

Chapter 17

Visitor Services Program Statements and Implementation



for Crimson Lake Provincial Park

EcoLeaders

Prepared by

Interpretation and Environmental Education
Box D82, Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G0
email: info@ecoleaders.ca phone: (604) 947-0483
www.ecoleaders.ca



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The ANZECC Best Practice Model

In 1999, the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) released *Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education*. This report contained a model developed based on an intensive study of best practice in 35 state and federal agencies (including several Canadian agencies) that deliver interpretation and education services. The model illustrates current best practices in organizing, managing, and delivering interpretation and education services.

Best practice can be divided into five areas: Define, Plan, Deliver, Evaluate and Support.

Define

This stage focuses on the interpretation objectives and services of the organization. They are clearly defined and linked to legislative requirements, mission statement, and broader agency objectives.

Plan

Here foundation elements from the define stage are translated into strategic planning for interpretation and education services. Markets are researched and considered, and messages, key audiences, performance standards, and options for service delivery are developed.

Deliver

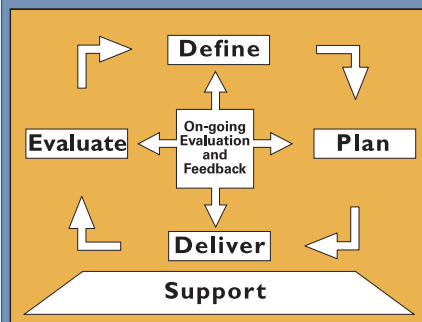
Here, managers ensure that front line staff, friends groups, and other service providers understand all relevant agency objectives, targets, and performance standards from the previous stage. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

Evaluate

Here interpretation services are monitored, measured, evaluated, and improved. The contributions that services make towards achieving agency goals are assessed for effectiveness.

Support

Support includes financial systems, technology, equipment, human resources, and deployment of staff. Core skills are identified, trained for, and maintained at all interpretation and education service levels.



Based on: *Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education, A Report to the ANZECC Working Group on National Park and Protected Area Management*
Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria; April 1999, www.environment.gov.au/parks/publications/best-practice/interpretation/index.html

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the processes and procedures of delivering Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park and includes recommendations for implementation over the next five years. It focuses on ten areas of core competency.

Core Competencies

Core Competencies are the collective knowledge and skills needed by Visitor Service Staff to successfully do their jobs. They include the areas of operation and service in which the Visitor Services program should excel.

The areas of core competency identified in this chapter include:

1. Research
2. Information Orientation
3. Assisting Park Management
4. Interpretation
5. Education
6. Stewardship Involvement
7. Recreation Programming
8. Collaboration and Partnership
9. Tourism
10. Marketing

For each core competency, the following areas are examined and discussed:

Outputs

These are the key products and services related to each core competency.

Critical Success Factors

These are the structures, materials, processes, procedure and/or staff capacity (knowledge, skills) that must be in place for an output to be achievable.

Key Performance Indicators

These are observable outcomes of the outputs. They will help Visitor Services staff define and measure progress toward delivering the outputs identified within each core competency.

Tables

Tables throughout this chapter identify the outputs, critical success factors and key performance indicators for each core competency.

Best Practice

Each core competency is discussed in detail under the five areas identified in the ANZECC Best Practice Model (see Sidebar on the facing page).

Best practices within each core competency are described under the following headings:

Define

- outputs
- critical success factors
- the key performance indicators
- objectives

Plan

- target participants
- themes

Deliver

- key locations
- optimal methods and media

Evaluate

- what to evaluate
- when to do it

Support

- capital costs
- operational costs
- operational support
- revenue generation

Implementation Recommendations

Recommendations for action over the next five years are included at the end of each core competency section.

These recommendations can be used by Visitor Services staff as a checklist identifying areas of effort.

Key Constraint

Lack of staff in the David Thompson Corridor is the main limiting factor for what can be done in Visitor Services Program over the next five years. In some cases core tasks can only be achieved with addition of full time staff (e.g., developing relationships and collaborations with local First Nations communities and deploying LEET tourism programming).

General Guidelines for Visitor Services Programming

The following guidelines will aid Visitor Services staff in providing the Visitor Services for Crimson Lake Provincial Park.

Go with Crimson Lake Provincial Park's Main Strengths

- feature outdoor activities
- feature interaction with the real thing (lake, wetland and forest habitats, live plants and animals, natural features and events such as mass bird migrations, artifacts, and real people)

These authentic features are not as widely available in the mass entertainment/recreation/education market of Central Alberta.

Go Where the People Are

- deliver Visitor Services where people congregate in Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- deliver some virtual Visitor Services through electronic media
 - target people and groups in nearby communities and outlying areas in their homes
 - include cottage leaseholders and neighbouring landholders
- deliver some Visitor Services outside Crimson Lake Provincial Park, especially in local schools and community centres

Increase the Profile of Visitor Services , Crimson Lake Provincial Park and the David Thompson Corridor

Crimson Lake Provincial Park is an important destination and the gateway to the David Thompson Corridor. However, until recently Visitor Services programming were absent from the park and the corridor. Park staff must make sure that current and potential visitor know that "interpretation programming is back". To do this, Visitor Services staff will need to:

- clearly brand the park and its programs
- provide Visitor Services for on-site visitors and clearly identify these services as part of Crimson Lake Provincial Park's programs
- increase awareness through publicity, promotion and mass media
- provide novel Visitor Services to attract media attention
- provide a wide variety of services at a wide variety of locations within the park
- provide opportunities to experience Crimson Lake Provincial Park remotely via the park website and through podcasting or similar media

- promote programs through other community organizations, e.g., local community centres, heritage associations, etc.
- see collaborations and partnerships below

Follow Best Practice in Public and Formal Education

- deliver Visitor Services and education services that are appropriate to target participant prior knowledge, interests, age and cultural background
- regularly evaluate public Visitor Services and school programs to determine if program and learning objectives were met and park Visitor Services themes were adequately covered

Public Programming

- design Visitor Services for well defined and clearly identified and understood target participants
- include two-way communication opportunities for conversations and inquiry learning whenever possible
- recognize that a high proportion of park users are multiple repeat visitors and design programs accordingly
 - e.g., choose program types and media that can be easily changed, and replaced by new offerings

Education:

- connect all environmental education services with grade-specific curriculum and learning outcomes as described by Alberta Learning
 - choose only curricula that can be shown to have connections with the park's goals mission and Visitor Services themes
- focus on inquiry, hands-on learning
- follow and develop best practice
 - Visitor Services staff must keep abreast of current developments in scientifically developed learning theory and incorporate new findings into the development, delivery, support and evaluation of school programs

Develop Collaborations and Partnerships

- communicate with other Visitor Services providers in the David Thompson Corridor
- continue to develop and expand relationships with individuals and groups in the area
- provide incentive, opportunity for training, recognition and community for volunteers

Detailed Review of Core Competencies

1. Research

Introduction

Research is an important area of work for Visitor Services staff at Crimson Lake. Chapter 15: Features Analysis identifies key areas for further research including:

- support gathering new knowledge about the natural and cultural history of Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- designing and implementing a system for monitoring and analysis of visitor activities, interests and preferred locations in the park and throughout the David Thompson Corridor
- initiate, support and enable research on effective techniques in personal and non-personal heritage interpretation especially for multiple repeat visitors
- support and enable ongoing research on effective environmental education techniques and evaluation tools
 - including monitoring and applying current best practices

Crimson Lake Provincial Park has the potential to be a valuable laboratory for research on the effects and effectiveness of interpretation and education in outdoor settings on park user activities, behaviours, and attitudes.

Park staff will be able to apply the results of this formal research to develop new, effective interpretation and education programming.

Visitor Services staff will not have the time and expertise to conduct much of this research. Instead, one of the areas of work for Visitor Services staff will be the encouragement and enabling of appropriate research by academic and expert groups on sites within Crimson Lake Provincial Park.

This core competency area may be difficult to initiate and maintain. A key question will be whether or not Crimson Lake Provincial Park is attractive to researchers as a study site. This may require direct contact with local colleges and universities to identify specific researchers and their needs.

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff should understand the basic processes and techniques in research on biology, ecology, archeology, formal and informal education, cognition and social sciences. They must be able to recognize good and poor practice.

Define

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.1 on the following page.

Objectives

Research on the Park's Natural and Cultural History

1. To encourage, enable and oversee appropriate research on:
 - natural and cultural history of Crimson Lake Provincial Park
 - values, behaviours and motivation of park visitorsby academics, professional associations and knowledgeable amateurs.
2. To encourage and enable the translation of new technical knowledge about Crimson Lake Provincial Park into easily understood jargon-free language and formats that are accessible, interesting and relevant to regular park users and other stakeholders.
3. To catalogue and make available this new information to park users when appropriate.

Research on the Effectiveness of Personal and Non-Personal Visitor Services Methods and Media

For Public Programming

1. To encourage and enable academic research on:
 - new media and methods
 - new, evaluation methods to determine the effectiveness for public programming

For School Programming

1. To encourage and enable academic research on effective environmental education approaches, methods and media.
2. To develop, catalogue and make available existing and new methods for effectively and efficiently evaluating the effectiveness of environmental teaching approaches, methods and media.

2. Information/ Orientation

Introduction

The grounding for this program can be found in the Foundations (Chapters 2 and 12) and Presentation Options (Chapter 6).

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff should understand the key concepts of customer service and have excellent communications (both oral and written) and people skills.

To do this job well, staff in an Information/Orientation position must have a detailed knowledge of the park's natural and cultural features, park rules and regulations, current Visitor Services programs and activities, the names and backgrounds and ways of contacting the park's major partners, and the recreation and education opportunities in Alberta Park system.

Define

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.2 on the following page.

Objectives

1. To assist park users in locating the park, its facilities and trails, and in navigating within it.
2. To assist regional residents in identifying and recognizing Crimson Lake Provincial Park as a valuable community resource.
3. To inform park users and potential users of the park's rules and regulations.
 - best done through framing—e.g., why rules are in place and how they support park stewardship
4. To maintain the profile of Crimson Lake Provincial Park, especially to people within one-hour's travel time.
5. To provide basic information about Crimson Lake Provincial Park including:
 - the reasons for the establishment of the park
 - the park's history
 - an introduction to key natural and cultural features
6. To inform park users and neighbors of the park's stewardship mandate and to keep them abreast of current developments and new initiatives.
7. To assist park users, park neighbours and passers-by to recognize the boundaries of Crimson Lake Provincial Park.
8. To maintain good relations with current and future collaborators and partner Visitor Services service providers and cooperating stewardship groups in the area.

This can include:

 - promoting their services and special events in Crimson Lake Provincial Park publications
 - making their information/orientation publications available at selected Crimson Lake Provincial Park sites (e.g., the park's website)
9. To fulfill the park's status as a gateway to the David Thompson Corridor.

This can include:

 - providing information about and travel directions to other parks and protected areas in the corridor (this will include information about Visitor Services and recreation opportunities at these sites)
 - provide information about recreation and tourism opportunities in the corridor
 - making available the information/orientation publications of Alberta Parks and other agencies and businesses in the David Thompson Corridor

3. Assisting in Park Management

Introduction

A role of Visitor Services is to assist park management through supporting the Three-E management model which has three parts:

- Education
 - informing park users of problems, regulations and solutions
 - usually framed in positive language, such as “Help us protect the fragile riparian habitat by staying on official hiking trails ...”
- Engineering
 - designing and locating park facilities, including trails in ways that reduce chances of endangering park users, wildlife, habitat and historic features
- Enforcement
 - following up education of the park’s rules and regulations with enforcement of the same by trained enforcement staff

Visitor Services staff have the background and communication skills that will assist park managers in developing and delivering the education component of this model.

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff should understand the key concepts of customer service, the park’s key management goals and objectives as put forward in the park’s Management Plan and have excellent communications and people skills.

Define

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.3 on the following page.

Objectives

1. To assist park management and enforcement staff through developing clear communications about park regulations and on-going management issues.
2. To be able to react quickly to emergency management issues by producing quick communications to park users, neighbours and the general public about emergency management issues (e.g., floods, problem wildlife, etc.).

Plan

Target Participants

- all park users
- all potential park users
- park neighbours

All communications should follow a planning process similar to that used in interpretive program development.

Deliver

Key Locations

Key locations for printed information will be similar to those listed for the Information and Orientation section.

Optimal Methods and Media

For On-going Management Issues

On-site

- trailhead kiosks
- notice boards
- posters
- brochures and park notes
- personal contact through staff, volunteers and partners

Off-site

- the Crimson Lake Provincial Park website
- newsletters (print or digital) or seasonal brochures or email messages about upcoming programs

For Emergency Management Issues

The same media can be used for communications about emergency management issues. However, depending on the level of emergency, press releases and public service announcements to local media (newspapers, television and radio) can also be included.

Evaluate

Evaluation of this service should be done annually by a team of management, enforcement and Visitor Services staff who will look at performance using the key performance indicators in Table 17.3.

4. Interpretation

General Introduction

This section deals only with interpretation services that take place in Crimson Lake Provincial Park. Off-site interpretation is covered in the Community Outreach section. The grounding for this program can be found in first five chapters of this plan: Foundations (Chapters 2 and 12), Features Inventory (Background Papers 2 and 3), Features Analysis (Chapter 13), Presentation Options (Chapter 6) and Visitor Services Theme (Chapter 16).

Discussion of this core competency is divided into five segments:

- 4.1 General Information
- 4.2 Personal Services
- 4.3 Non-Personal services
- 4.4 Community Outreach
- 4.5 Special Events

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff must have excellent oral and written communications skills as well as an understanding and be ability to apply:

- current learning theory related to outdoor-focused learning
- current understanding of learning styles and the design of activities that address a spectrum of these styles
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see sidebar on the following page)
- group facilitation
- group dynamics
- program evaluation

Areas of knowledge must encompass the natural and cultural features and processes in the park, the mission goals and objectives of Alberta Parks Division, Crimson Lake Provincial Park plus the park's Visitor Services program's goals, objectives, themes and subthemes.

As stated elsewhere in this plan, heritage interpretation is much more than the delivery of information about natural and cultural history. Key functions include providing opportunities for first hand experience of the features and processes that take place within the park and have influenced the people that have lived here. This enables participants to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and emotional and spiritual connections with landscapes, the built environment, with habitats, and even particular plants and animals.

Through the act of inspiring people to care about the park and its many features, heritage interpretation must also provide

park users and park neighbours with opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the protection and stewardship of the park resources and features they have come to respect and love. In this way heritage interpretation is a perfect segue into the stewardship segment of the Visitor Services program as per the Stewardship Development Model.

Visitor Services staff must have a complex set of knowledge and skills including:

- the ability to read their participants through understanding body language and non-verbal communication
- an understanding of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how this affects park users and their learning experiences (see sidebar on the following page)
- an understanding of how people engage, learn and become involved during informal learning
- a knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of common and novel programming techniques and approaches
- an ability to plan programs that suit particular target participants using a wide variety of methods and media
- flexibility of delivery
 - the ability to change approaches and content focus while delivering personal programs
- basic skills in graphic design and use of new media such as podcasting, interactive web-based communication, etc.
- skills and experience in evaluation of interpretive programs and media to ensure effective, on-target program facilitation and communications

4.1 General Information

Define

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.4 On page 17.28.

Objectives

The key objectives for interpretation in Crimson Lake Provincial Park include the following:

1. To inform participants of:
Natural and Cultural Heritage and Stewardship
 - features in Crimson Lake Provincial Park
 - Crimson Lake Provincial Park's role as a key player in the stewardship of natural and cultural heritage, especially wetlands
 - opportunities to work with Crimson Lake Provincial Park and other agencies and groups to further its stewardship
 - other opportunities to learn about Crimson Lake Provincial Park provided by other groups and agencies
2. To inspire participants to care about the natural and cultural heritage of Crimson Lake Provincial Park and its stewardship.
3. To involve participants in appropriate activities in Crimson Lake Provincial Park, especially recreation, heritage appreciation/discovery activities and stewardship.
4. To inform park visitors of the many other opportunities to discover and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the David Thompson Corridor.

General Plan

Target Participants

The main focus of interpretation services will be on people who visit Crimson Lake Provincial Park. People located outside of Crimson Lake Provincial Park will be addressed in the Outreach section of this chapter. For a detailed analysis of participants and markets, see the Visitor Analysis (Chapter 15).

Key Characteristics

No large-scale formal study of park users and potential park users has been done (such studies to be undertaken as soon as possible). The following information has been extrapolated from discussions with park staff. Key features of park users include:

- a large majority are multiple repeat visitors
- most are currently from nearby communities (approximately a one-hour's trip to the park)
- through multiple repeat visits many park users know the park well
- the majority come to enjoy recreation activities and to have connections with nature

Requirements of Participants

The implications to Visitor Services service development and delivery are:

Repeat visitors

- require fresh experiences and activities to attract them to regularly take part

Knowledgeable visitors

- need Visitor Services that go deeper than basic information about what is special about this place
- know about the site and have experiences and observations that they want to share—two-way communication required in programming

Visitors come for their own planned activities

- must be flexible to accommodate their timetables:
 - feature drop-in programming that start and finish when they want and engage for a short or a long time, depending on their timetable

Recreation-Focused Visitors (e.g., runners)

- need Visitor Services that mesh with their recreation activities
 - take place before or after their recreation activity
 - or are relevant to their main recreation activity and that they can do while they cycle park roads or hike park trails

4.2 Personal Interpretation Services

Leading Visitor Services professionals consider personal programming to be the most effective way of helping people to discover and explore natural and cultural heritage in real settings.

As well, when dealing with multiple repeat visitors, personal programming affords a flexibility of delivery and content that is not achievable through non-personal media. A skillful interpreter is able to converse with participants, assess their levels of knowledge, interest and skills, and rejig the program to accommodate the prior knowledge, and needs of a particular set of participants. In contrast, even the most well designed and engaging interpretive sign or exhibit will become stale to park users by the third or fourth reading.

Personal Visitor Services are relatively expensive (requiring paid staff, or paid partner, volunteer coordinators and volunteer trainers). All require professional skills in planning, developing, supporting and evaluation. Ideally, presenters need broad knowledge of the topics and region in order to facilitate two-way communication with the audience, answer questions and to inspire and involve participants.

Define

What is Personal Interpretation?

This is any Visitor Services activity where staff and/or volunteers or partners interact directly with participants face-to-face.

Plan

A planning process should be developed and followed for all Visitor Services provided. Planning should take into account:

- identification of specific target audiences
- indication of the Visitor Services themes and subthemes that will be addressed
- clear statement of participant learning objectives including critical success factors and key performance indicators
- identification of location(s) within the park with justification(s)
- identification of media and methods to be used with justification
- risk analysis (to participants, to park features — see Conducting a Risk Assessment below)
- a listing of key points that will be covered
- required materials with costs
- evaluation strategy

Conducting A Risk Assessment

What is Risk Assessment?

Risk assessment is a process of identifying and assessing the dangers that participants and watershed resources may be exposed to in the course of your program or project. Risk assessment can be done in two steps.

Step 1: Site Inspection

The first step is to identify potential risk factors to the people and to the watershed resources. Resources may include not only natural components of the watershed such as delicate habitat, rare plants and animals, but also cultural items like heritage buildings and historic artifacts.

When you have a project and a site in mind, you may find it useful to visit the location and visualize the activities there.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- What hazards (fast flowing water, sensitive vegetation etc.) can you see?
- Is access to the site safe and easy?
- What would this site be like in bad weather?
- Are there alternative sites or other ways to gain access?

Using Maps And Taking Notes

When doing a site inspection, take along a map or sketch one as you go. Mark locations and make notes about hazards and potential hazards.

Step 2: Assess Risks and Act

The second step is to assess the hazards you have identified and determine if they are true risks, how risky they are and what you are going to do to avoid or reduce that risk to an acceptable level.

4.3 Non-Personal Interpretation Services

Although it is recognized as good practice to provide personal services to a high percentage of visitors, it is not possible to with sites such as Crimson Lake Provincial Park that have small staff and high visitation. Many agencies address this challenge through the provision of non-personal services in addition to personal services.

Non-personal interpretation range from low cost to extremely expensive. All require knowledgeable, skilled staff, contractors or perhaps volunteers to design, produce and support them.

Managers, with limited staff and budget, must be prepared to strategically choose non-personal Visitor Services and media that are effective (reach an important target audience and produce results), and are cost effective.

Define

What is Non-Personal Interpretation?

Non-personal services are those Visitor Services where staff and/or volunteers do not interact directly with participants.

Plan

Target Audiences

Focusing on Target Audiences

Only some non-personal interpretation media can provide the flexibility needed for addressing the large numbers of repeat visitors to Crimson Lake Provincial Park.

A Planning Process for Non-Personal Interpretation

Program planning forms were introduced in Chapter 11. They can be used as a standard template for planning non-personal services as well.

Deliver

Selecting Non-Personal Visitor Services Media

Good practice in Visitor Services service delivery recognizes that selection of Visitor Services media is best left up to the individual Visitor Services staff who will be planning and delivering the service. This allows the individual to work with her or his personal strengths and passion to develop an effective Visitor Services offering. That said, it is important that the choices are also based on:

- participant characteristics
Key points include:
 - most are repeat audiences who know the site
 - will need opportunities to share their knowledge and opinions
 - will be interested in making their own discoveries on their own time (may not be interested in scheduled programs)
- site resources and features
 - these are the factors that make Crimson Lake Provincial Park sites different and appealing
- communication and learning style
 - media that promote inquiry and two-way communication are good practice
- current site management issues
 - these can be incorporated into existing Visitor Services offerings
- appropriateness for working with Visitor Services themes

Strategic Use of Non-Personal Visitor Services Media

Different non-personal Visitor Services media and techniques have strengths that can be exploited for success. For example, some techniques such as self-guided trails, teacher's activity kits and self-guided activity packs allow participants to choose the time, duration and location of their engagement in a Visitor Services activity. This makes these media ideal for Visitor Services directed at day users. If these media can be regularly changed, refreshed or updated, they will also be able to accommodate regular repeat visitors.

Incorporating Two-way Communication

A major weakness of most non-personal interpretation is that it is very difficult to incorporate two-way communication that allows participants to contribute observations and interpretations of their findings. One solution is to integrate personal and non-personal media into programming. Examples include providing self-guided quizzes, activity packs and scavenger hunts from a point duty station or park office (e.g., the Crimson Lake store). Visitor Services staff can personally brief and debrief participants at the beginning and end of the self-guided activity.

Another option is to provide visitors with an opportunity to provide written feedback after a self-guided activity such as:

- blogs written by park staff which include opportunities for participants to make comments and ask questions
- a wildlife sighting board at trailheads and staging areas
 - this will still require regular inspection and maintenance (daily or weekly)
- observation and comment sheets that can be handed in at the park store

Key Functions of Non-personal Visitor Services

Provide Information

- here Visitor Services staff develop and combine text, images and sometimes sounds, moving pictures, artifacts, objects and models to tell a story about cultural and natural history
- the key objective here is to show and tell participants *what is special about this place* within the framework of the Visitor Services themes

Other objectives include:

- giving participants a reason to want to return to the site in a future visit

Lead the Audience

- through self-guided media (brochure, a series of interpretive sign panels, audio or audio/visual podcast and/or smart phone/tablet computer application) the participant is led to specific site along a trail, road, or lakeshore
- at each stop participants are provided with information and perhaps some tasks to observe and record wildlife, landscape or historic site observations and questions

Engage the Audience

- the key objective here is to inspire and involve participants in doing active things (observe, touch, listen), building skills, and asking questions, reflecting and constructing their own understanding
- through these activities and direct involvement with real things, participants may develop connections with the place and become inspired to protect it and to contribute to its stewardship
- the non-personal medium must facilitate learning, identify major questions to be investigated, and assist participants in developing their own questions and finding answers

Operational Costs

Good practice in Visitor Services management indicates that Visitor Services programs should have an operations budget that supports Visitor Services staff in producing services at agency standard or above. This budget includes line items such as:

Expenditures

- equipment maintenance and replacement
- acquisition of new equipment
- computer support
- office supplies
- miscellaneous materials and equipment used in self-guided programming (e.g., magnifiers, backpacks, etc.)
- training of staff and volunteers
- travel/vehicle maintenance

Income

- revenue generated from sale of non-personal Visitor Services products (e.g., booklets, maps, podcasts, ebooks and smart phone/tablet computer applications, etc.)

Staff Time Budgets

Good practice in Visitor Services management indicates that time must be budgeted for maintenance of non-personal media, such as exploration kits. Each kit must be examined and refreshed (missing equipment replaced, packs and containers cleaned/repared or replaced as needed before it is released to the next participant). This will ensure that kits are maintained at a high standard for all participants.

Revenue Generation

Except for the sale of podcasts and smart phone/tablet computer applications, there does not appear to be any opportunities for revenue generation.

4.4 Community Outreach

Introduction

Community outreach is a new program in response to the mandate of Crimson Lake Provincial Park (see Foundations: Chapters 2 and 12). Other key grounding for this program can be found in Presentation Options (Chapter 6).

The foundations indicate that Visitor Services can extend outside of park property boundaries. Crimson Lake Provincial Park must extend its education and involvement initiatives to a greater audience than the people who already visit it.

The community outreach program attempts to reach and involve a broad spectrum of citizens.

Define

Objectives

The key objectives of the outreach program in Crimson Lake Provincial Park include:

1. To extend contact with participants of on-site Visitor Services beyond their visits to the park and to enrich their on-site learning with further information and instruction.
2. To increase the profile of Crimson Lake Provincial Park and Visitor Services.
3. To provide Visitor Services service to community groups and organizations.

4. To reach audiences that do not normally visit Crimson Lake Provincial Park and do not usually take part in Visitor Services offerings.

Plan

Target Audiences

The key target audiences in order of size include:

- A. People in the region who do not visit Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- B. Past participants in Visitor Services in Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- C. Community service groups that do or could use Visitor Services on- or off-site (e.g., Scouts/Guides, 4-H, cultural associations, seniors)
- D. Decision-makers who control planning and funding of Crimson Lake Provincial Park and Visitor Services programs

These audiences are very broad and diverse and will require a wide spectrum of services.

Support

Capital Needs

Key capital expenditures will revolve around a Crimson Lake Provincial Park web-presence plus the equipment already described in the Interpretation section of this chapter required for off-site program presentations. Annual expenditures will be needed for IT and maintenance contracts.

Operational Needs

The community outreach program will need:

- an efficient program booking system, preferably part of the website
- a promotion system
- a park vehicle for traveling to and from outreach destinations

If community outreach is to be developed to its fullest extent in the future, extra staffing will be needed. This could include:

- a part-time web content development manager
- a part-time community group programmer

Staffing Needs

Crimson Lake Provincial Park will need to rely on the expertise of well-trained, long-term, full-time staff. Seasonal staff and volunteers will be less able to provide the levels of service required for this core competency. Note that community group audiences, like school audiences, do not book programs in the summer season.

Revenue Generation

Fees for Visitor Services for programs and services as defined in the Provincial Visitor Services Program Fee Schedule are recommended.

4.5 Special Events

Introduction

The grounding for this program can be found in the Foundations (Chapters 2 and 12), Features Inventory (Background Papers 2 and 3), the Features Analysis (Chapter 13) and Presentation Options (Chapter 6).

Define

Special events attract crowds and media attention. They may animate what may take place in un-visited areas and create a visible presence in a community. They can range from sporting events organized by other groups, such as the cross-country running events, through collaborative interpretive events developed by Crimson Lake Provincial Park with several partners such as an Earth Day event, to recreation events such as Family Fun Days developed by Visitor Services staff with a series of family-focused nature and history discovery activities. Special events generally have a spectator element and an undemanding drop-in format. Admission is often free.

Objectives

Visitor Services involvement in special events may be for different objectives from those of collaborating event organizers. Visitor Services staff may get involved or organize their own special events to:

1. Attract media attention, to increase and maintain the profile of Crimson Lake Provincial Park, especially to people within a one-hour drive of the park.
2. Engage long-time users (e.g., Cottage Leaseholders and multiple repeat day users and campers). Provide them with ways to celebrate the park and assist in hosting fiends, family and newcomers.
3. Attract first-time visitors to Crimson Lake Provincial Park to familiarize visitors with what's available on site and in the David Thompson Corridor.
4. Attract first-time visitors to Crimson Lake Provincial Park sites as intake/recruitment of new Visitor Services participants who may later participate at higher levels of the Stewardship Development Model.
5. Frame Crimson Lake Provincial Park as positive, engaging place with nature, history, people, colour and action.
6. Contribute to solutions for visitor management issues.
7. To provide recreation through special events and sporting events.

5. School Programming

Introduction

The grounding for the School Program can be found in the Visitor Analysis (Chapters 8 and 15), the Market Analysis (Chapter 9), Presentations Options (Chapter 6) and the Curriculum Review (Chapter 5). These chapters provide a grounding in content and effective presentation options.

Education programs provide an opportunity for Visitor Services to reach a wide number of people, including the children of families that do not choose to visit Crimson Lake Provincial Park. This will also be true for programs where Visitor Services staff travel to schools.

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff should have the same skills and knowledge as outlined for Interpretation (above) plus additional knowledge and skills including:

Additional Knowledge:

- child cognitive, physical and emotional development (ages and stages)
- current learning theory related to outdoor-focused learning
- current Alberta Science and Social Studies curricula plus other areas of curricula that can be addressed through park programming

Additional Skills:

- leading groups of children in the outdoors

Define

Education programming focused on public, private and home schools is a viable option for Crimson Lake Provincial Park's Visitor Services program. This mandate can include preschool and post secondary education groups as well.

Personal education services will include all programs led by Visitor Services staff, volunteers and partners (e.g., guided walks, stream studies, projects, etc.). Non-personal education services will include those that do not require presenters (e.g., teacher-led visits, workbooks/work sheets, audio-visual presentations, websites, etc.).

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.9 on the following page.

Objectives

The key objectives for education services in Crimson Lake Provincial Park include the following:

1. To provide education services that mesh with the mandate of Crimson Lake Provincial Park and its parent agencies, the themes and subthemes of the Crimson Lake Provincial Park Visitor Services Plan and the science and social studies curriculum set out by Alberta Learning for grades K–12.
2. To develop or increase student overall environmental literacy and develop sustainable behaviours.
3. To inspire students to care about the natural and cultural heritage of Crimson Lake Provincial Park and take part in its stewardship.
4. To enable students to participate in appropriate activities in Crimson Lake Provincial Park.

Plan

Target Participants

The key target participants in order of size and importance include students in:

- grades K–8
- grades 9–12
- preschool
- community colleges and universities

Grades K-12

This is by far the largest market for education services.

Community Colleges and Universities

Most of this group are at the undergraduate level. The types of undergraduate and graduate level studies that students take part in (e.g., plant and wildlife censuses, ecological investigations and the effects of interactions between people and wildlife) fit very well into the Crimson Lake Provincial Park mandate for learning more about the ecology of Crimson Lake Provincial Park properties for management purposes, and more.

Preschools

Preschool students are children aged three to five. The key function of education services to this group are to engender the idea that natural areas and historic sites are fun to visit and to increase the profile of Crimson Lake Provincial Park to them and their families. They are less likely to visit if a long bus ride is required.

Budget

1. Visitor Services staff should continue to follow the school program fee schedule developed by Alberta Parks.
2. If additional staff are hired to deliver education programming, the park will have to budget appropriately for a permanent or seasonal staff. If the park chooses to use volunteer educators, a full or part-time coordinator/ trainer/evaluator of volunteers will be required
3. The park should have budget line items for:
 - regular professional development
 - staff/volunteer training and professional development
 - purchase of equipment and materials for the current year's education program
4. Program fees collected for school programming should be funneled back into the overall park school program and be used to fund:
 - subsidies for schools and classes that can not afford current fees
 - formal evaluation and assessment of student learning
 - purchase of equipment and tools used in school programming
 - development of new school programs

6. Stewardship Involvement and Education

Introduction

Alberta Parks Stewardship Action Plan: An Action Plan to Inspire Albertans to Value and Care for Alberta Parks (2009) (an internal document only available to Alberta Parks staff) indicates that stewardship, including habitat protection and restoration is a mandate of Alberta Parks (see Foundations, Chapter 2).

The Visitor Services program at Crimson Lake Provincial Park has a role in inspiring, informing and involving park users and park neighbours about the stewardship initiatives undertaken by the park and the opportunities to participate in and contribute to these initiatives.

Visitor Services staff must realize that many participants may have significant knowledge about the parks natural and cultural history plus skills and experience in stewardship activities. They are also likely to have very strong passions and opinions. At Crimson Lake, cottage leaseholders may become important stewardship program participants because many have long-term connections with the park.

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff should have skills in group facilitation, and have good working knowledge and understanding of the park's ecological systems and detailed understanding of the concepts of volunteerism and citizen science.

Knowledge of the park's management goals and initiatives are also important.

Define

What is Stewardship

One of the best definitions of stewardship comes from Alberta's Land Stewardship Resource Centre (www.landstewardship.org/):

...the practice of carefully managing land usage to ensure natural systems are maintained or enhanced for future generations.

The centre goes on to identify four guiding principles of what is meant by carefully managing usage:

1. **Caring for the system as a whole**—understanding the fundamental roles and values of natural systems, building up biological fertility in the soil, incorporating an understanding of the ecological cycles on the landscape (water, energy, nutrients) and how land-use practices can either benefit, be in harmony, or negatively impact these cycles and other land-users, flora and fauna.
2. **Resource conservation**—maximizing efficiency and striving to reduce the one-time consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources; aiming for long-term optimization versus short-term maximization of production.
3. **Maintaining, building and enhancing stability in Nature**—maintain and encourage natural biological diversity and complexity; maintaining natural areas and functions on the land (wildlife habitat conservation).
4. **Cultural values and ethics**—caring for the health of the land for future generations and long-term economic stability; the link between civilization, urbanization, and the land-base and ecosystems that are vital to survival; the intrinsic value and right to exist of all life on Earth.

The Land Stewardship Resource Centre believes it is cultural values and ethics where the very essence of land stewardship exists.

"Land, water and air stewardship is about re-connecting with our dependence on earth, air, water and sunshine - and the abundance of life it supports."

7. Recreation

Introduction

Crimson Lake Provincial Park is an important regional centre for water-based recreation. Twin Lakes features year-round fishing opportunities, while Crimson Lake is a focus for boating and beach activities. Visitor Services staff will continue to promote these activities plus, wildlife watching, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the park. They should also promote the wider variety of self-propelled and motorized recreation activities available throughout the David Thompson Corridor.

This plan does not anticipate active delivery of recreation programs by park staff. However, it will provide information about and facilitate recreation activities that are permitted in the park or available in the David Thompson Corridor.

Key areas of activities can include facilitating:

- skill training and development
- safety training and instruction

in popular outdoor activities that take place in the park. Instruction will be provided by partner organizations (e.g., cross country ski workshops provided by local and regional ski clubs).

Define

Currently, recreation in Crimson Lake Provincial Park consists of:

- hiking/walking on park trails
- wildlife watching
- bicycling on designated trails
- canoeing/kayaking
- picnicking
- snow shoeing/cross-country skiing
- fishing

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.11 on the following page.

Objective

- to inform park users of and encourage appropriate recreational activities in the park
 - if designated locations for specific recreational activities are identified by park management, Visitor Services staff will provide this information to park users
- to encourage appropriate recreational activities in the David Thompson Corridor

Deliver

Currently Alberta Park staff hold several winter activity-based events in the park during the winter and at least one trail running competition in the summer.

Alberta Parks staff do not have the time to deliver regular recreation programming. However, they may consider expanding the number of recreation offerings through working with partners such as local cross-country ski clubs and provincial and regional recreation and safety associations (e.g., Paddle Alberta and the Red Cross) to deliver skills and safety workshops and special events (e.g., a cross-country loppet on the Amerada Trail). As well, Visitor Services staff can work to combine recreation and interpretation activities, combining snowshoe instruction with winter wildlife tracking activities.

However, with current staffing levels, any increase in recreation programming, either delivered directly by Alberta Parks staff or delivered by partners but coordinated by Alberta Parks will result in a corresponding decrease in delivery of core services such as public interpretation and school programming.

Evaluate

Alberta Parks staff will be developing an evaluation system for all Visitor Services over the next five years. Ideally evaluation of recreation programming will include the key indicators listed in Table 17.11.

Support

Capital Needs

Key capital expenditures will revolve around supporting existing recreation activities. This could include:

- new, larger docks at both the Crimson Lake and Twin Lakes boat launches
- extended, nested-loop trail in the northern section of the Crimson Lake Block for cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking
- a secure equipment shed for partners and contractors to store recreation equipment (e.g., snowshoes)

Operational Needs

The stewardship program will need:

- legal support for liability issues regarding recreation activities encouraged in the park
- administrative and organizational support for projects, workshops and training courses

Table 17.12 Collaboration: Outputs, Critical Success Factors and Performance Indicators

Outputs	Critical Success Factors	Description	in place ✓ = yes, X= no		Key Performance Indicators
			Status (2011)		
• a range of collaborations and partnerships between the park and other groups to develop, deliver, evaluate and support Visitor Services services • fund raising for project staff and capital projects	Connections with the Park Management Team	Visitor Services staff must have regular contact with the park's management team to be aware of Alberta Parks policies and procedures regarding partnerships, current management issues and research projects that have potential connections with partner groups.	✓		• the park and district develop a partnership policy and protocol that covers: - requirements for collaboration and partnership agreements - guidance for Visitor Services staff on initiating and terminating such agreements • the Visitor Services program is able to expand its level and quality of services through working with partners
	A List of Potential Collaborators or Partners	• a review of regional, provincial and national agencies and groups with goals and objectives that are compatible with those of Alberta Parks	✓	included in this plan	
	Staff Capacity	For General Development and Maintenance of Collaborations and Partnerships Visitor Services staff should have training and experience in: • group dynamics and multi-stakholder dialogue • leadership • consensus building and conflict resolution • project management	X		
	A protocol for creating and terminating collaborations and partnerships	• this is a transparent process that Alberta Parks staff can follow to approach, develop and terminate associations with government agencies, and NGO groups and individuals in delivering Visitor Services	✓		• past and potential partners are eager to work with Crimson Lake Provincial Park because of previous positive experiences
	Positive Relationships with local First Nations elders, community leaders and experts	This is a long-term project that will require following an extended process of trust building and cooperation.		X	

9. Tourism

Define

Tourism refers to destination visits to the park by people on holiday. Tourists are usually people from a fair distance away from the park who come to recreate and, often, to learn about the landscape and history.

The Audience Analysis (Chapters 8 and 15) and Market Analysis (Chapter 9) in this plan indicate that people from central Alberta are the main source of tourist in the David Thompson Corridor.

Learning Enrichment and Experiential Travel (LEET) Tourism

Alberta Parks in the David Thompson Corridor is committed to addressing this type of tourism. It is defined as a concept that focuses on tourists who have a strong interest in learning and personal development. Key elements of programming that LEET tourists are interested in are:

- hands-on authentic experiences and activities with real things in natural and cultural settings
- longer, deeper experiences that can extend over several days to a week or more
- personal contact with skilled instructors (for outdoor skills), knowledgeable, personable experts (especially real researchers and specialists) and authentic personalities (local people who live and work in the area)
- opportunities to make real, meaningful contributions to science, conservation and knowledge

Core Skills and Knowledge

Visitor Services staff should have excellent communication skills and an understanding of marketing techniques including web-based and viral marketing.

For LEET tourism they will also have to have most of the following skills and knowledge:

- deep knowledge and extensive experience with the site's natural features and processes
- outdoor guiding and leadership training
 - high levels of skills in outdoor activities
 - could include training in outdoor skills instruction (backcountry hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing)
- contacts and good relationships with local experts including members of First Nations communities
- first aid certification

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.13 on the following page.

Objectives

Objectives for the tourism program include:

1. Promote regional tourism.
2. Work with public and private tourism operators to provide tourists with a complete package of activities in the region including LEET tourism packages.

Plan

General Tourism

Audiences have been identified and analyzed in previous chapters. The key targets are:

- Alberta citizens from inside the region
- Alberta citizens from outside the region

Implementation Recommendations

Address Missing Critical Success Factors

Infrastructure

To be an important tourism destination the park must have safe, attractive, well maintained trails, trailheads, parking lots and amenities. This indicates to tourists that the site is safe, cared for and worth visiting.

1. Visitor Services staff should work with the park's management team to upgrade trails and wayfinding signs to current Alberta Parks standards.

Interpretation Services

1. Continue to deliver personal programming with current staff (see section 4, Interpretation in this chapter for details)
2. Use program planning forms for development of all new programs.
3. Work with district Visitor Services staff to develop an effective program evaluation program based on the criteria developed in the program planning form. The evaluation process should be developed within two years.

Formation of a David Thompson Corridor Tourism Association

1. Alberta Parks should work with local tourism operators and government agencies to develop a local tourism association to pool resources to promote and market sustainable tourism in the corridor. Visitor Services staff could sit on this council and work with other stakeholders to integrate education, recreation and interpretation services and maintain high levels of service standards including staff training.

LEET Tourism

Address Missing Critical Success Factors

Staffing

The descriptions of LEET programming stress the importance of highly skilled, knowledgeable program leaders. This type of work can not be delivered by lightly trained seasonal staff. It must be preformed and coordinated by seasoned veterans. If LEET programming is to take place skilled staff are needed. They must receive regular professional development to further develop knowledge and skills (successful LEET programs can attract multiple repeat visitors who will be looking for even deeper education and more authentic experiences).

Formation of a David Thompson Corridor LEET Tourism Association

Ideally, Alberta Parks can work with partners and local businesses that are involved in various aspects of LEET tourism. An association could:

- help coordinate LEET offerings in the David Thompson Corridor
- organize and share cost of:
 - tourism market research
 - professional development
 - program evaluation
 - maintain high quality standards through certification

Developing LEET Tourism Programming

Development of programming will depend on the outcomes of research on topics identified in the research section of this chapter and the outcome of market research recommended in this section.

10. Marketing

Introduction

A review of the Market Analysis (Chapter 9) indicates the need for a more in-depth review of market structure and opportunities for Crimson Lake Provincial Park and the David Thompson Corridor. EcoLeaders recommends that Alberta Parks commissions a detailed market study for the region. In the mean time, we recommend that Visitor Services staff use this core competency statement. Advertisements play a large part in marketing.

Define

Marketing is the process of Crimson Lake Provincial Park and the David Thompson Corridor:

- making current visitors and stakeholders aware of the park and the district's sites and services (especially Visitor Services)
- attracting new visitors
- keeping existing customers interested in activities and services

Outputs/Critical Success Factors/Key Performing Indicators

See Table 17.14 on the following page.

Objectives

For both Crimson Lake Provincial Park and the David Thompson Corridor:

1. To increase the profile of the park and district as places to enjoy nature, learn about its history and recreate in the outdoors.
2. To increase visitation.
3. To increase participation in Visitor Services offerings.

Plan

Target Participants/Audiences

Target participants will include:

External Markets

Local Residents

People within a one-hour drive of Crimson Lake Provincial Park are currently and will remain an important visitor group.

Central Alberta

The audience Analysis Chapter of this plan indicates that people from central Alberta are likely to remain the major market for the park and the district.