

Chapter 10

District Visitor Services Vision, Mission and Goals



for Alberta Parks Properties
in the David Thompson Corridor

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SAMPLE PAGES

Introduction

These district-level foundations help staff contribute towards achieving the initiatives of *Alberta's Plan for Parks*. This information is valuable to Visitor Services program managers and planners working at a district or site level. They are new and in some case are in early or interim stages of development. Program managers will likely make many revisions of this section over the duration of this plan.

District-Wide Visitor Services Vision, Mission and Goals

Why

This Visitor Service plan includes segments devoted to a district-wide Visitor Services strategy. This is important because the David Thompson Corridor is large, the Alberta Parks properties in it are in general spread far apart and the number of Visitor Services staff are very limited. This chapter sets out the overall vision, mission and goals of Visitor Services. It is hoped that they will assist in the delivery of maximum service with limited staff.

Current Conditions

Currently, the corridor is relatively undeveloped and understaffed. Alberta Parks presence in the David Thompson Corridor is limited to less than 10% of the lands in the corridor. Most of its sites are small (see map on the following page) and with some notable exceptions, infrastructure such as trails and interpretive signs are old and in need of upgrading, repair and/or replacement. Alberta Parks has only deployed a small staff of one person to develop and deliver Visitor Services for the entire district.

High Potential

The David Thompson Corridor is one of the province's best kept secrets. The corridor includes landscapes ranging from forested plains in the east through foothills, to Front and Main Ranges in the Rocky Mountains in the west. Highway 11 provides excellent accessibility to wild nature including some of the province's most scenic mountain habitat and includes a number of important provincial parks, recreation areas and Wilderness Areas. As well, it includes one of Alberta's largest Ecological Reserves and another large land base, the Kootenay-Cline Park Reserve (see map on the following page).

With significant investment in infrastructure (such as an environmental education centre with overnight accommodation) by Alberta Parks and partners, the

corridor has the potential to become a hub for nature based experiential education for schools and organizations throughout Central Alberta.

With its bounty of accessible natural features and with sufficient organization and infrastructure, the David Thompson Corridor has the potential to become a destination for outdoor recreation and nature and culture-based education of a size and provincial importance as Kananaskis Country.

Big Changes Coming

The provincial government is redefining the role of Alberta Parks and the lands that it administers in the David Thompson Corridor. Key initiatives including the *Land-Use Framework* (2008) which will result in a regional Land-use Framework for the North Saskatchewan region due to be released later, and Alberta's *Plan for Parks* (2009) which commits Alberta Parks to developing a regional parks plan for the North Saskatchewan region as well. In *Alberta's Plan for Parks* the province commits to upgrading park infrastructure and services. Also, it is highly likely that the upcoming regional plans will point to the development of the David Thompson Corridor as a major recreation, tourism and nature education destination and Alberta Parks will receive funding and staff to implement these commitments. This along with continued increased visitation and demand for services, the David Thompson Corridor has great potential to become a centre of excellence in heritage interpretation, environmental education, outdoor recreation and tourism.

Challenges

Although the corridor has very high potential for increased visitation and demand for Visitor Services from Alberta Parks, the current reality for the present and near-future for the district is continued low staffing and limited resources. Developing partnerships will be an important way of increasing programming. However, the number of partnerships will be severely limited by current staffing because Alberta Parks staff will still be needed to initiate, monitor and administer partnerships.

Current staffing levels will make it difficult to deliver significant increases in programming within district Alberta Parks properties, let alone beyond their boundaries as set out in Alberta's Plan for Parks. Another challenge in the David Thompson Corridor is the limited number of Alberta Parks landholdings within the corridor. Unless the number and size of its landholdings in the corridor increases significantly, Alberta Parks will be hard pressed to meet the upcoming demand from visitors for accommodation, recreation and Visitor Services.

Chapter 10: District Visitor Services Vision, Mission and Goals

At the time of writing, there were no official district-level foundation planning documents. However, EcoLeaders proposed a set of interim foundations. We anticipate that these foundations may be developed further by district staff.

A Provisional Vision for Visitor Services in the David Thompson Corridor

“The David Thompson Corridor will be a popular site for visitors to easily access and experience the diverse rocky mountain, foothill and montane environments of the region. It will also be a hub for nature based experiential education for schools and organizations within Central Alberta.

Albertans and visitors to the province will recognize the region’s scenery and diverse habitats as some of the most beautiful and intact in the world. They will take part in working with Alberta Parks and other stakeholders to wisely steward region’s natural and cultural heritage for generations to come.”

A Provisional Mission for Visitor Services in the David Thompson Corridor

“The district Visitor Services program will provide information, inspiration and opportunities to: enjoy and learn about the David Thompson Corridor’s natural and cultural heritage. The district Visitor Services program will also encourage and enable:

- interpretation and education services for visitors
- stewardship activities in parks and adjacent public land
- sustainable recreation and tourism aimed at visitors and residents of the district

This will be achieved through direct programming by Alberta Parks staff and through collaboration with other government agencies, local and provincial groups and business and local First Nations groups and individuals.

Provisional Visitor Services Program Goals at the District Level

The following goals were developed by EcoLeaders to support the *Plan for Parks* vision. Note that Alberta Parks will be developing a regional Plan for Parks that will provide additional guidance for the development and delivery of Visitor Services in the district. It is likely that sometime in the future district Visitor Services staff will need to revise the following provisional goals and objectives to reflect these additions.

The provisional Visitor Services goals for the David Thompson Corridor district include:

- Goal 1:** Put in place the necessary infrastructure staffing, staff capacity and partnerships to monitor visitor numbers and follow trends in visitation and recreation activity in the district. And to use this information to develop strategies and deploy staff and resources to meet the changing needs of visitors to the district.
- Goal 2:** Deliver, facilitate, promote and enable sustainable nature based experiences within the unique and diverse environments within Alberta Parks and public lands in the corridor
- Goal 3:** Provide nature and culture based tourism opportunities including Learning Enriched Travel that provide opportunities for Albertans and visitors from outside the province to have authentic experiences—discovering, learning, and sharing their discoveries in the unique areas within the David Thompson Corridor
- Goal 4:** Work with stakeholders in the district to develop and deliver quality curriculum-linked environmental education and history and cultural education to schools in Central Alberta
- Goal 5:** Contribute to maintaining healthy ecosystems and environment and intact cultural and historic sites in the David Thompson Corridor for the sustainable enjoyment, health and prosperity of current and future generations of Albertans
- Goal 6:** Support diverse, enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities in the David Thompson Corridor that contribute to healthy lifestyles
- Goal 7:** Collaborate and partner in the delivery of visitor services with other government agencies (federal, provincial and municipal), non-government agencies and groups and the private sector
- Goal 8:** Coordinate with stakeholders in the district so that Alberta Parks in the David Thompson Corridor are the place to for people visiting the corridor or planning a visit to access information about recreation, education and tourism opportunities in corridor
- Goal 9:** Generate revenue for use by Visitor Services staff to deliver programs and services in the David Thompson Corridor