
Executive Summary

Background

In February 2003, Alberta Parks and Protected Areas contracted EcoLeaders Interpretation and Environmental Education to prepare a Heritage Appreciation (HA) Development Plan for the Alberta section of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park (CHIP-AB). In southern Alberta, similar “legacy” projects were also initiated at Writing-on-Stone and Dinosaur Provincial Parks.

The intent of this plan is to incorporate the agency's HA Revitalization Strategy into personal and non-personal programs and services as well re-development of the park's aging visitor centre. The Park Centre Program Statement portion of this plan will facilitate redevelopment.

The revitalization strategy was developed in response to a needs assessment initiated in April 2001. Expectations have been redefined and new directions set for the HA program.

Key changes are:

- an acknowledgement that all three HA services (interpretation, education and information/orientation) are critical in raising the public profile of the Parks program with Albertans
- programs and messages should be taken to the public where they live and work, not just where they enjoy recreational pursuits
- financial sustainability must be developed

The Park

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park is the province's only interprovincial park. The official interprovincial agreement was signed on August 25, 1989 by the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The Alberta section of the park, established as a Provincial Park (CHIP-AB) in 1951, is one of the largest in Alberta. It consists of 20,250 hectares (50,000 acres) of wild land, 3 day use areas, 13 campgrounds with a total of 550 campsites, 3 public group camps, 5 private group camps, the townsite of Elkwater, a privately operated ski hill and a golf course adjacent to the park. In 2000, over 250,000 people visited the park.

Features of This Plan

Capacity building among HA staff and other presenters is a goal of the EcoLeaders consulting team. New planning tools and resources were developed to reflect and facilitate the new HA revitalization directions, along with detailed program statements.

Clearly defined HA goals with defined links to broader agency mission and legislative requirements are required to provide goal-based services as per current best practice in management of park interpretation and education. The Foundations Review portion of this plan breaks new ground in identifying a set of key foundation elements to guide the development of this plan and future HA services at CHIP-AB.

Process and Contents

This plan was not developed through a linear, sequential process. For example, the Park Centre Program Statement in Chapter 6 was developed before most other chapters were completed, resulting in some overlap in the document.

Chapter 1 is a review of the foundations for HA services in PPA and in CHIP-AB. The agency has recently developed several key foundation documents including:

- the HA Revitalization Strategy
- PPA Guiding Principles
- the PPA Key Message Framework

These documents guided the development of the PPA Stewardship Model described in this document. The stewardship model is used as a guide for identifying key target audience segments and as a focus for identifying learning outcomes for HA services and programs.

The implications of the new foundations are that HA offerings must:

- focus on stewardship of protected areas
- include a wider audience including people who do not visit the park
- provide services that focus on developing awareness, appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural history of Alberta's protected areas, but also include opportunities for participants to develop higher levels of stewardship development including stewardship values, behaviours and leadership

To meet these needs, HA services will have to expand to include courses, workshops and projects and other methods.



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Audiences, both current and potential, have been identified and described in Chapter 2. Characteristics of the various audiences and implications for HA services include:

- a very high percentage of day users (up to 70%)
- a very high percentage of return visitors in both day users and campers (some estimates up to 80%)
- a majority of park visitors are local, from within a two hour drive of the park
 - by far the largest group come from Medicine Hat

This visitor profile differs from many PPA sites in the province by having large day user and return visitor populations. The implications for HA offerings include the need for:

- a focus on services for day users
 - tailored to fit their special needs
- more programs that are changed regularly to satisfy the needs of repeat visitors
- more in-depth offerings to give repeat visitors the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the park's natural and cultural heritage

A feature analysis is conducted in Chapter 3. It is based on a feature inventory (Appendix A). This is a comprehensive inventory of important natural and cultural features and their management in and around the park. The feature analysis reviews the importance of the park's features for inclusion in HA offerings.

New goals, audiences and approaches lead up to a very different way of doing things at the field level. Chapter 4, Program Statements: Exploring the New Approach is specifically directed to field staff. Included are general sections on how to address:

- sense of place
 - A sense of place emerges through knowledge of, contact with and discovery of the geography and geology, flora and fauna and history and legends of an area. Through the acts of discovery a person develops, over time, a growing sense of the land and its history. Sense of place is a core foundation for committed stewardship action. HA staff will need to fully understand sense of place and incorporate sense-of-place activities into HA offerings



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- the PPA Stewardship Model
This model requires two-way communication between the presenter and participants. Each step of the scale favours different methods for presentation
- financial sustainability
Charging for some HA services is now a reality in PPA. Staff will now have to find ways to recoup at least some cost for HA services. Other routes to financial sustainability are also described.
- lines of inquiry
The lines of inquiry reflect the PPA Stewardship Model. They and their associated concepts guide HA staff in developing programs that fit the needs of their audiences and the new directions of PPA
- evaluation
There will be additional criteria for evaluation of HA services. These include:
 - fit to audience needs
 - fit with agency mandate
 - the extent that planned learning outcomes have taken place
 - contribution to development of sense of place
 - meeting of financial targets
- partnerships
Partnership will become increasingly important as HA staff work to find ways to meet its goals and obligations. HA staff will need to develop a broad spectrum of collaborations with local and regional partners
- program planning
A new planning form is presented to lead HA staff through the program planning. Its key features include:
 - a new focus on audience
 - inclusion of the PPA Message Framework
 - three levels of objectives focusing on influencing the participant's knowledge, feelings and behaviours
 - inclusion of the Lines of Inquiry and Associated Concepts
 - consideration of potential partners and allies
 - consideration for revenue generation potential
 - a requirement to include two-way communication

The remainder of Chapter 4 are individual program statements for:

High Priority Audiences

- Day Users On-site
 - the park's largest audience group
 - currently not addressed by HA services
 - HA effort and funding devoted to development and delivery will be phased in over three years to reach 20%
- Campers
 - the park's second largest audience group
 - HA effort and funding devoted to development and delivery will be reduced in phases over three years from 30% to 15%
- Day Users and Campers Off-site
 - made up of the park's two largest audience groups
 - off-site services for these groups is not currently delivered
 - HA effort and funding devoted to development and delivery will be phased in over three years to reach 15%
- School Groups
 - divided into on-site and off-site audiences
 - HA effort and funding devoted to development and delivery will be 20% (10% School Groups On-site, 10% School Groups Off-site)

Moderate Priority Audiences

HA effort and funding devoted to development and delivery will be 5% for each of:

- First-time Visitors
- Cottagers
- Nearby Landowners
- Researchers
- Community Groups

Low Priority Audiences

HA effort and funding devoted to development and delivery will be a total 5% divided among the following groups:

- Group Campers
- Remote Visitors
- Former Visitors
- Vehicle-less Potential Visitors

Non-Audience-Based Program Statements

- Orientation
- Tourism
- The Park Centre (Appendix B)

All audiences were identified in the Audience Analysis



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(Chapter 2).

Implementation processes, timelines and staffing levels are detailed in the Chapter 5. Expenditures will be approximately \$30,000 per year.

Key recommendations include:

- incorporate action research into the development of new HA programs especially for new audiences such as Day Users On-site and Day Users and Campers Off-site
- set aside extra planning time in the first three years of implementing the plan
 - this will require a reduction in service delivery or an increase in HA staff
- Increase HA Staff Capacity or hire new staff with the following skills:
 - teacher training
 - community development
 - facility management
 - informal and life-long learning
 - visitor research
 - environmental and experiential education
 - education for sustainable development
 - social marketing and tourism
 - web site development
 - web and graphic design
 - on-line learning design
 - coaching and mentoring skills

Scheduling Recommendations

Key recommendations include:

- aim to extend HA services year-round
 - the main summer focus to be on park visitors
 - the main fall and winter focus to be on school groups (on- and off-site), community groups, day-users and campers off-site and winter recreationalists



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Staffing Recommendations

Key recommendations include:

- Staff Positions
 - HA Supervisor
 - a full-time position
 - co-ordinates and supervises the HA program at CHIP-AB
 - Public HA Services Officer
 - a full-time position
 - in charge of developing a delivering HA programs to the public outside the Park Centre
 - School HA Services Officer
 - a full-time position
 - in charge of developing a delivering HA programs to school and community groups
 - Exhibit/Activity Coordinator
 - a full-time position
 - in charge of developing a delivering HA programs and exhibits in the Park Centre
 - Exhibit Designer
 - a full-time position shared between CHIP-AB, Dinosaur Provincial Park and Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park (CHIP-AB will support 1/3 of this position)
 - will design and maintain permanent exhibits and support the Exhibits/Activity Co-ordinator
 - Facility Attendant/Clerk
 - will work out of the Park Centre, provide public information, make bookings for HA services, collect fees
 - Giftshop Manger
 - Casual Facility Attendant
 - will work out of the Park Centre
- reduce the number of seasonal positions
 - provide longer term positions that will allow extension of HA services into the shoulder seasons (spring and fall)
 - increase likelihood of trained seasonal staff entering an long-term HA career path. This will become increasingly important as new HA services will require trained, experienced staff
 - consider replacing seasonal positions with permanent positions

