

Yekooche First Nation Agreement-in-Principle Provincial Parks / Land Management

Protecting B.C.'s Parks and Protected Areas

B.C.'s provincial parks are a rich natural resource, and the Province is committed to ensuring parks are maintained for the benefit of all British Columbians. Parks and protected areas require careful management in order to protect biodiversity and ecological values, and to ensure harmony among environmental, social and economic interests. The government of B.C. seeks to negotiate treaties that:

- ensure provincial parks and protected areas are maintained for the benefit of all British Columbians;
- ensure recreational opportunities in parks continue for all British Columbians;
- clarify rights, responsibilities and jurisdiction with respect to parks and parks management.

Parks Management

The Yekooche First Nation values the importance of tourism and recreational opportunities in the region. Yekooche First Nation and B. C. will negotiate arrangements to ensure that First Nation members' activities are compatible with other park values & activities. First Nation activities will be built into provincial park management plans. The First Nation's participation in parks management will broaden visitors' understanding of the history & culture in the region. Yekooche First Nation has entered into a Parks Agreement for Ruby Rock Lake Provincial Park with Ministry of Environment.

Land Management

Proposed treaty lands encompass an area of 5,960 hectares of Provincial Crown Land and existing Indian Reserves totalling 379.8 hectares within an area affected by the extensive beetle infestation of the region's forests. The Mountain Pine Beetle infestation has led to wide-spread harvesting in the Yekooche Area of Interest, and as a result, reduced levels of timber revenue will be earned by the First Nation from proposed treaty land for the next 80 to 100 years. The effect of this infestation has been an allowable increase in the rate of timber harvesting resulting in a significant reduction in the land values for the area. About 70% of the proposed treaty land has been harvested. Yekooche First Nation is exploring alternative economic development opportunities on proposed treaty land and within the region. The proposed treaty land is within the core area of the Yekooche Statement of Intent area and joins three of four reserves into one parcel. The fourth reserve, on Babine Lake, is surrounded by private land and Sutherland River Provincial Park.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who will retain overriding authority over provincial parks and protected areas?

The Minister of Environment retains full responsibility for managing and conserving provincial parks and protected areas.

Will a treaty allow Yekooche First Nation members unlimited access to carry out traditional activities in parks?

Yekooche First Nation members' activities in parks, such as hunting, fishing and gathering, will be negotiated prior to Final Agreement. It is anticipated that Yekooche First Nation members activities in parks will be built into park management plans balancing the First Nation members' access with park values and access for other users. In addition, the AIP sets out that the First Nation's right to hunt, fish and gather plants will be limited by measures necessary for conservation, public health and public safety. Provincial and federal ministers will retain full authority for the management and conservation of these resources and their habitat.

What is a park management plan?

A park management plan sets out the objectives for park use and guides provincial management of the park for the future. Such a plan will set out Yekooche First Nation's involvement and participation in park planning and management.

Will these agreements create more certainty for park users in the region?

A treaty with Yekooche First Nation will eliminate the uncertainty associated with Aboriginal gathering, hunting and fishing rights. The Final Agreement will provide that the First Nation may participate in regional management processes set up by the provincial or federal governments, including park management plans. Through such processes, all parties can work co-operatively for the benefit of all British Columbians.

Will a treaty help to protect and conserve parks and protected areas in the area?

No parks or protected areas will be removed from the area. First Nation community involvement in park management processes will contribute to improved relations with other users and consolidate local commitment to conserve and protect parks.

What is and what will be the major economic influence on Yekooche First Nation residents?

Forestry is, by far, the most important source of revenue for Yekooche First Nation. The effects of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation have led to wide-spread harvesting in the Yekooche Area of Interest and the First Nation is exploring alternative economic development opportunities on proposed Treaty Land and within the region.