

Tyax Adventure Company

October 4, 2011

South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek Parks

Values:

- Wilderness backcountry setting and varied landscape.
- Incorporate economic, environmental and recreational uses as envisioned by the Lillooet LRMP.
- Lodge is a main employer in the valley, and securing a successful business will provide job creation and attract visitors.

Concerns:

- Fairness in considering camp on Warner Lake and Spruce Lake.
- Mountain biking and floatplane use does not have equal level of representation as other user groups in BC Parks management.
- Perception of conflict arises by user groups having their own view of "appropriate backcountry wilderness use."
- Mountain biking is not understood by other interests, tending to wrongly characterize the mountain biking community and their effects. They are portrayed poorly in the 1995 background document and not mentioned except in a negative connotation of causing erosion, looking for the thrill of downhill. Mountain biking in South Chilcotin is not targeting downhill, but longer, wilderness rides.
- Mountain bike/float plane community should be given greater consideration in South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek due to other nearby, large parks having excluded floatplane and mountain bike activities via management planning in the past.
- Work is needed to educate users and tour operators.
- Other large parks in the area tend to be centered on lakes, which have taken away opportunities for floatplane access; want to retain access for floatplanes within South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek Parks. Other parks can provide for more secluded "hiking only" experiences.
- Within operating area, the only land based that has not been industrialized and can provide a suitable wilderness product is within these parks.
- All users of the parks should attempt to get along and solve issues rather than have them develop into conflicts.
- Should retain access for all users and not giving more weight to single-use.
- Improper food storage = bear habituation.
- Need standardization of policy between the two parks: South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek.

- Mountain biking should not be allowed by other commercial operator as this is an alteration of their original permit and has potential to increase pressure on the parks, leading to a decline in the recreational experience.

Business Model:

- The main objective for South Chilcotin Mountains and Big Creek Parks should be to develop world class multi-user recreation opportunities while conserving the natural and cultural values. The parks should become a model of co-operation for multi-use recreation.
- The park is the livelihood of Tyax Adventure Company, accounting for 95% of fly-in business, with a substantial investment.
- Tyax Air has been operating since 1991, flying into Spruce Lake, Warner Lake and Lorna Lake. Repeat business is important.
- Tyax Adventure Company provides float plane service to South Chilcotin Mountains Park, horseback trips and mountain bike tours, both single day and multiple day trips.
- Prefer to have no restrictions on aircraft, but clients want to have some quiet experience.
- Mountain bikers are generally mid-age, higher income and looking for a wilderness experience and longer rides.
- Mountain biking is a broad spectrum experience, emphasizing a wilderness backcountry experience and the park as a special place. People looking specifically for fast downhill riding should be discouraged. People looking for “cross country” single track riding and a wilderness experience should be encouraged.
- The airplane ride is part of the experience, providing a view of the landscape.
- Growth in business is likely hikers going hut to hut. Future intent is provide a unique product of hut-to-hut operation, not to fly more people into the park. This will use the five existing camps of the former Spruce Lake Adventures, with a maximum of 10 clients and 2 guides at each camp each night, with allowance for larger groups by special request.
- Have an annual permitted client accommodation set at 75% of camp capacity for the June to September season.
- Long-term consideration is to have a host at each camp who would be responsible for the surrounding area and maintenance. Radio repeater would be installed, with BC Parks access to frequencies for emergencies. Radio is a safety feature, and for co-ordinating with other operators.
- A mix of guided tours, some family, large groups.
- Provide an interesting combination of horse and mountain biking experience, which can get along with proper co-ordination and etiquette.
- An aging demographic may want more access.
- Airplane will be used more to take in supplies.
- Follow a code of conduct for high safety standards and trail maintenance.
- Float plane use:

- If flights are restricted, the suggestion is to have a maximum of 4 flights per day to Spruce Lake, twice to Lorna Lake, and twice to Warner. Anything over that then visitor experience suffers.
- Horse will be more efficiently used in the future to transport gear and supplies due to the availability of aircraft.
- Flight tours over the park are limited, usually using Slim or Leckie Creek areas.
- Noise is mitigated by not spending time in any one area.
- Would like to work with other tour operators.
- Optimize itineraries.
- Educate clients. Make sure people are prepared. Etiquette.

Knowledge:

- Provide a safety brief for customers.

Conservation:

- It is not believed that flights have a great impact on wildlife.
- Flights over mountain goat habitat are avoided, especially kidding areas.

Wildlife:

- Mitigation measures expected to avoid wildlife impacts include:
 - Bear awareness.
 - Monitoring of wildlife encounters and reporting of locations.
 - Garbage control.
 - Bear-proofing of facilities.
 - No-fly zones in critical wildlife habitat areas.
- Presently disagree with wildlife population inventory numbers. Wildlife are numerous, but just using different areas, e.g. mountain goats have moved slightly east out of the park due to mining activities adjacent to park boundaries.

Recreation:

- Most customers looking for a longer ride of 8 to 10 hours, with most being day-trippers.
- Request for commercial opportunity for mountain biking and hiking in Big Creek Park.

Facilities:

- Want to relocate the accommodation portion of the Spruce Creek Camp back to its original location approximately 100 meters to the west or another suitable location on Spruce Lake.
- Upgrade existing camps/cabins to provide comfortable accommodation for 10 clients each. Each camp to include: cabin, 5 wall tents, sauna, shower, picnic area, saddle fly, outhouse, corral and bear proof metal storage container.
- Would like to tie in existing camp at Taseko Lake, which is outside the park, with operations based out of Tyaughton Lake.
- Would like to obtain a permit for additional camps on Lorna Lake and Leckie Lakes.

- Maintenance and restoration: Intent is target resources to park maintenance with possible work to include:
 - Trail maintenance and improvements, re-route trails, twin trails.
 - Signage (location, directional, etiquette).
 - Bridge construction.
- Request to obtain permits for existing docks on Spruce, Warner and Lorna Lakes, maintain them to ensure safety and operational efficiency while maintaining “wilderness visuals.” Have the ability to charge other commercial users for dock usage.
- Provide access to the camp on Spruce Creek by way of a dock on the west side of the Spruce Lake outflow.

Recommendations:

- Tyaughton Creek bridge crossing.
- Re-route Deer Pass trail to less steep route.
- Alternative trail from Spruce Lake to Windy Pass.
- Twin trails and make some one-way or separate uses.
- Twin Trail from Gun Creek to Jewel Bridge.
- Rehabilitate trails with water erosion.
- Create a high trail to Pearson Basin.
- Trail from Relay to Twin Lake to Big Creek.
- Trail improvements in Elbow Pass and upper Graveyard Creek junction.
- In future:
 - Retain current tenures.
 - Park can be a model for multi-use tourism. There was too much segregation in the past, with some having more input than others; a goal should be to leverage synergy between companies using the park.
- Existing operators in the area should have a priority over new interests.
- If flying is limited, then Tyax requests the sole permit holder to fly commercial aircraft into the park so that other operators do not get an advantage from Tyax’s loss of flights.
- BC Parks should present a yearly five-year plan to operators to aid efficiency and promote input to park management.
- Should regulate early season horse use of “wet” trails to mitigate damage.
- Controlled burning should take place to provide a diverse forest, clear some of the pine beetle deadfall, and provide some fuel management to aid in forest fire suppression.
- Should allow snowmobile and ATV use on the trail on the Gun Creek Trail, between Jewel Bridge and Gun Creek Road.

Bridge River Delta Park:

Wildlife:

- Moose and grizzly bear move through the park.

Tyax Resort and TLH Heliskiing

Business Model:

- Summer activities have changed, with park use by Tyax Lodge dropping. Horseback trips to be taken over by Tyax Adventures.
- Mountain biking is important, with this segment accounting for approximately 55% of business.
- TLH operates four helicopters for heli-skiing, with 60% of the use in Leckie and Slim Creek area. Eldorado not used to a great extent due to winds. Slim and Gun Ridge are best bad weather areas. Warner is used infrequently.
- There is high summer hiking potential around Leckie Lake, with potential for a cabin.

Recommendations:

- Harmonize Crown Land and Park tenures to bring more certainty.
- Provide longer-term tenure due to loan requirements.
- No-fly zones are unrealistic, and TLH imposes their own restrictions to protect wildlife. They are more familiar with wildlife locations and need the flexibility to make short-term changes as wildlife move.
- The snowmobiling community uses the pass over Bridge Glacier, which should be kept open.
- Conflict with snowmobiles occurs in Eldorado.