

8.0 Zoning and Declared Wilderness Area

8.1 Zoning

Parks Canada’s national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in the national parks and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water based on the ability to support those uses. The zoning system has five categories:

- Zone I – Special Preservation
- Zone II – Wilderness
- Zone III – Natural Environment
- Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation; and
- Zone V – Park Services

This plan incorporates minor adjustments to improve the zoning from the 2010 Jasper National Park management plan. The zoning changes ensure consistency in how zoning is applied throughout the park and resolve minor

geospatial inaccuracies in previous mapping layers. Map 4 illustrates the zoning changes. The overall percentage of the park occupied by each zone has not changed.

Parks Canada may consider adjustments to zoning and declared wilderness area boundaries in conjunction with the conceptual proposal for the redevelopment of the Jasper SkyTram, provided these adjustments result in net ecological gain.

Suitable land in Zone II (and within the Declared Wilderness Area) may be used for temporary caribou captive breeding and release facilities, provided it can be returned to a wilderness condition following the project (see Objective 1.4).

Zoning Area Changes from Jasper’s 2010 Management Plan

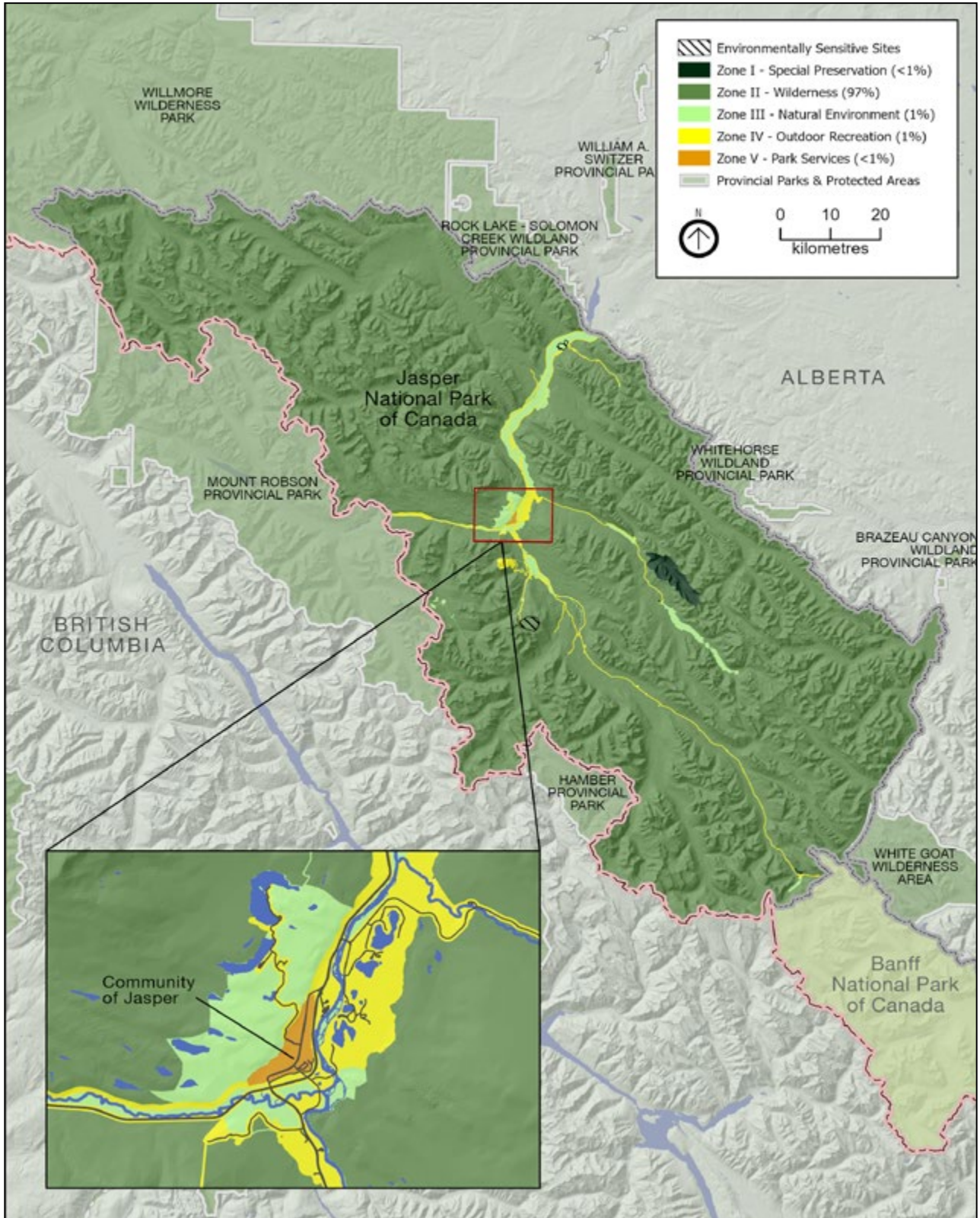
Zone	Area in 2010 (km ²)	Area in 2020 (km ²)	Change from 2010 (km ²)	Percent Change	% of Park Area 2010	% of Park Area 2020
Zone 1	47	47	0	0%	0.42%	0.42%
Zone 2	10,923	10,926	3	0.03%	97.27%	97.30%
Zone 3	141	141	0	0%	1.25%	1.25%
Zone 4	116	113	-3	-0.03%	1.03%	1.01%
Zone 5	2	2	0	0%	0.02%	0.02%
TOTAL	11,229	11,229				

Photos opposite page left to right:

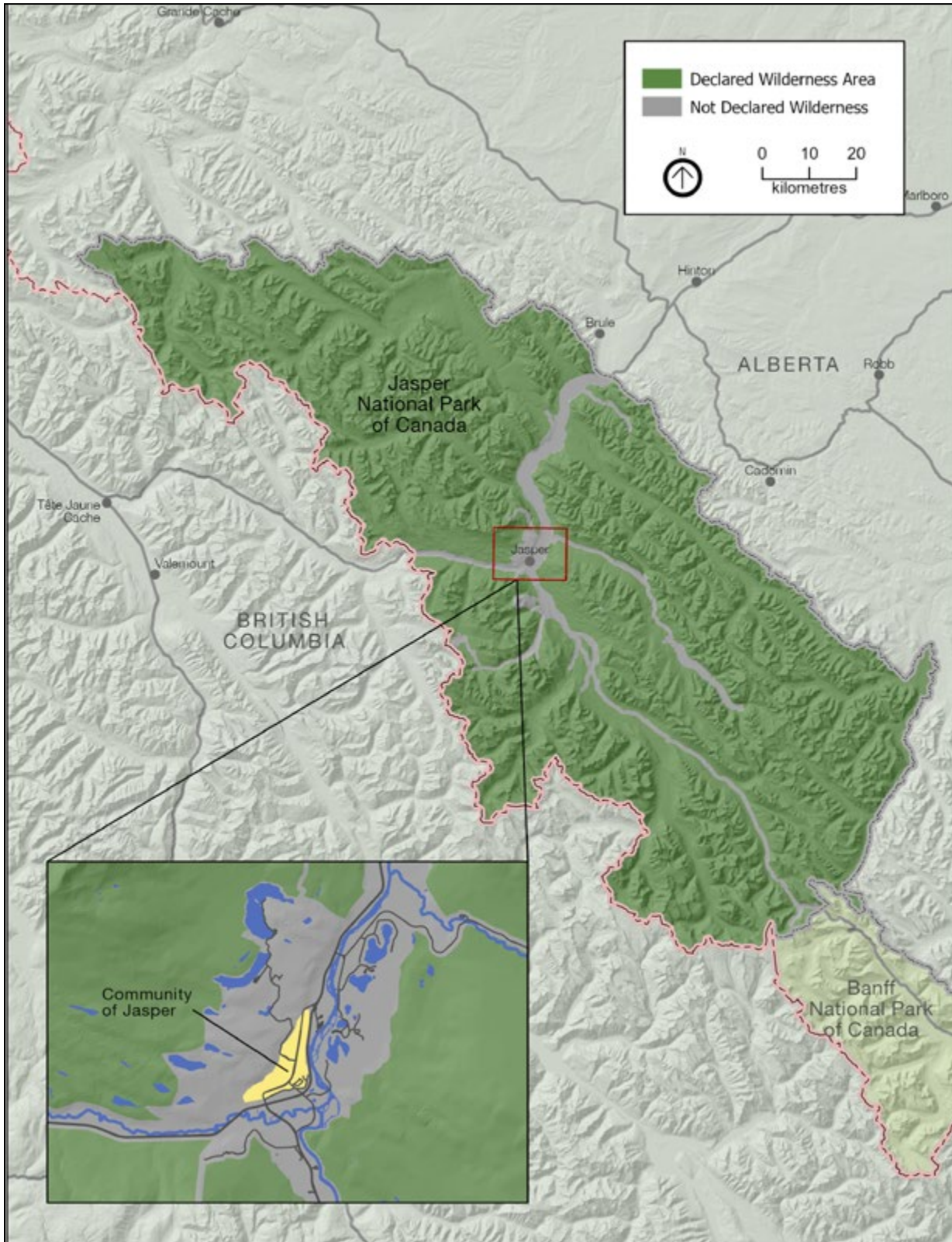
Tonquin Valley at sunset
 by Alex Lader

Tonquin Valley caribou
 by Lalenia Neufeld

Map 4: Jasper National Park Zoning Summary



Map 5: Jasper National Park Declared Wilderness Area



Zone I – Special Preservation (less than 1 percent of the park)

Zone I lands deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access and circulation are not permitted.

Ancient Forest and other climate study sites

This Zone I area is comprised of several study sites that have contributed to scientific understanding of past climates and glacier retreat in the Rocky Mountains overall, and at the Columbia Icefield specifically. The forested stands within the zone contain very old—in some cases 500- or 600-year-old—living specimens of Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*). Dead timbers in the area mark two Little Ice Age maximum advances of the Athabasca Glacier, at approximately 1714 and 1841–1843. Old trees and dead wood at these sites have been used to produce a 1,000-year long summer temperature record. Due to the scientific value of these sites, the park will not encourage access to the area and will interpret its resources off-site.

Surprise Valley

Surprise Valley is part of the Maligne karst system, one of the largest underground river systems in North America, and is designated as a Zone I area for some of the best examples of surface karst features in the park. The valley, located above the Maligne River, is drained entirely underground through limestone of the Upper Devonian Palliser Formation. The valley contains deep sinkholes in glacier drift, sink lakes and some of the finest examples of rillenkarren in North America. An unmaintained trail provides access to the valley; no restrictions on access are required at the present time.

Archaeological cave site

In Jasper National Park, there is one known cave site that contains pictographs and other culturally and archaeologically significant material. Due to its cultural sensitivity and the importance of not disturbing the archaeological material, the area is not identified on the zoning map and access to the cave will be strictly controlled.

Jasper House

Jasper House, a national historic site because of its significant role in the fur trade, is rich in architectural features, artifacts and faunal remains. Archaeological remains are intact and are very important in understanding the history of the site. There is also a cemetery on site. Off-site interpretation of the site's heritage values is provided at the Jasper House trail and platform along Highway 16.

Zone II – Wilderness (97 percent of the park)

Zone II contains extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and are conserved in a wilderness state. Much of this land consists of steep mountain slopes, glaciers and alpine meadows. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Zone II areas offer opportunities for visitors to experience the park's ecosystems first-hand, and require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. In much of Zone II, visitors experience remoteness and solitude. Motorized access and circulation are not permitted. Facilities are restricted to trails, backcountry campgrounds, alpine huts, trail shelters and patrol cabins. Most of Zone II will continue to have no facilities.

Zone III – Natural Environment (1 percent of the park)

In Zone III areas, visitors experience the park's natural and cultural heritage through outdoor recreational activities that require minimal services, and facilities of a rustic nature. Zone III applies to areas where visitor use requires facilities that exceed the acceptable standards for Zone II. For example, snowmobile access routes and land associated with commercial backcountry lodges are zoned as Natural Environment. Utility corridors may also be located in Zone III.

Motorized access and circulation in Zone III are permitted in limited circumstances and controlled through regulatory permitting and realty instruments (for example, leases, licences and easement agreements), including:

- Snowmobile or helicopter use to service backcountry facilities;
- Off-highway vehicle use to maintain and operate linear infrastructure, such as power lines and pipelines;
- Motorized commercial tours on Maligne Lake and on the Athabasca Glacier as authorized through a valid lease; and
- Seasonal use of signed Zone III or IV lakes by boats with electric motors, within established parameters.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation (less than 1 percent of the park)

Zone IV includes limited areas that are capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage values and related essential services and facilities, in ways that impact the ecological integrity of the park to the smallest extent possible, and whose defining feature is direct access by motorized vehicles. In Jasper National Park, Zone IV includes frontcountry facilities and infrastructure, such as park roadways, road-accessible campgrounds and overflows, day-use areas and visitor facilities like Miette Hot Springs.

Commercial operations such as the Marmot Basin Ski Area, Jasper Park Lodge, bungalow camps and hostels outside of the townsite are also located in Zone IV. Several more intensive land uses related to park operations, such as gravel pits, power generation facilities and the waste transfer station are also located in Zone IV.

Zone V – Park Services (Community of Jasper – less than 1 percent of the park)

The community of Jasper, with its concentration of visitor service and support facilities, is the only Zone V area in the park. Specific activities, services and facilities in this zone will be defined and directed by the approved community plan.

Zoning and Declared Wilderness Area (continued)

Environmentally Sensitive Sites (ESS)

This designation applies to areas with significant, sensitive features that require special protection, but do not fit the zoning described above. This designation complements the zoning system and is important to the protection of the full range of valued resources.

Edith Cavell Meadows

Many significant plant species grow in the upper subalpine and alpine meadows near Mount Edith Cavell. The meadows are also an important caribou calving and rutting area.

Use of the meadows will be consolidated on the day-use trail in the northeast corner of the meadows and climbing access along the east ridge of Mount Edith Cavell; visitors will be encouraged to stay on the formal trail.

Athabasca Ponds

This area of small ponds and stream channels in the Athabasca floodplain near the junction of Highway 16 and Miette Road is very important to wildlife. Critical winter range for elk and moose, the area is also important to small mammals. These prey species in turn attract carnivores. Numerous bird species occur in high densities, many of which are not found elsewhere in the parks. Raptors, such as osprey and bald eagle, nest here. The area also provides habitat for the river otter, a species that is rare in the park.

Any major construction in the area (for example, utilities and roads) could change patterns of sedimentation and erosion. Future development in the vicinity of the ponds will be managed to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on the area's special resources.

Maligne Lake Outlet

Since the 2000 management plan, Parks Canada has managed the Maligne Lake outlet and mid-Maligne River to provide secure habitat for harlequin ducks. The outlet is particularly important for harlequin ducks during their pre-nesting period, and is also part of the mid-Maligne River movement corridor between Maligne and Medicine lakes for harlequin duck broods. Harlequin ducks have narrow ecological requirements, low reproductive potential and are sensitive to human-caused disturbance.

To protect harlequin ducks and their habitat, human activity and development in the vicinity of the outlet will be managed in conjunction with the seasonal closure of the mid-Maligne River to instream recreational activity.

8.2 Wilderness Area Declaration

The intent of legally designating a portion of a national park as wilderness is to maintain its wilderness character in perpetuity. Only activities that are unlikely to impair the wilderness character of the area may be authorized within the declared wilderness area of Jasper National Park.

Large tracts of protected wilderness are becoming a scarce and valuable resource in Canada and the world. From an ecological perspective, their importance lies in their ability to support natural processes and to serve as benchmarks. They are critical for animal species with large home ranges and for migrating wildlife.

Most of Jasper's Zone II has been declared as wilderness under the *National Parks of Canada Wilderness Area Declaration Regulations*. Only limited development required for park administration, public safety and provision of basic visitor facilities—such as trails, backcountry campgrounds, alpine huts, trail shelters and patrol cabins—is allowed in Jasper's designated wilderness. Public motorized access is not permitted in designated wilderness areas.

Any revisions to declared wilderness area boundaries must go through a formal regulatory process with public review. Parks Canada may consider minor adjustments to these boundaries and Zone II boundaries for infrastructure projects that would result in clear environmental gains (for example, water supply, wastewater treatment, utilities and communications projects at outlying commercial accommodations, the Marmot Basin Ski Area and other operations) that are consistent with the intent of the *Canada National Parks Act and Regulations*.

Photo opposite page:
Grizzly bear and cubs
by Simone Heinrich

