



# Partner Perspectives

## Partnership helps Jasper park see bigger management picture



### Partner Perspective

PARKS CANADA

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**Steve Otway,**  
Manager, Resource Conservation,  
Jasper Field Office, Parks Canada

DECEMBER, 2009 – Jasper National Park is the largest wilderness park in the Canadian Rockies, encompassing more than 10,000 square km and attracting more than two million visitors a year. It is an integral part of the UNESCO Rocky Mountain World Heritage Site, and one of the core parts of the largest national park system in the world. Key objectives are to maintain an experience of natural wilderness and diversity for today's visitors, and for future generations.

### The Challenge

Resource conservation manager Steve Otway says one of the park's greatest features is its outstanding range of natural diversity, from animals such as bear, wolf, caribou and elk to vast river systems to the unique plant communities found at varying altitudes.

"These are intact assemblages of natural ecosystems, minimally disturbed by human activity if at all," he says. "Our challenge is not managing the human or industrial footprint; it is playing an effective management role in populations and systems that operate far beyond our own boundaries."

Examples include the wide-ranging grizzly bear, caribou, wildfire and mountain pine beetle. While they're important to the park, they also operate at scales that go north and south along the Rockies, west into British Columbia, and east into settled parts of Alberta.

"Regardless of how large our parks are, they are still postage-stamp sized for some of these management objectives," Otway says. "We can't successfully manage for them without collaborating with our adjoining landholders."

### The Solution

Foothills Research Institute offers a solution by bringing partners and collaborators together in a way that accepts inevitable differences in priorities and views, and works towards solutions that make sense from multiple perspectives.

"Foothills Research Institute offers a wonderful mechanism to bring together a diverse group of agencies and governments that have an interest in land management," Otway says. "The partners represent large landbases, and the institute's research is often a springboard to even broader perspectives."

### The Results

One notable benefit is the ability to move beyond management plans or ecosystem targets aimed solely at one's own landbase. "I can't set fire targets for Jasper National Park without thinking about my downwind neighbors," says Otway. "This partnership helps us work together on a multi-jurisdictional basis."

Individual reports and results coming out of research programs on grizzly bear and natural disturbance patterns have been very valuable to parks managers.

"Also, one of the key advantages has been relationship building. For the park, it gives us a front-row seat with neighbors who are facing all kinds of complex decisions. We get a much greater understanding of our partners' successes and challenges, and it's been a huge enabler for us to tackle even greater issues, on the basis of relationship and trust."

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