

Storylines and Substories

For this plan, our clients preferred to use the Theme and Subtheme in place of our terms Storyline and Substory.

Themes and Subthemes of the Visitor Services Program at Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve

Terminology

Themes and subthemes provide focus and structure and help to identify major areas of Visitor Services effort.

Overall Ecological Reserve Theme

The overall theme is the unifying idea that is a recurrent element in interpretive offerings at Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve.

This theme is the key recurring idea found within the ecological reserve's overall Visitor Services program. It guides the development of all Visitor Services toward contributing to the Alberta Parks mandate.

Using the Overall Site \ Visitor Services Theme

All Visitor Services must fit into the overall theme. Visitor Services field staff use the theme as an overall guide and check to ensure the appropriateness of all new Visitor Services. The overall Visitor Services theme for Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve is:

A bountiful dry landscape—a special place for wildlife and people:

Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve protects, significant parts of the Kootenay Plains, one of the province's most accessible sections of the Montane Natural Subregion. It features dry grassland, and open savannah-like forests that are winter range for large numbers of elk and bighorn sheep. The area's abundance of game and low snowfall has attracted people here since the end of the ice age. This area remains sacred to the Stoney First Nation.

Visitor Services Themes

The overall ecological reserve theme is complex and must be broken down into smaller ideas or subthemes that are either written as a short phrase, sentence or paragraph. These explain or clarify the meaning and direction of the overall theme and are stated in terms of the key ideas that participants in Visitor Services and activities should walk away with—they are the learning outcomes of Visitor Services.

Themes for Visitor Services in Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve are listed on the following pages. Themes guide the development of both personal and non-personal services. They must:

1. **Reflect the ecological reserve's goals as reflected in its foundations (Chapters 1–18).**
2. **Be purposeful—they arise from objectives. Themes must conform to the site's Visitor Services objectives.**

Subthemes

Each theme is broken down into several subthemes which are usually stated as simple sentences and short paragraphs.

Using Subthemes

Subthemes guide Visitor Services staff in developing accurate, relevant and timely Visitor Services offerings. They provide more focus. Most Visitor Services offerings will include several subthemes from several themes.

Using Themes and Subthemes in Planning and Evaluating Visitor Services

All Visitor Services offerings must fit into the matrix of themes and subthemes. When developing a new program, Visitor Services staff will choose between one to three themes as the guidelines for developing the focus of a Visitor Services offering. For adding further structure, several subthemes can be used to develop the program.

Another way of thinking is that themes and subthemes are the main learning objectives for the target audiences/ participants. Visitor Services staff will then use information from the features inventory and develop activities to support these learning goals.

Chapter 21: Kootenay Plains Visitor Services Goals Objectives , Themes and Subthemes

Theme A:	By walking the ecological reserve trails, you can make many connections with this unique landscape.	Priority
Subtheme A1:	The Kootenay plains Ecological Reserve is a great place for wildlife-watching. A combination of low snowfall, abundant grass and other winter forage provide winter habitat for large numbers of elk and bighorn sheep and several other species of ungulates.	High
Subtheme A2:	Mineral licks are an important wildlife feature in the ecological reserve. These are places where salty spring water accumulates in the soil. Hundreds of elk, bighorn sheep come to these sites to lick the soil to take in minerals lacking in their plant-food diets.	High
Subtheme A3:	You can learn how to appropriately observe wildlife and other natural features of the ecological reserve without causing damage or disturbance.	High
Subtheme A4:	Do it Yourself: Cognitive science studies show that you learn best by making your own discoveries, asking questions, looking for answers and formulating your own conclusions. Try it out when you walk the trails of the reserve.	Moderate
Subtheme A5:	Nearby accommodation at Two O’Clock Creek campground, Cavalcade group camp private resorts make it possible for you to spend several days exploring the ecological reserve.	Moderate

Theme B:	The Kootenay plains is a mosaic of habitats. These include dry grassland, rare wetlands, river valleys, and many types of forest.	Priority
Subtheme B1	Ancient glaciers, climate, chinooks, the fast-flowing North Saskatchewan River, large numbers of grazing animals and past forest and grass fires have sculpted the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve into a mosaic of patches of dry grassland, open forest and wetland. This is typical of Alberta’s Montane Natural Sub Region. This wide variety of habitats makes it possible for many different kinds of plants and animals to live here.	High
Subtheme B2	Riparian communities are the lands directly adjacent to rivers streams and lakes. With their abundance of sunlight and water the riparian communities along the North Saskatchewan River and its tributaries are among the most species rich and biologically active communities in the ecological reserve. Plants growth is thick and luxuriant and animals come to eat and drink.	High
Subtheme B3	Unlike most forests of the Lower Foothills Natural Subregion, the ecological reserve’s forests are mostly located on porous sandy soils. As a result the ecological reserve’s forests are dryer than typical for this subregion.	High

Theme C:	A combination of a warm, dry microclimate, large variations in altitude and many soil types has resulted in a very high diversity of plants including many rare species.	Priority
Subtheme C1	The wide variety of habitats and the numerous ecotones between them result in high diversity of plants and animals in the ecological reserve.	High
Subtheme C2	Disjunct Plant Species: The Kootenay Plains' wide grasslands are home to many plants found elsewhere only in the flat plains to the east. Others are found only here and nowhere else in the province.	High
Subtheme C3	The Kootenay Plains is driest place in the David Thompson Corridor. The Rocky Mountains catch most of the moisture coming eastward from the distant Pacific Ocean leaving the Kootenay Plains in a rain shadow. In winter, warm-dry chinook winds melt much of what little snow that falls and dries exposed soil. This creates conditions ideal for grasslands that are isolated in the mountains.	High
Subtheme C4	Several studies of plants between the 1970s and the 1990s found that the ecological reserve is home to many small rare plants.	Moderate

Theme D:	Within the ecological reserve you can see many evidence of geological forces and processes extending from millions of years ago to the present.	Priority
Subtheme D1	There is abundant evidence of long-term geological change brought on by the glaciation that ended about ten thousand years ago. This includes the u-shaped valleys of the Siffleur River and Whiterabbit Creek, the deep valley cut into bedrock by the Siffleur River, the benches of sand, gravel and rock and the plains of fine silt and sand dropped by glacial meltwaters.	High
Subtheme D2	Many of the Front Range mountains of the Rockies can be seen from the trails in the ecological reserve. Typically, these mountains have steeply sloped strata that reveal how they were formed.	High
Subtheme D3	Siffleur River Canyon also reveals the steeply sloping rock strata of the region.	High
Subtheme D4	All around you can see evidence of geological forces that shaped this landscape including the uplifting, folding and shifting of bedrock that formed the front range mountains and the glaciers that ground them down and shaped them.	High
Subtheme D5:	You can find fossils of plants and animals that lived in the area millions of years ago when this area was the bottom of a warm shallow ocean.	Moderate

Theme G:	Throughout history the Kootenay Plains have been important to people.	Priority
Subtheme G1	Preliminary archeological evidence shows that people lived and hunted here since the end of the ice age, 10,000 years ago.	High
Subtheme G2	Before the coming of European settlers and explorers, the area's extensive grasslands and relatively mild climate supported large populations of bison and elk. First Nations people came here to hunt and to trade. The North Saskatchewan River and Howse Pass were major trade and travel routes for First Nations people.	High
Subtheme G3	Before the coming of European settlers and explorers, the North Saskatchewan River and Howse Pass were major trade and travel routes for First Nations people.	High
Subtheme G4	When European fur traders set up a trading post at Rocky Mountain House, they used the North Saskatchewan River trading routes established earlier by First Nations. The Kootenay Plains was an important location for harvesting game for feeding local fur traders.	Moderate
Subtheme G5	You can still find evidence and clues that the Kootenay Plains once were used for horse ranching in the early 1900s. Feral horse herds originating from this time ranged throughout the Kootenay Plains until the 1950s. Their numbers and impact on grasslands reduced the carrying capacity for elk and other ungulates.	Moderate
Subtheme G6	Recent human activities such as the building of the Big Horn Dam and David Thompson Highway. These activities impacted the wildlife and habitats of the Kootenay Plains were in part the reason for the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve.	Moderate

Theme H:	Getting out and active in the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve is healthy and fulfilling.	Priority
Subtheme H1	Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve is a great place for you to make discoveries about nature. Through Alberta Parks staff and Visitor Services programs, you can explore the ecological reserve.	High
Subtheme H2	You can learn how to appropriately observe wildlife and other natural features of the ecological reserve without causing damage or disturbance.	High
Subtheme H3	You can share your nature discoveries and your knowledge of the past with Alberta Parks staff and other site users through the ecological reserve's website and Facebook page.	High
Subtheme H4	People need nature. Science shows that people who have regular exposure to the natural world are healthier and happier.	Moderate
Subtheme H5	Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve encourages appropriate outdoor recreation. These activities include: hiking on all trails and mountain biking horse riding on specified trails.	Moderate
Subtheme H6	The Kootenay Plains are a refuge for the human spirit. Scientific studies also show that people need green space to relax and recharge their spirits.	Moderate
Subtheme H7	Cognitive science studies show that you learn best by making your own discoveries, asking questions, looking for answers and formulating your own conclusions.	Moderate
Subtheme H8	The park and its partners provide opportunities to learn how to become a better nature observer and local historian.	Moderate