projects in the David Thompson Corridor?

- to be seen as good corporate citizens in the community and in the province
- to market and sell specific products
- to build brand loyalty and long term repeat customers

The bottom line is if you can offer an opportunity for a corporation to positively influence their core customers or advance their marketing objectives, there is an opportunity for sponsorship.

➥ Recommendations

District Visitor Services staff should:

Immediately

1. Over the next year, work with other members of the district parks management team, head office staff and ministry lawyers to develop a partnership and sponsorship protocol that will provide District Alberta Parks staff with guidelines for establishing and maintaining partnerships and sponsorships and working with partners and sponsors on Visitor Services-related projects (see sidebar: Developing a Partnership Protocol on page 11.18). This protocol can be shared with prospective partners as part of a transparent process for establishing partnerships.
2. Include a separate section specific to sponsorship. See Sidebar: Developing Industry Sponsorship on page 11.20 for information that should be incorporated.

Short Term

1. Within two years, district Visitor Services staff will use the partnership protocol to establish at least one new partnerships and one sponsorship in the David Thompson Corridor. Partners will be chosen from those identified and analyzed in Chapter 4: Partnership Analysis.

more partnership recommendations on the following page

Long Term Partnership Recommendations

1. Whenever practical, regional and provincial Visitor Services staff will work with site Visitor Services staff to expand partnerships throughout the DTC.
2. Using feedback from partners and Alberta Parks staff, from the initial use of the partnership protocol, District Visitor Services staff will modify and update the partnership protocol. This process will be repeated annually in order to maintain an effective protocol.

Developing a Partnership Protocol

In the future finding, developing and maintaining effective partnerships is likely to be an important aspects of work of district Visitor Services staff. Successful partnerships can allow Alberta Parks to expand its programs, and broaden its participants and influence. But partnerships can also present challenges. An unsuccessful partnership can damage an agency, just as a successful one can advance it. A partnership protocol can assist Alberta Parks staff in choosing appropriate partners, forming and maintaining effective partnerships and also providing exit strategies for ending unsuccessful collaborations.

A partnership protocol doesn't answer the question of what is right for Alberta Parks, instead, it provides tools and information to help find the best solutions possible for the needs of the agency within the David Thompson Corridor.

A partnership protocol should be developed by district staff using established departmental procedures (e.g., the process for developing memoranda of understanding) and the advice and best practices of a wide variety of experts from the world of academia, business and not-for-profit organizations.

A partnership protocol must focus on three key areas of interest
- why partnerships are important in the David Thompson Corridor District
- guiding principles for partnerships
- how those principles are put into practice

The process, of developing a partnership protocol should provide an opportunity to debate, discuss and learn from other groups' partnership arrangements.

The success of a partnership is dependent on shared goals and vision and an understanding of all parties involved of how the partnership will unfold through each stage of a joint project.

Typical Phases of a Partnership to Be Considered in a Partnership Protocol

Phase 1: Assessing Potential Partners

This phase involves finding potential partners, identifying their mission, goals and reputation and assessing their compatibility with the foundations of Alberta Parks in the David Thompson Corridor. This phase is covered in detail in Chapter 4. Partnership Analysis.

Phase 2: Building Partnerships

Building a partnership involves developing relationships with partners and funders, choosing mutually beneficial projects and selecting suitable project evaluation procedures to show that both party's needs are being met. This relationship must be solidified with an agreement.

This stage lays the groundwork for building an effective, enduring and fair partnership that will allow both partners to pursue their objectives.

Tips for Achieving Effective Relationships

Be flexible to the needs of your partner and communicate often and openly—informally and at established check-in points. The nature of the relationship between Alberta Parks and its partner is fluid. Conflicts and problems can arise. A solid partnership protocol can help mitigate these potential difficulties:

- identify the controllable elements of the partnership and its projects
  - identify how they will be managed
- develop a collaborative agreement on the shared vision, goals (definition of success), expectations, rules of engagement (e.g., there will be monthly meetings alternatively chaired by a member of each party), and measurable objectives
- take time to develop relationships your counterparts in the partner organization
- communicate often and openly—informally and at established meeting dates
- be clear and up front about the nature of the disagreement when conflicts arise or when Alberta Parks' interests and those of the partner diverge
- establish a process of accountability and follow it, delivering as promised

Tips for Developing Partnership Agreements

Partnership agreements can take many forms. The length of the document should reflect the nature of the relationship and the scope of the partnership. The agreement needs to be comprehensive, drafted by the people who will implement it, reflect the partners' relationship and be reviewed and approved by legal experts—preferably by lawyers who specialize in memoranda of agreement and sponsorships.

All partnership agreements should be ethical, purposeful, thorough, principled, transparent, legally viable and enforceable.

When drawing up the partnership agreement, Alberta Parks should clearly outline:
- each partner's role, responsibilities and deliverables
- each partner's positions on the use of logos or trademarks, copyrights, confidentiality, ownership of products developed
- a detailed dispute resolution plan and termination/exit clauses
- mutually agreed-upon definitions and related terminology

continued on the facing page— >

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Tourism

The David Thompson Corridor with its uncrowded, accessible wilderness and great scenic beauty has the potential to become a major tourism destination on the level of Kananaskis Country west of Calgary. How this potential is developed will strongly depend on the parameters set out in the upcoming Land Use Framework for the North Saskatchewan Region. District Visitor Services staff should keep abreast of the development of this plan and its implications for recreation and tourism in the district.

That said, there are already many recreation/tourism activities and stakeholders in the David Thompson Corridor. The tourism aims of Alberta Parks in the district can be effectively supported by working with or on the Tourism Destination Regions boards and by creating a regional tourism association that includes the major land use managers and tourism stakeholders in the David Thompson Corridor. This association could work to coordinate and fund-raise for projects for members such as visitor/market research and segmentation, staff training/professional development, and marketing.

➥ Recommendations

1. Alberta Parks will work with local tourism stakeholders to establish a district tourism association and ensure that at least one Visitor Services staff sit on the executive of the association to ensure that Alberta Parks initiatives are well represented.
2. Continue to work with the Alberta Central and Canadian Rockies Tourism Destination Regions.

Marketing

Currently Alberta Parks properties and programs are marketed through site-specific park websites and through the Rocky Mountain House chamber of commerce. This marketing effort can be expanded.

➥ Recommendations

1. Through its two gateway sites (Crimson Lake Provincial Park and Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area), its site-specific websites and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) and through other marketing efforts as part of a district tourism association, Alberta Parks will market the David Thompson Corridor and its properties within the district to Central Albertans including people living in Edmonton and Calgary.
2. Include cross-marketing agreements as part of partnership agreements with all partners in the David Thompson Corridor.
3. If a district tourism association is formed, work with other shareholders to develop marketing tools such as a district adventure brochure and website, and perhaps a district facilities smartphone application similar to the Tofino App developed by the merchants of the resort Village of Tofino on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

A District Marketing Smartphone Application

Alberta Parks working with partners and regional stakeholders should investigate the feasibility of developing a marketing application for smartphones similar to the Tofino App developed by local businesses.

The Tofino App is a free iPhone, iPad or Android phone travel guide that helps visitors explore the Tofino and Ucluelet area of Vancouver Island including Pacific Rim National Park.

The application contains information and maps that assist visitors to find stores, restaurants, resorts, trails, beaches accommodations and food. It also features guided activities, art galleries and surf shops. Using Google maps users get maps and turn by turn navigation directions to any destination.

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