

Chapter 12

Visitor Services Foundations



for Crimson Lake Provincial Park

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Introduction

As stated in Chapter 2, foundations can be considered as the guiding principles for the Visitor Services program at Crimson Lake Provincial Park. They are the statements of the intentions and mandate of the park as expressed in the park's management plan.

The in this chapter, key park-level foundations form the park's management plan are identified and their implications for the park's Visitor Services program are discussed. Visitor Services staff should regularly review the park management plan to ensure that their programming remains true to the intent and purpose of Crimson Lake Provincial Park.

Overview

The park was founded in 1949 and is currently classified as a Provincial Park. It has been one of the provinces top 10 most visited provincial parks for camping for a number of years. In 2002/2003 it had approximately 42,480 visitors and park use has remained relatively constant at this level over the past 18 years.

The park is currently composed of two units (Crimson Lake and Twin Lakes Blocks) with a total area of 3,209 hectares.

The Management Plan

A management plan is intended to provide the overall direction for the programming, development, maintenance and protection of the park. It supports the mandates of Alberta Parks (see Chapter 1: Summary of Foundations and Background Paper 1: Review of Foundations).

Note

The park's current management plan was completed and approved in 2002. The plan is brief and provides only limited background and guidance for visitor services. EcoLeaders expects that it will require revision in order to conform to the provincial-level Plan for Parks (2009) and the regional plan for parks which will be completed in the near future.

The current management plan is an important document to reference in conjunction with this VS plan.

The Management Plan provides the following:

- a long-term vision
- identification of the role that park plays within the Alberta Parks system
- guidelines for day-to-day stewardship of the park
- an outline of the type and extent of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities, facilities and services
- the park's program objectives for preservation, visitor services, outdoor recreation, and tourism
- direction regarding the delivery of Visitor Services (heritage appreciation) programs that assist Albertans and visitors to understand and appreciate the site's natural heritage while ensuring its ongoing preservation
- location of existing facilities and programs in context with their program objectives
- a listing of park issues and concerns and recommend remedial actions
- a listing of park upgrading and development requirements needed to meet program objectives
- priorities for the addition or deletion of lands to Crimson Lake Provincial Park

Definition of a Provincial Park

According to the Alberta Parks website: *A Spectrum of Sites: Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas Site Classifications* (<http://tpr.alberta.ca/parks/managing/spectrumsites.asp#provpark>), Provincial Parks preserve natural heritage; they support outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and natural heritage appreciation activities that depend upon and are compatible with environmental protection. They:

- protect natural and cultural landscapes and features
- have a greater range of outdoor recreation facilities, road access, and the interpretive and educational programs and facilities than wildland parks
- feature outdoor recreation activities that promote appreciation of a park's natural heritage and cultural features are encouraged.
- offer a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and support facilities
- often feature interpretive and educational programs that enhance visitor understanding and appreciation of, and respect for, Alberta's natural heritage (without damaging natural values)
- serve visitors of diverse interests, ages, physical capabilities and outdoor skills.

Park Purpose

The management plan identifies the purpose of the park as follows:

“Crimson Lake Provincial Park is one of many sites within a large system of parks and protected areas in Alberta. As such, it plays a unique role in contributing towards the four program objectives of parks and protected areas (Alberta Parks). Crimson Lake Provincial Park contributes primarily to the preservation goal of parks and protected areas by preserving significant natural landscapes and making significant contributions to heritage appreciation, outdoor recreation and tourism. It was designated as a provincial park due to its ability to protect a significant natural landscape and features while providing quality recreational and heritage appreciation experiences.”

Note that the significant natural features, current recreation facilities, and management issues are described in detail in the Features Inventory (Background Paper 3). Further, park resources are analyzed in terms of their potential and suitability for interpretation, education, recreation activities and other visitor services programs in Chapter 13: Features Analysis.

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→ Implications for Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park:

The purpose statement makes it clear that the park has a clear mandate to:

- preserve and protect the significant provincial landscapes and cultural resources
- provide quality interpretive and educational experiences
- provide appropriate high quality recreational opportunities

1. VS staff will have the opportunity to help many people to discover and understand:

- the reasons for the establishment and continued protection of the park
- the key natural features protected by the park including both rare and common habitats, species and features
- the importance and value of natural areas in the park, the David Thompson Corridor and the province in general
- current park management issues and the responsibilities of all visitors to protect the parks and its natural and cultural heritage (stewardship)
- appropriate recreational activities and behaviour in a provincial park
- the idea that provincial parks are a fun, safe place
- that there are many other provincial parks and recreation sites in the corridor that they can visit

Classification

Crimson Lake is classified as a Provincial Park (see description of this designation in the sidebar on facing page).

→ Implications for Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park:

The visitor services program will have to include topics about:

- visitor opportunities to discover the natural and cultural features of the

park and the plains and Lower Foothills Natural region and share their findings with others

- how the park preserves and protects natural features and functions and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of visitors and generations to come
- opportunities to participate in stewardship activities of the park's natural and cultural features
- appropriate recreation activities available in the park

Objectives

The management plan divides its objectives into four areas:

- Preservation
- Visitor Services
- Outdoor Recreation
- Tourism and Economic Development

Preservation

The management plan identifies the following areas of focus for preservation:

- to protect the natural history features within the park that are representative of the Foothills Natural Region
- to protect the wildlife habitat and species within the park
- to protect Crimson Lake and Twin Lakes
- to protect the vegetation and provide a natural environment in the park

Implication for On-going Management

Park staff and partners will work to:

- ensure wildlife habitat and species within the park are managed and protected on a sustainable basis
- manage and protect the natural vegetation of the park
- protect the features that are representative of the Lower Foothills Natural Region

- actively maintain biological diversity within the park
- allow natural processes to operate as much as possible within the management of the park
- protect special areas and maintain historically significant sites, including places of First Nations cultural significance and geological formations and features

→ Implications for Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park:

The Visitor Services will work to support the park's preservation mandate. To do this VS staff will need to focus on interpretation, education and information programs that will have two areas of focus:

- natural systems and landscape
- cultural and historical

For natural systems and landscapes three key areas of emphasis are indicated:

- biodiversity
 - what it is, how it works, why it is important
- sustainability/sustainable development
 - what it is, how it works, why it is important
- Crimson Lake Provincial Park's role in the district's stewardship, sustainability and protection of biodiversity

Note: Details of features to be preserved re found in Chapter 13: Features Analysis.

Visitor Services

The management plan indicates that Crimson Lake Provincial Park:

"... provides an ideal opportunity to provide interpretation services of the Lower Foothills Natural Region..."

and

"... provides an ideal opportunity for visitors to explore, appreciate and understand the diversity of the Lower Foothills."

The management plan indicates the importance of interpretation and education services to the park user's visitor experience and identifies the following objectives:

- to provide interpretive and educational opportunities that will enhance visitors' understanding, use and enjoyment of the park
- to provide environmental education opportunities for youth groups and school groups throughout the year

→ Implications for Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park:

Visitor Services activities should include:

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- focus on enhancing park user understanding, use, and enjoyment of the park environment
- provide park users with opportunities to learn about and gain an appreciation for the mandate, purpose and goals of Alberta Parks
- provide park users with an opportunity to understand and learn about the concept of sustainable development
- enhance public understanding of environmental education and ecosystem management
- increase visitor understanding of and support for park management practices

Environmental Education

- provision of environmental education opportunities for community, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary youth and school groups throughout the year
- a focus on programming for educational groups and professional teacher development that may involve training and research opportunities for the educational community
- an increase in the environmental literacy of learners entering the program

Community Engagement and Involvement in Stewardship

- develop informal community educational programming