

Strathcona Park

Master Plan Amendment

January 2010



BCParks

Strathcona Park
Master Plan Amendment

Approved by:



Barry Penner
Minister

_____ *March 11, 2010*
Date

INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared to amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Provincial Park (1993) and the Master Plan Amendment for Strathcona Park (2001). This amendment focuses on clarifying the use of horses in Strathcona Park.

The overall management objective for horse use in the park remains unchanged from the Master Plan (1993) and the Master Plan Amendment (2001). The management strategies for horse use have been clarified. This direction applies to locations that were identified in the Master Plan Amendment for Strathcona Park (2001) as potential horse use areas, as well as other potential locations.

Amendment Rationale

- The Master Plan Amendment (2001) states (page 3): “Review of the plan may occur in response to specific issues that were not foreseen by the plan and require greater public review”.
- The Master Plan (1993) and the Master Plan Amendment (2001) was open to interpretation on where horse use was appropriate. The master plan objective is clear that it is a limited activity but did not explicitly exclude it from portions of the park.

Table1. Summary of previous management direction regarding horse use in Strathcona Park

Master Plan (1993)	<p>Objective: To provide opportunities for horse use which have minimal impact on the environment or conflict with other users. (Horse Use, page 45).</p> <p>Direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Permit horse use on the logging road to the west of Gold Lake, and on the section of the old logging road near Kunlin Lake (page 45). ▪ Study the potential of horse use at Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes (page 45). ▪ Study the potential of the Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes areas to support horse use (Plan Implementation - Visitor Services, page 53). ▪ On a trial basis, two areas have been designated for horse riding and other areas will be reviewed (Plan Highlights, page vi).
Master Plan Amendment (2001)	<p>Horse Use: Horse use is allowed in many parks but is managed carefully to ensure that there is minimal impact on the environment or conflicts with other users. Horse use is inappropriate for most of Strathcona Park because of the steep terrain, wet soils, and sensitive plant communities (page 36).</p> <p>Direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to allow horse use in the Kunlin area north of the Ucona River (page 36). ▪ Allow horse use northwest of Donner Lake and at Oshinow Lake for a two-year test period, while implementing a monitoring system in conjunction with horse users to assess impacts (page 36).

- The areas identified as appropriate for horse use in the Master Plan (1993) and the Master Plan Amendment (2001) utilized old road beds and their associated corridors. The trails allowing for horse use that were considered in the Master Plan (1993) and Master Plan Amendment (2001) have characteristics of existing, disturbed corridors (from road development in the past) capable of providing travel surfaces that were wide enough, with a stable substrate, to accommodate horse use.
- The intent of that direction was to ensure that:
 - the environment was capable of supporting horse use without unacceptable adverse effects on soils and vegetation; and
 - minimizing or eliminating potential conflicts with other park users.
- The 2009 Master Plan Amendment direction is consistent with that intent, as it limits horse use to existing old road beds and their associated corridors and avoids user conflicts. Specifically, this amendment clarifies that:
 - the use of horses is not allowed in the Wilderness Conservation Zone (75% of the park); and
 - criteria will be applied to consider the appropriateness of horse use in proposed areas to assist decision-making in determining whether proposals for this activity are consistent with management objectives and intent.

Review Process

Open houses and public meetings were held in May 2008. In addition, the opportunity to provide comment was offered on the BC Parks website. Public and First Nation input was received by mail, email and web submissions to the BC Parks website. All responses and input received were considered and taken into account in determining the clarified management direction for horse use in Strathcona Park.

Public Feedback

The consultation revealed widely divergent views on horse use in Strathcona Park and it proved to be a divisive issue. A large portion of the input was on an area-by-area perspective. Opinions ranged from exclusion of horses entirely in Strathcona Park to support for allowing horse use in areas other than those specifically identified in the Master Plan Amendment (2001), provided restrictions were put in place on where horse use could be contemplated.

There was unanimous agreement that the wilderness character and values of the park should be maintained. There was also agreement that any horse use must be limited and done only in a very careful manner.

As part of the 2009 Master Plan Amendment process, a report summarizing public input was prepared to assist BC Parks in the decision making process. This report, *Strathcona Provincial Park: Master Plan Amendment Horse Use in Strathcona Park*, was made available to the public through the BC Parks website.

AMENDMENTS

DELETE:

Section 6.6.6 Horse Use (page 36 in the Master Plan Amendment (2001))

REPLACE WITH:

Section 6.6.6 Horse Use

Horse use is allowed in many parks but is managed carefully to ensure that there is minimal impact on the environment or conflicts with other users. Horse use will not be permitted for most of Strathcona Park because of the steep terrain, wet soils, and sensitive plant communities.

- Horse use will only be allowed on trails identified as appropriate for that purpose.
- Trails allowing for horse use will only be considered in the Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment and Wilderness Recreation zones.
- Trails allowing for horse use will only be considered on existing old road beds and their associated corridors. Corridors for consideration for trails allowing for horse use are defined as the linear length of area where a road was previously developed. These existing old road bed corridors are identified in Table 2 which contains all the candidate areas.
- Road corridors with existing vehicle use or significant hiker use (i.e., do not meet the criteria below), and are not contained in Table 2 will not be considered for horse use.
- Potential trails allowing for horse use on existing old road beds and corridors identified in Table 2 will be assessed for site conditions present along the length of the old road bed. Site conditions along the corridor may require trail reconstruction and/or rerouting to connect the trail along the linear length of the corridor. In order to have contiguous trails, there may be instances where areas of trail construction are required outside the old road's area of disturbance. Any trail construction or rerouting must also meet the criteria below.
- Trails allowing for horse use must meet the following criteria:
 1. There is low likelihood of conflict with existing use (e.g., vehicle use of roads, significant hiker use).
 2. There is low likelihood of conflict with wildlife populations that are sensitive to horse presence.
 3. There is low likelihood of impacts to sensitive habitat/ecosystems (aquatic or terrestrial).
 4. Proposed trails allowing for horse use will be subject to the BC Parks Facility Standards for Horse Trails.
 5. Proposed trails allowing for horse use will be subject to the BC Parks Impact Assessment process.
 6. Procedures are followed to reduce the possibility of introducing invasive/non-native species into the park.

Table 2: Strathcona Park – Existing Old Road Bed and Associated Road Corridor Candidates for Potential Horse Trail Use by Zone

Zone	Locations of Existing Old Road Bed/Associated Road Corridor Candidates for Potential Horse Trail Use			
Intensive Recreation Approximately 14.5 km of road corridor within zone	Elk River Power line corridor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 11 km long road corridor Access road/trail to service hydro lines 	Oshinow Lake <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 3.5 km long road corridor Main access road into lake 		
Natural Environment Approximately 37.3 km of road corridor within zone	Divers Lake/Rossiter Lake access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 3.5 km long road corridor 	Donner Lake and Kunlin Lake areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 22 km long road corridor Also must cross very small portions of Intensive Recreation and Wilderness Recreation Zones 	Oshinow Lake <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 3.8 km long road corridor Along northeast shore Starts in Intensive Recreation Zone 	Toy Junior/June Lakes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 8km long road corridor Starts in Intensive Recreation Zone
Wilderness Recreation Approximately 12.5 km of road corridor within zone	Bedwell Valley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 12.5 km long road corridor 			

NOTE: Existing old road beds and associated road corridors that have existing user conflicts (vehicle use or significant hiker use) do not meet the criteria and are not contained within Table 2 for further consideration and assessment for horse use.