

# **SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN**

## **BACKGROUND REPORT**

**May 7th, 2002**  
*(Revised September 15, 2002)*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1. BACKGROUND ON THE SRMMP</b>	
1.1 History	1
1.2 Purpose	1
1.3 Plan Area	1
1.4 Approach	2
1.5 Guiding Principles	2
1.6 Planning Process and Timelines	3
<b>2. DESCRIPTION OF VALUES AND RESOURCES</b>	
2.1 Fish and Wildlife	
2.1.1 Wildlife	3
2.1.2 Wildlife Habitat	4
2.1.3 Fire Maintained Ecosystem Restoration	4
2.1.4 Endangered and Threatened Species	4
2.1.5 Fisheries	5
2.2 Water Resources	5
2.3 Subsurface Resources	
2.3.1 Geological Setting	6
2.3.2 Coal	6
2.3.3 Coalbed Methane	7
2.3.4 Minerals	7
2.3.5 Oil and Natural Gas	8
2.4 Timber Resources	8
2.5 Scenic Areas	9
2.6 Settlement	
2.6.1 Transportation and Utility Corridors	10
2.6.2 Communities	10
2.7 Agriculture	
2.7.1 Existing Uses	11
2.7.2 Agricultural Land Reserve	11
2.8 Heritage and Culture	
2.8.1 First Nations History, Traditional Uses and Treaty Process	12
2.8.2 Pre-Contact Archaeological and Traditional use Sites	12
2.8.3 Post Contact Archaeological/Heritage Sites	13
2.9 Tourism and Recreation	13
<b>3. PROJECT TEAM AND DELIVERABLES</b>	
3.1 Project Team	14
3.2 Key Deliverables	14

## APPENDICES

# **1. Background on the Southern Rocky Mountain Management Plan**

## **1.1 History**

In November of 2001, the B.C. government decided to rescind the Environment and Land Use Act Order-In-Council that created the former Southern Rocky Mountain Conservation Area covering parts of the Flathead, Wigwam, Bull and Elk River valleys in the southeast corner of the province. The Kootenay Region of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management was directed to proceed with the development of a Southern Rocky Mountain Management Plan (“SRMMP”) with a new focus for management and planning in the Southern Rocky Mountain area. The SRMMP will cover a larger area than the previous Conservation Area, and this renewed process will be led by government, will follow tight timelines, and will pivot on collaborative input and advice from interests in the region rather than consensus through planning tables. The entire area is part of the treaty negotiation process with the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council

## **1.2 Purpose**

Through a public input and planning process, and without prejudice to the current treaty negotiation process, the Southern Rocky Mountain Management Plan is intended to provide government with refined management direction for land and resources within the SRMMP area. The plan will provide the basis for consistent decision-making and guidance of future tenures and permits in the plan area.

## **1.3 Plan Area**

The SRMMP area covers the southeast portion of the East Kootenays and extends from the B.C./Montana border north through the Flathead and Wigwam watersheds and portions of the Elk and Bull River watersheds to the southern boundary of Heights of the Rockies Provincial Park. All federal lands, private lands, and Provincial Parks are excluded.

More specifically, the area covered by the plan includes all non-park provincial Crown land along the eastern slopes of the Bull River drainage, the western slopes of the Elk Valley south of the Height of the Rockies Provincial Park, the Sand Creek drainage, and the Canadian portion of the Wigwam River and Flathead River drainages.

The SRMMP area comprises a largely undeveloped and relatively intact ecosystem that links the Canada-USA border through the Flathead, Bull, Wigwam and Elk River watersheds, and supports diverse and abundant wildlife. Other values in the area include: fisheries and water, tourism development and backcountry recreation activities, subsurface resources including minerals, coal, and petroleum resources, and timber harvesting.

For resource evaluation purposes, a larger area than the SRMMP area is being considered in order to undertake a scientifically based process which works on the premise of ecosystem management. This “Resource Evaluation Area” has a total area of

754,463 ha, covers approximately one half of the Cranbrook Forest District, and encompasses 16 landscape units compared to the SRMMP area which has a total area of 440,614 ha within 10 landscape units.

Table 1: Summary of Planning Area

	<b>Landscape Units</b>	<b>Total Area (ha)</b>	<b>Timber Harvesting Land Base (ha)</b>	<b>Area not owned or administered by B.C. (ha)</b>
<b>SRMMP Area</b>	C14-C18, C23-C26, part of C27, planning cells T490 in C34, and T555 & T560 in C13	440,614	78,179	68,386
<b>Resource Evaluation Area</b>	14 -28, 38, planning cells T490, T555, T560	754,463	114,593	149,679

Source: Cranbrook Forest District PCRS Reports by Landscape Unit

## 1.4 Approach

The SRMMP will:

- take a balanced approach to encourage sustainable economic development and ensure that key conservation values are protected and maintained within the SRMMP area;
- provide the basis for consistent decision-making in the area and will guide future tenures and permits in the plan area; encompass social, economic and environmental issues and enable the opportunity for a broad range of participation from all relevant sectors;
- refine and clarify the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy;
- clarify strategic planning direction arising from the Forest Practices Code (FPC); and
- implement the Kootenay Boundary Higher Level Plan Order .

## 1.5 Guiding Principles

- Build public and sectoral awareness and support for the Southern Rocky Mountain Management Plan process and the plan itself.
- A process that is open and welcoming of input and advice from local participants and sectors
- Create land use certainty for all relevant sectors and residents in the SRMMP area.
- A science-based land use plan that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility, and balances the need for economic development with the need to protect ecosystems.
- Build upon the existing policy and land use direction that exists in the region (i.e. Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy, Forest Practices Code, Kootenay-Boundary Higher Level Plan).

- Respect existing tenures and rights in the plan area.
- The process and plan is without prejudice to the current treaty negotiation process.
- Create a plan that provides “one-stop shopping” for land use direction which is clear, easy to implement and minimizes regulatory compliance needs.
- Provide more specific direction for land allocation and management.

## **1.6 Planning Process and Timelines**

The planning process is intended to be technically driven based on available resource inventories, research information, and information gained through public consultation. The information gained from the various public consultation activities will be critical to the success and quality of the planning process and products. The public consultation and planning principles are: to establish constructive dialogue with the public and relevant sectors, to conduct an open and transparent process where all interests are considered, and to undertake a credible process with no predetermined outcome.

The planning process was initiated in November 2001 with an Open House and Public meeting held in Fernie in December 2001. Focus Group sessions were conducted throughout March and April, and draft guidelines will be presented for review at an Open House in October 2002 and revised as necessary. A final draft will be submitted to the Deputy Minister in December 2002 and released for public review in 2003.

This first planning phase of the SRMMP addresses a number of tasks and activities that cannot be accomplished within the plan timeframe, yet which should be addressed to achieve a comprehensive land use plan. A workplan to complete a Phase 2 will be part of the final document.

A Recreation Management Strategy and a Recreation Carrying Capacity Pilot are taking place concurrently with the SRMMP process, are being coordinated, and results will be incorporated into the SRMMP. The intent is to have one final plan for the area.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF VALUES AND RESOURCES**

### **2.1 Fish and Wildlife**

#### **2.1.1 Wildlife**

The East Kootenay region is internationally renowned for its spectacular abundance and diversity of wildlife. In addition to the biological and aesthetic value of East Kootenay wildlife, many species have significant economic value for hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing.

The landscape within the SRMMP area is one of those increasingly rare areas that has retained a high degree of ecological integrity and processes. As a consequence, the species diversity of large mammals in the Southern Rocky Mountains has managed to

remain among the highest on the continent. This phenomenon exists in part because large tracts of land remain relatively isolated, undeveloped and unpopulated.

**Carnivores:** The plan area supports populations of eight species of large carnivores: black bear, grizzly bear, bobcat, lynx, cougar, coyote, wolf, wolverine as well as small fur-bearers, fisher, martin, greater and least weasel and badger.

The Flathead watershed, within the planning area, is reputed to support the highest density of non-coastal grizzly bears in North America<sup>1</sup>. The watershed functions as the centre of the linkage between the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem population in the United States and contiguous populations of grizzlies in Canada, and as a recruitment source for Alberta, the state of Montana and adjacent watersheds in British Columbia.

**Ungulates:** The plan area supports six species of ungulates: elk, mountain goat, moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. The populations of Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep, mountain goat, mule deer, elk and moose are considered to be of international and regional significance.

### **2.1.2 Wildlife Habitat**

The East Kootenay is internationally renowned for its impressive abundance and diversity of wildlife. This can be attributed largely to the areas' inherent complexity of ecological systems and connectivity with both the Great Plains in Alberta and the intermountain region of the United States. The relatively intact connective linkage that extends south from the source of the Elk River watershed through the Flathead River watershed and across the Canada-U.S. border into the state of Montana makes the SRMMP area valuable for many species.

### **2.1.3 Fire Maintained Ecosystem Restoration**

Fire maintained ecosystems are represented on the west side of the Wigwam and Elk Rivers, along the southwest boundary of the SRMMP area. Managing to restore the desired open stand structure and high forage values was first initiated on Wigwam Flats and Sheep Mountain. These restoration activities have been ongoing since the 1970's and include logging, thinning, slashing and prescribed burning. Activities to control noxious weeds are part of the restoration.

### **2.1.4. Endangered and Threatened species (Red/Blue listed)**

There are 104 species of vascular plants and 32 species of vertebrates in the Cranbrook Forest District that are Red- or Blue-Listed. Of the vertebrates, at least 14 may be found in the SRMMP area. These include Grizzly bear, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, Williamson's sapsucker, Fisher, Wolverine, Badger, Red-tailed chipmunk, Least chipmunk, Southern Red-backed vole, Tailed frog, Mottled sculpin, Westslope Cutthroat trout and Bull trout. While Mountain goat are not endangered or threatened in

---

<sup>1</sup> McLellan 1989a

this area, they are a species of special concern because of their sensitivity to habitat and human disturbance. A full report of Red- and Blue-Listed vertebrate and vascular plant species in the Cranbrook Forest District and in the SRMMP area is found at .

### **2.1.5 Fisheries**

The most common native fish in the SRMMP area are Bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, mottled sculpin, slimy sculpin and large-scale sucker. Streams in the Flathead, Elk, Bull and Wigwam watersheds provide important spawning and rearing habitats for these species.

Bull trout, the largest indigenous fish in the area, is a blue-listed species in British Columbia and an endangered species in the neighbouring American jurisdictions. The Wigwam River, through intensive management, is the most important Bull trout spawning stream known throughout their range.<sup>2</sup>

## **2.2 Water Resources**

The Elk and Flathead River basins, and portions of the Bull River basin are included in the SRMMP area and the resource management area.

The Elk River has its headwaters in the Front Ranges and flows south and southwest for about 185 km to its confluence with the Kootenay River, draining an area of about 4450 sq.km. The three major tributaries of the Elk are the Wigwam, Fording River and Michel Creek. At Fernie, the Elk R.<sup>3</sup> has a mean annual discharge of 1,470,000 dam<sup>3</sup> with a daily maximum of 642 m<sup>3</sup>/s and daily minimum of 5.80 m<sup>3</sup>/s. There is only one major dam on the Elk R. just downstream from Elko. Four community and 47 domestic watersheds are located in the Elk River basin.

The eastern portion of the Bull River basin forms part of the SRMMP area. Major tributaries on the east side of the Bull include Narboe, Iron and Sulphur Creeks. There are 2 domestic watersheds on this system. A BC Hydro dam is located at the southern end of the Bull River. Regulated measurements<sup>4</sup> of mean annual discharge, daily maximum and minimum are 1,040,000 dam<sup>3</sup>, 388 m<sup>3</sup>/s, and .820 m<sup>3</sup>/s respectively.

The Flathead River basin drains an area of about 1110 sq km between its headwaters and the B.C.-Montana border. The river flows south and southeast for about 60 km. to the border at an elevation of 1200 to 1500 m. Main tributaries to the southeast are Sage and Kishinena Creeks which join the Flathead River south of the border. Mean annual discharge<sup>5</sup> at the US border is 827,000 dam<sup>3</sup>, while the maximum recorded is 413 m<sup>3</sup>/s

---

<sup>2</sup> S.G. Cannings and J. Ptolemy 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Water Survey of Canada (1990 data)

<sup>4</sup> Water Survey of Canada (1990 data)

<sup>5</sup> Water Survey of Canada (1990 data)

and minimum of 1.74 m<sup>3</sup>/s. Three domestic watersheds are located in the Canadian Flathead River basin.

The Elk and Flathead Rivers and major tributaries are mostly high gradient and fast-flowing, their hydrographs dominated by spring freshets when discharge increases two to three fold over base flows. Wetlands and marshes are fairly rare and for that reason important for species dependent on these habitats. While most lakes in the plan area are alpine, headwater lakes, the SRMMP area also includes eight L1 lakes<sup>6</sup>. These are Snowshoe, Weber, Hunger, Marl, Beryl, Three Mile, Frozen and Proctor lakes. Proctor lake, the largest Crown-owned lowland lake in the southeast Rocky Mountains, is representative of lowland lakes in the area. Relatively undisturbed by human activity, 165.25 ha area of lake and upland was proposed in 1991 as an ecological reserve.

Climatic temperature extremes are an important determinant of fish habitat in the rivers. Winter air temperatures can drop to -40 degrees C resulting in considerable river ice accumulation and frazzle ice formation in faster flowing reaches. Ground water springs are common along the rivers throughout the SRMMP and are critical in the maintenance of ice-free winter refugia for fish.

The water chemistry of these systems is highly influenced by the limestone parent geology of the Rocky Mountains. The water is alkaline with a base-flow hardness of about 150 mg/L CaCO<sub>3</sub> hardness and pH of about 8.5, which contrasts with that of the St. Mary River with a hardness of about 20 mg/L and pH of about 7.7. With the exception of Michel Creek, autotrophic (algal) production in these rivers is strongly phosphorus limited. Natural phosphorus-rich groundwater in upper Michel Creek causes seasonal nitrogen limitation for algae in this tributary. Anthropogenic channel disruptions and waste inputs are mainly associated with coal mining, logging, municipal development and cattle ranching.

## **2.3 Subsurface Resources**

### **2.3.1 Geological Setting**

The SRMMP area is in the Foreland Fold and Thrust Belt of the Canadian Cordillera, and is underlain for the most part by sedimentary rocks ranging from Precambrian to Tertiary in age. Small bodies of intrusive igneous rock occur locally. Average structural trend is roughly north-south. Dominant structures include the Lewis thrust fault, whose trace is exposed immediately east of the Alberta border.

### **2.3.2 Coal**

Known coal deposits and resources belong to the Jurassic-Cretaceous Kootenay Group and occur where the Kootenay Group crops out or is buried under younger sedimentary

---

<sup>6</sup> Forest Practices Code – Operational Planning Regulations



rocks. Within the SRMMP area the most significant coal deposits are within the Flathead River drainage. Vast coal resources also occur in the Elk River drainage but are mainly outside (to the east of) the Plan area.

Coals in the Plan area are bituminous in rank (predominantly medium-volatile) and are low in sulphur. They are very attractive for, and have widespread application to both thermal and metallurgical uses. International steel mills are the biggest consumers of coal from the Plan area.

Coal mining has a century-long history in southeast BC. There are five active open pit coal mines in the Elk Valley area (Fording River, Greenhills, Line Creek, Elkview and Coal Mountain, all outside the SRMMP area) and numerous other sites, such as Hosmer (in the SRMMP area), Coal Creek and Morrissey Creek (private land), where coal was mined in the past. The current most developed coal exploration property in the SRMMP area is the so-called Sage Creek deposit on Cabin Creek, but all known deposits have received some level of exploration.

Coal-bearing lands in the SRMMP area are covered by two land-use designations in the Kootenay-Boundary Land Use Plan. Most are in the Integrated Resource Management category, while some are in the Enhanced Resource Development (Coal) category.

The Kootenay Group is known to occur at great depth beneath the Lewis thrust fault in parts of the plan area, but these occurrences are considered to have only very long-term potential interest for resource extraction.

### **2.3.3 Coalbed Methane**

Many of the areas where the Kootenay Group is at surface or buried beneath younger sedimentary rocks in southeast BC also have potential for coalbed methane occurrences. In the SRMMP area this mainly applies to coal-bearing lands in the Flathead River drainage.

Exploration for coalbed methane in the Fernie/Elk Valley area began in the late 1980's, although the gas-rich nature of some of the seams that were mined underground in the early days was well known. Activity so far has focused mainly on areas outside of the SRMMP area, although short test holes were drilled in the Lodgepole Creek area. There are no proven resources of coalbed methane in southeast BC, but the potential is considered to be very large.

### **2.3.4 Minerals**

Given the complex geology it is not surprising that there is a wide range of mineral occurrence types and mineral potential in the SRMMP area. With the exception of building stone and aggregate materials, no economic deposits have been discovered to date. Some of the known occurrences are discussed below; they are in no particular order. Numerous copper (with and without silver) showings are found east of the Flathead River in Precambrian-age Purcell Supergroup strata (Grinnell Formation). Gold is known to occur in association with intrusive rocks in the Flathead Valley, most notably in the Howell-29 Mile creeks area and on Commerce Peak Phosphate rock occurs regionally at several horizons in the Paleozoic and Mesozoic stratigraphy, most

notably at the base of the Jurassic Fernie Formation (a marine shale). Small intrusive rock bodies with unusual composition are found north of Elkford and in parts of the Bull River drainage. Some occur in pipe-like form, and some have been identified as kimberlite, the typical host rock for diamonds. Zinc showings are known to occur in the Bull River drainage, where they are associated with Paleozoic carbonate rocks. Limestones and dolomites are common in the plan area, as are other rocks with characteristics suitable for construction purposes. Sand and gravel deposits are found mainly in the valley bottoms.

The known mineral occurrences and areas of potential are mainly located in either Integrated or Special Management zones<sup>7</sup>.

### **2.3.5 Oil and Natural Gas**

Monahan<sup>8</sup> has summarized the geology and oil and gas potential in the Elk and Flathead drainages. He describes the area as being under explored with its prime targets being poorly tested to date. There are no petroleum reserves in the SRMMP area, but the area has significant potential given its geological setting and proximity to productive sites in Alberta., and a CO<sub>2</sub>-rich natural gas resource is known to exist.

Oil and natural gas potential occurs in a variety of settings in the plan area .Faulted Paleozoic carbonate rocks situated below the Lewis thrust fault appear to be the most prospective targets, with suitable structural trends extending over considerable distances. These reservoirs are potentially gas-bearing (rather than oil) for the most part.

Areas with oil and gas potential in the SRMMP area occur in Enhanced, Integrated and Special Management zones<sup>9</sup>.

## **2.4 Timber Resources**

Timber harvesting for industrial purposes started with the construction of the railways into the East Kootenays in the mid-1800's. The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Great Northern Railway extended their lines into the Elk valley and Kootenay River valley to access timber, coal and mineral resources. As the 1800's came to a close, trees were harvested for railway ties and mining props, and then for the U.S. and prairie lumber markets. Mineral, oil and coal exploration in the early to mid 1900's, opened up initial road access into the Flathead and middle reaches of the Elk valley. The strong economy of the post-war period saw increasing demand for lumber. Gradually a number of small sawmills were consolidated and today continue to have a strong presence in the area as Tembec Inc.

Industrial forestry operations were initiated in the Flathead in the late 1960's, in an effort to salvage spruce bark beetle killed wood. Later in 1980 to 1982, a massive mountain pine beetle outbreak led to another timber salvage effort which resulted in the harvest of over 7500 ha in the Flathead valley alone. The pine beetle salvage operation,

---

<sup>7</sup> Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan – Implementation Strategy

<sup>8</sup> MEM Petroleum Geology Special papers 2000/01 and 2001/02

<sup>9</sup> Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan – Implementation Strategy

and further subsurface resource exploration in the late 1970's and early 1980's brought the current road infrastructure in the Flathead valley into existence.

Present day forestry operators in the plan area are Tembec Industries Inc., Galloway Lumber Company Ltd., and the Small Business Forest Enterprise Program. Tembec's sawmill in Elko is the only large sawmill located in the area. Timber resources from the plan area are also used in local sawmills, pulp mills and specialty wood products facilities located outside the plan area (eg. in Jaffray and Skookumchuck). Harvesting is ongoing and continues to be planned for the area. Often harvesting in the Elk and Flathead valleys is directed to beetle control and salvage operations. All operations are carried out according to Higher Level Plan Objectives and the Forest Practices Code.

Dominant commercial tree species in the plan area are lodgepole pine, white spruce, Douglas-fir, western larch, sub-alpine fir, western red cedar, western hemlock and ponderosa pine.

As noted in the introduction, the total land base for the Southern Rocky Mountain Management Plan area is 440,614 ha. The area that is expected to be harvestable within the plan area is 78,179 ha or 18%.

The Resource Evaluation area contains 754,463 ha of which the timber harvesting land base is 114,579 ha or 15%..

## **2.5 Scenic Areas**

Under the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan, the management objective established for front country scenic areas is to conserve the quality of views from communities, major waterways and major highways. This objective is legally enforceable through the Kootenay Boundary Higher Level Plan Order.

Front country scenic areas within the plan area include the Highway 3 corridor from Elko to the B.C.- Alberta border, and the Highway 43 corridor from Elkford to Sparwood. The Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy (KBLUP-IS), identifies these scenic areas and defines visual management guidelines for designing timber harvest, forest management and mineral exploration activity.

Visually sensitive areas in the backcountry are managed according to KBLUP-IS backcountry recreation guidelines for resource development. Backcountry scenic resources are not mapped or identified specifically, rather they are defined as they relate to backcountry facilities and features. The guidelines state that any logging within 200m of a defined<sup>10</sup> campsite, cabin, lake, or river should be designed so that

---

<sup>10</sup> For definition of backcountry facilities and features to which visual guidelines apply, see KBLUP-IS. Section 3.9.2 Operational Guidelines. Table 1.2 Management Guidelines for Backcountry Recreation. p 56.

modification may be discernible but not clearly evident from the site. For tenured areas, resource development should show evidence of good visual design.

## **2.6 Settlement**

### **2.6.1 Transportation and Utility Corridors**

Highway 3 and 43, and the Canadian Pacific Railway form the main transportation corridor running through the SRMMP area. Highway 3 and the Canadian Pacific Railway parallel the Elk River from Elko to Sparwood, where the rail line splits. At Sparwood, one rail line runs north to Elkford and the Fording River, Line Creek and Greenhills coal mines, and the other rail line travels southeast paralleling Highway 3 through the Crowsnest Pass, Alberta. At Sparwood, Highway 43 initiates and runs north to Elkford.

The Trans Canada natural gas pipeline enters the SRMMP area from the west, north of Sheep Mountain, continues north from the Wigwam River through the north and west Flathead to Sparwood, then east through Phillips Pass into Alberta. Subsidiary lines tap this line to service Elko, Fernie, and Sparwood.

The 500kV hydro transmission line passes through the plan area enroute to the Sparwood sub-station from Elko, northeast through the Flathead, then through Phillips Pass into Alberta. Lower voltage lines distribute power from the Sparwood sub-station to the local communities.

Other utility lines such as telephone, fiber, and hydro distribution, generally follow the transportation corridor.

### **2.6.2 Communities**

The SRMMP area lies entirely within the Regional District of East Kootenay and is adjacent to the communities of Elko, Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford. Table 2 provides population statistics and the top three employment sectors for each community. Coal mining is the main employer in the Elk Valley, however in Fernie tourism is growing steadily with Fernie Alpine Resort attracting an increasing number of tourists to the area every year. Elko, a small community of about 500 is not included in the table because of its small size. Employment there is mostly provided by sawmill and forestry operations.

**Table 2. Community Facts**

Community	City of Fernie	District Municipality of Sparwood	District Municipality of Elkford
Area	1,655.5 ha	18,279.6 ha	10,525.9 ha
Incorporated	1904	1966	1971
Population (2001)	5,511	4,232	2,877
Top employers (% of population employed)	19% mining	28% mining	53% mining
	14% retail trade	10% retail trade	8% retail trade
	11% accomod., food+beverage	9% accomod., food+beverage	6% educational service

Source: BC Stats website (2001 population census; 1996 employment census)

## 2.7 Agriculture

### 2.7.1 Existing Uses

Beef cattle production is the main agricultural activity in the SRMMP area. Other agricultural uses are limited by the small amount of arable land and the short frost-free period. Access to Crown range for livestock grazing is often the determining factor in terms of the sustainability and profitability of this type of farming.

Range values in the plan area are low to moderate for livestock, and generally moderate to very high for wildlife, particularly ungulates. Currently, fifteen tenure holders utilize range within the plan area, ten of which are Guide Outfitters who pasture relatively small numbers of horses used for their guiding operations. To avoid displacing wildlife from critical habitat and foraging areas in the Flathead, livestock use is excluded except for low intensity Guide Outfitter horse use.

Approximately 100 water licenses for irrigation purposes are held in the plan area, which is within the Fernie Water District.

Noxious weeds are present throughout much of the plan area, and can significantly impact range values and wildlife..

Human suppression of naturally occurring fires has contributed to forest ingrowth on range areas and diminished the amount of range available. Range enhancement activities (ie. prescribed burning, thinning) are important to maintaining Crown grazing opportunities and have been ongoing since the 1970's in parts of the SRMMP area.

### 2.7.1 Agricultural Land Reserve

Agricultural Land Reserve designations within the SRMMP area are concentrated along the Elk River from Elko to Sparwood, and along the Upper Elk and Fording Rivers in the area south of Elkford. In addition, there are two small ALR areas close to the west

boundary of the plan, at the confluence of Lodgepole Creek and Wigwam River, and due north from the confluence, on Morrissey Creek.

## **2.8 Heritage and Culture**

### **2.8.1 First Nations History, Traditional Uses and Treaty Process**

The SRMMP area lies within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa First Nation. The Ktunaxa Nation consists of several communities in southeastern British Columbia, northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. The Ktunaxa traditionally followed “a nomadic seasonal subsistence round determined by the location and timing of abundance of a broad range of animal and plant resources” (W.Choquette, pers. comm). The people travelled extensively throughout the Wigwam, Elk and Flathead valleys (and elsewhere outside the plan area) hunting, trapping, fishing and harvesting vegetation. They also crossed the Continental Divide to hunt bison on the prairies.

There are seven bands in the Ktunaxa traditional territory, five are located in British Columbia and two are in the United States. The Canadian First Nations communities that make up the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council are the Lower Kootenay Band, St. Mary’s Band, Shuswap Band, Tobacco Plains and Columbia Lake Band.

The Ktunaxa First Nation are currently at stage 4 of the 6 stage Treaty Negotiation Process. The SRMMP will not limit treaty negotiations or settlements.

### **2.7.2 Pre-Contact Archaeological & Traditional Use Sites**

Numerous First Nations archaeological sites are spread throughout the plan area, and are particularly concentrated in the area between Sparwood and Elkford. Archaeological sites represent only those activities which have left a footprint on the landscape such as campsites or aboriginal mining. Traditional uses such as hunting, berry picking and travel routes may not be evident on the land, however are known through oral history. Traditional use studies of the Ktunaxa territory in the plan area are ongoing.

### **2.8.3 Post-Contact Archaeological/Heritage Sites**

Post-contact archaeological sites are found throughout the plan area in the way of mining, forestry, oil wells and railway sites. Particularly significant or well preserved historic sites include coke ovens, mine structures and townsites near Hosmer, Morrissey, Coal Creek and Corbin, as well as oil well sites in the Flathead.

## **2.9 Tourism and Recreation**

The SRMMP area supports year-round tourism and high quality outdoor recreation opportunities. It is internationally renowned for its rich diversity of natural resources including its spectacular scenery, wilderness settings, rugged mountains, lakes and

rivers, abundant fish and wildlife, and an annual average 10 metre snowfall. Outdoor recreation, both motorized and non-motorized occurs in all four seasons and includes snowmobiling, four-wheel drive and all-terrain vehicle use, skiing (alpine and cross-country), nature viewing, hang-gliding, hiking, photography, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horseback riding, berry-picking, picnicking, camping, caving, swimming, sports fishing and hunting, mountaineering and golf. A variety of cultural-heritage values and sites, a network of interesting communities, and a range of resorts, hotels, motels, camping and park facilities also support tourism and recreation.

Tourism, after mining and the public sector, is the third most important contributor to the Study Area's economic base. According to BC Stats 1996 census information, 15% of the basic employment and 5% of basic income in the area depends on tourism, and indications are that this sector will continue to grow strongly<sup>11</sup>. This view is supported by the historical trend of growth in tourism, the number of tourism-related investments being proposed (including backcountry recreation operations), the proximity of the area to Alberta and the US borders, and the fact that all of the communities in the SRMMP area include tourism as a key economic development priority. The Fernie Alpine Resort is seen as a major driving force to development of the tourism sector in the SRMMP area. Developments outside the SRMMP area like the Kimberley Alpine Resort will have spill-over effects on, and reinforce tourism growth in the Study Area.

Tourism products are described in the KBLUP-IS as "front-country" (products offered in communities and along main travel roads, eg. golf, alpine skiing or accommodation) or "backcountry" (those offered away from communities and travel corridors eg. heli and cat skiing, guide-outfitting). While front-country tourism is primarily located on private land, it is nonetheless highly dependent on the natural resources on surrounding Crown land.

A visitor profile undertaken in 1995-96<sup>12</sup> showed that 85% of visitors to the eastern Rockies were non-residents, and 15% residents of BC. Leisure versus business travel to the area accounted for the majority of visitors, both resident and non-resident.

Public recreation facilities in the SRMMP area include one provincial campsite (Mt. Fernie) with an average of over 12,200 visitors per year between 1998-2000<sup>13</sup>. There are also several significant provincial protected areas adjacent to the SRMMP area: Akamina-Kishinena, Height of the Rockies, Elk Lakes, and Top of the World parks.

Commercial facilities in Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford support recreation and tourism in the SRMMP area. In Fernie, this includes the Fernie Alpine Resort, Island Lake Lodge, over 20 lodges, motels and hotels, 2 hostels, several B&B's, 2

---

<sup>11</sup> Socio-Economic Base Case for the SRMMP, April 2002 (draft)

<sup>12</sup> British Columbia Visitor Study: The East BC Rockies Visitor Report, Tourism BC 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Socio-Economic Base Case for the SRMMP, April 2002 (draft)

private campground/RV parks and a large variety of retail outlets, food/beverage services, golf courses, museums, galleries and studios. Sparwood has a number of food and accommodation establishments as well as a small ski hill and golf course. In Elkford, there is also a small ski hill, golf club, municipal campground and two motels.

There are 10 Guide Outfitters with territories entirely or partly within the SRMMP area and 18 commercial recreation (outdoor adventure) operators<sup>14</sup>. The commercial recreation operators, and to some extent the Guide Outfitters, offer a range of outdoor recreation activities including hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, rafting and fishing. Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in angling guide licenses issued in the SRMMP area which has raised some concerns about the negative impacts of the growing angling pressure on fish populations as well as the recreation and tourism resource.

### **3. Project Team and Key Deliverables**

#### **3.1 Project Team**

The process of developing a management plan for the area will be led by the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. A listing of the core project team can be found at :

An interagency liaison group will be established to provide active input to development of the management plan. Participation will be requested from First Nations and various government ministries and agencies.

#### **3.2 Key Deliverables**

The Southern Rocky Mountain Management Plan will provide direction for multiple resource use and recreation access while maintaining key wildlife and habitat.

The following deliverables will be produced by 2003:

- public input summary report and Focus Group issues list
- background report
- socio-economic analysis
- draft management plan

---

<sup>14</sup> Socio-Economic Base Case for the SRMMP, April 2002 (draft)