

## Chilcotin Holidays Guest Ranch

September 16, 2011

### South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek Parks

The following information was summarized from a meeting on September 16, 2011. However, more comprehensive input on values, objectives and proposed management strategies are provided under the name of the Wilderness Stewardship and Training Foundation at:

[http://wildernessstewardshipandtrainingfoundation.com/bigcreek\\_spruce\\_mp.pdf](http://wildernessstewardshipandtrainingfoundation.com/bigcreek_spruce_mp.pdf)

#### Values:

- Wilderness character.
- Wildlife.
- Hunting.
- Trails.

#### Concerns:

- South Chilcotin Mountains Park is a wilderness park; ease of access brings issues.
- Trails:
  - Increased trail maintenance due to addition of mountain biking; trails were used and created by horseback riders, which should be considered in plan development.
  - Horses are difficult to pass for other trail users.
  - Trail use conflicts and growing number of visitors.
  - Mountain biking can create dangerous situations riding downhill or around blind corners at high speeds; horses can be spooked if trail etiquette is not followed; wildlife can be disturbed in their habitat.
  - Horses can damage alpine meadows when wet.
- Campsites:
  - Overcrowding at public campsites.
  - Grizzly and black bear habituation at sites due to poor food storage and handling.
  - Lack of facilities (hitching rails, feed storage, etc.) for public; people hitching horses to trees, causing horses to paw roots and kill the trees.
  - Fire bans sometimes ignored.
  - Lack of bear-proof containers.
  - Use of Chilcotin Holidays firewood by public.
  - Feed for horses around commercial camps being depleted by public horse riders.
- Air access:
  - Disturbance of mountain goats in winter habitat by heli-skiing operations.

- Lack of data to determine impacts of helicopters in winter.
- Noise of helicopters reduces wilderness character of parks in backcountry ski areas such as Spruce Lake and Eldorado.
- Plane noise reduces wilderness character of parks.
- Landing poles from heli-skiing are accumulating on mountain tops.
- Air access leads to mountain bike overuse of some trails (e.g. Warner Lake down Gun Creek, Spruce Lake down Gun Creek), creating conflicts with other trail users, such as horseback riders and hikers.
- Upon creation of Spruce Lake Protected Area commercial uses were to be status quo until the development of a management plan, but mountain biking has increased dramatically even though there was LRMP direction to hold development at 2001 levels.
- Hunting is a traditional use that should be given special recognition in the event that new users demand changes.
- Wind power proposal on Relay and Cardtable Mountains.
- Fish getting smaller in Spruce Lake.
- Seemingly unplanned/unstructured mountain bike use; unprepared bikers which impact Chilcotin Holidays.
- Air access brings public users who are unprepared and with limited or no backcountry skills, deep into the wilderness, dropping them off to survive on their own, impacting horse operators who have to alter their activities to help out.
- Motorized vehicles (motor bikes) using park trails.
- Hiking is a historic use, but many are unprepared for wilderness when they are flown in, and almost all are now flown in.
- The park being used as a day-use park.
- Funnelling of users down trails to the Chilcotin Holidays property.
- Visitors getting lost in park, with some depending upon GPS, which is not dependable given the wilderness and accuracy of available maps.

## Recommendations:

- Implement the intent of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan to categorize South Chilcotin Mountains Park as a wilderness and natural environment park.
- Use levels for trails should be kept the same as on the designation year of 2001.
- Wildlife:
  - Data on wildlife should be collected related to activities that occur within the parks, with efforts required to determine impacts.
  - Hunting serves as a tool to manage wildlife numbers in the park area, ensuring that populations don't exceed their habitat's capacity and damage it. Excess predator numbers lead to problems of lowering sheep and goat populations.
  - Recognize the financing of habitat protection with licence fees and other contributions.

- Heliski operations should be assessed as to their potential impact on wildlife and they should participate and contribute to such studies.
- Keep bears from settlements to prevent them from becoming habituated to humans.
- Implement active and effective bear harassment measures (aversive conditioning) in all areas.
- Habituation of grizzly bears in the Spruce Lake area needs to be addressed.
- Need education, storage bins, and bear harassment measures for bear management.
- Need for park presence and enforcement of bear attractants (cleaning fish in camps or on beach, etc.).
- Address disturbance of mountain goats by heli-skiing activities.
- Address interference of human settlements with bighorn sheep migration corridors.
- Consider impact of cougar and wolf predation on mountain goat, bighorn sheep, moose and mule deer.
- Heli-skiing information on trails and flight paths should be carefully recorded, with comparisons to winter ranges; collection of information must be mandatory by heli-skiing operations.
- Horseback riding is the historic use, which should be recognized in park planning and management; a balance is needed between traditional use and new uses.
- Hunting is a traditional use in the parks, which should be recognized. A guide outfitting territory covers the parks. Hunting requires off trail use.
- Development of new resorts in or adjacent to the park should be regulated.
- Mountain biking:
  - Mountain bikes should primarily go from Spruce Lake, down Tyaughton to Tyax.
  - Should be fly-in quotas and/or limited to certain days.
- Orientation for airplane clients is needed to minimize problems.
- Prevention of problems should be a priority.
- Hikers and bikers should be required to enter the park on their own so they are familiarized with the terrain; regulations would then not be needed.
- Commercial operators should be responsible for any visitors that they take into the park.
- Mandatory equipment should be required for park visitors.
- Change fishing catch regulations in Spruce Lake back to 5 from 2 to address smaller fish.
- Access:
  - Road deactivation is needed in Relay (back to main road), Slim (out of park), Bonanza (not used, but could be made day-use or easier route), Paradise (pulled back by Forest Service), Taylor (deactivate back from park).
  - Moving of trailheads back from park would address the issues of unpreparedness – a natural regulating tool – and alcohol related problems.
  - School groups now do not need a park permit if trip is less than one week, which results in unprepared groups, and taking on routes that are too tough.
- Air access:
  - Helicopter access to park should be prohibited during the summer.

- Summer pickup of landing poles should be required at the heli-ski drop-off points.
- Map helicopter flight paths and separate from mountain goat winter and kidding ranges.
- Require heli-ski operator to collect and submit wildlife data; Chilcotin Holidays is collecting such information, so other commercial operations should also take the effort to provide this information.
- Air operators should be responsible for client's safety, park rules and trail etiquette and must do a training program.
- Flights should be limited by day or client days.
- Flights to private property within the park should be controlled.
- Helicopters associated with mine exploration should not be able to fly over park; noise is an issue for park users in summer; wildlife displacement would be avoided.
- Implement a no-fly zone; be considerate of others since other operators and visitors have accommodated them.
- Is Mount Sheba being used by heli-skiers?
- Trails:
  - Lower Gun Creek Trail to Spruce Lake: separate trails for horse/mountain bike users by reactivation of Gun Meadows Trail and Gun Creek Slide Trail.
  - Develop trails that lead back to Tyax Lodge, at Cinnabar, and designate both ridges above Tyax Lodge for bike use only.
  - B+F Trail and Pearson Trail (Lick Creek): designate for horse use only since they end at Chilcotin Holidays private property.
  - Water barriers or longer switchbacks are needed on all trails where wash is occurring.
  - Designate user maintenance for trails for fairness amongst users.
  - Fix long, deep mud hole on High Trail to Eldorado (50m long, 2' deep).
  - Adjust trail grade in a few key locations:
    - Trigger up Deer Pass trail to fix a 3' deep area of the trail.
    - Mid-way on trail from Spruce Lake to Windy Pass: dangerous use by mountain bikers that requires more gradual switchbacks.
    - Top of Pearson Pass side on Eldorado Pearson Pass.
  - GPS mapping of main trails that haven't been mapped so far.
  - Update recreational maps for visitors, showing trail types and difficulty.
  - Signs should be erected at trail-heads and campsites to educate each group, including trail etiquette, campsite rules.
  - Educate larger community on permissible uses and etiquette.
  - Place notification on acceptable uses prior to visitors getting to trailheads, e.g. motor bikers using trails in park are sometimes not aware they are not allowed.
  - Have available forms for different user groups (mountain bike only, horseback only).
  - Consider user fees for backcountry users, especially in high use areas.
  - Designate requirements for maintenance as to who is responsible, user requirements, commercial operators.
  - Mountain bikes should use Tyaughton instead of considering double trailing Warner down Gun Creek and/or Spruce Lake down Gun Creek trails.

- Consider limiting flights to 2 flights per day, and prohibit flying on weekends.
- Campsites:
  - Designate new campsite areas for the public at Lorna Lake, Hummingbird Lake, Trigger Lake, Warner Lake, Deer Pass/Tyax Creek Junction (away from commercial camp), end of Relay (road at old recreation site).
  - Direct people to right areas.
  - Provide facilities at public campsites that accommodate horses.
- Bridges:
  - Should leave most trails natural, with proper fords through streams; bridges are not compatible with the wilderness setting.
  - Fix side rail on second bridge on trail to Spruce Lake.
  - Fix end of third bridge on Tyax Creek trail.
  - Fix 2 broken bridges in Pearson Basin.
- Infrastructure:
  - Improvements by Chilcotin Holidays: Spruce Lake Camp, Eldorado Camp (new cabin for skiing in Hidden Valley), Big Creek Camp, Warner Lake Camp (rebuilt tent frames), Tyax Camp.
  - Should have ranger cabins for park management established at Spruce Lake, Warner Lake and Big Creek.
  - Establish sign boards with information about trail etiquette, leave no trace, etc.
- Business Model for Chilcotin Holidays:
  - The ideal situation is to have one group of 7 to 10 people in each camp; presently, the average is 3 to 4, with a maximum of about 7.
- Park Management:
  - Ranger presence should be permanent from June 15 to Sept. 30.
  - Park should be self-supporting.
  - Park management plan should include need for provision of information and set up park fees for the public, similar to that for National Parks.
  - Commercial outfitters need productive rangeland inside the park for horse grazing.
  - Operators should do grass assessments on each trip in each grazing location.
  - Grazing areas for commercial and public horse users must be separate and designated. This would allow determination if grazing in localized areas is an issue and who may be responsible (public may put pressure to remove horse grazing if overuse takes place).
  - Forest fires should be left to burn within the park boundary.
  - Log around park boundary to control mountain pine beetle populations.
  - All development must be made in a way that does not decrease the wilderness character of the parks and does not spoil the views of the landscape; no big lodges should be allowed within the park.