

Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) Pilot Project

Final Report

March 2008

Prepared for:

Headquarters – Regional Client Services

Integrated Land Management Bureau

and

LAC Steering Committee

BC Government and Tourism Industry Joint Steering Committee

Prepared by:

Terje Vold, George Sranko, Sydney Johnsen and Warren Mitchell

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Increased public and commercial recreation activities on Crown land in British Columbia (BC) can impact the natural resources that and the quality of the recreational experience. An appropriate management regime is needed to help ensure recreation uses are sustainable and compatible. These considerations led the BC Government and Tourism Industry Joint Steering Committee (JSC) to propose that the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) system be pilot tested in BC as a planning approach to better manage public and commercial recreation use on Crown land.

The Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB), in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA), secured resources in 2007 to conduct two pilot projects: one in the Johnstone Strait area and the other in the Golden/Windy Creek area. The two pilot areas, chosen by JSC through an LAC Steering Committee, were selected in part because they possess very different attributes.

The Johnstone Strait area was selected as a pilot because of its reputation for sea kayaking associated with whale watching, and because the area had relatively little guidance for water-based recreation/tourism and camping with existing land use plans.

The Golden/Windy Creek pilot was selected to test the application of LAC on an existing strategic recreation land use plan, Golden Backcountry Recreation Access Plan (GBRAP), in a remote backcountry area that supports motorized and non-motorized land-based recreation during both the summer and winter.

Two objectives of the pilot project were: (i) to test the utility of the LAC system for tourism and recreation management in BC; and (ii) propose how LAC can be used in other areas of BC considering the lessons learned from the pilot projects.

The purpose of this LAC Pilot Project Final Report is to provide recommendations in support of the second objective i.e. how LAC could be used in other areas of BC considering the lessons learned from the two pilot projects.

The central question addressed by LAC is, “How much impact is acceptable and what strategies should be taken to avoid unacceptable impacts?” This refined the earlier recreation ‘carrying capacity’ question from “How many is too many?” to understanding: “What is appropriate or acceptable? and for whom?”

At the practical level, to answer the LAC question, the following 9-step LAC process was developed:

1. Identify issues & concerns
2. Define and describe a diversity of opportunity classes
3. Select indicators of resource and social conditions
4. Inventory existing resource and social conditions
5. Specify standards for resource and social conditions
6. Identify alternative opportunity class allocations
7. Identify management actions for each alternative
8. Evaluate and select a preferred opportunity class alternative
9. Implement management actions and monitor conditions

Recommendations provided below are based on lessons learned from both pilots taking into account: (1) observations from the ‘project team’ (i.e. the co-chairs and consulting team) for each pilot; and (2) participant feedback. The recommendations are grouped under four key project questions.

1. Did the LAC process provide a useful (i.e. effective, efficient and affordable) framework for recreation management?

Nine-Step Process in General

Recommendation #1: The LAC system is fundamentally sound as a useful framework. It should be considered for use in addressing recreation access and management issues in BC in appropriate situations (i.e. see other recommendations below).

Collaborative Aspect

Recommendation #2: The LAC system can be used to enhance networking and communication amongst recreational stakeholders, First Nations, government agencies and other interests, particularly in areas where existing or potential conflicts are significant.

Recommendation #3a: Government-to-government First Nations consultation is needed to determine if First Nations supports an LAC process if appropriately designed to address their interests and concerns.

Recommendation #3b: With 3a in mind, contact key local stakeholders and agency staff (federal, provincial, local as appropriate) before making a decision whether to proceed with a project since broad representation is crucial to the success of an LAC project.

Timeframe to complete LAC

Recommendation #4: The LAC process should be at least a one-year commitment, initiating with the first workshop, which is: (i) adequately supported by participants and government in multi-day workshops, and (ii) where needed information is compiled ahead of time (e.g. inventory)

Field trip

Recommendation #5: Support LAC projects with a field trip so that participants can see the area first hand and learn about key issues. A benefit of this is strengthened participant's capacity and willingness to address difficult issues and work collaboratively.

Continuous improvement

Recommendation #6: In order that continuous LAC process improvements can be made, require LAC project teams to: (i) seek participant feedback as part of every project; (ii) develop conclusions considering this feedback and the teams experience with the project; (iii) track the benefits and costs of each project; and to (iv) provide recommendations to an appropriate provincial government/non-government body (like ILMB and JSC) that would be responsible for ensuring suggested improvements are conveyed to those involved in LAC projects.

2. How could the LAC steps be improved?

LAC Step 4: Inventory existing resource and social conditions

Recommendation #7: Ensure the project allows for an inventory of resource and social conditions to occur, with the support of a user survey, so that this can inform project participants as they develop standards.

LAC Step 6: Identify Opportunity Classes

Recommendation #8: Modify Step 6 in order that the focus is on reaching shared agreement on proposed allocation of opportunity classes, and rename the step accordingly i.e. "Proposed Opportunity Classes".

LAC Step 7: Identify Management Actions

Recommendation #9: Modify step 7 in the LAC process in order to encourage project participants to identify management actions that are both proactive (i.e. those needed to retain acceptable conditions) and reactive (i.e. triggered when standards are breached).

LAC Step 9: Implement Management Actions and Monitor Conditions

Recommendation #10: Clarify the project approval process at the outset; provide a clear commitment “in-principle” to project implementation in the early stages of the process so that participant’s have greater security in believing their efforts will be valued and acted on. In turn, this should generate greater participant participation and engagement levels.

Recommendation #11: That public involvement be an integral part of the entire process including project approval where: (i) public review and comment opportunities are provided so that interests not directly represented in the process have an ability to comment; and (ii) government-to-government First Nations consultation occurs to help ensure aboriginal interests and concerns are fully considered.

Recommendation #12: Promote implementation and monitoring as a partnership activity that involves commercial and public recreation stakeholders, First Nations and the provincial government.

3. Did the LAC process add value to an area with an existing approved recreation access and management plan (i.e. GBRAP)?

Recommendation #13: Undertake LAC planning projects in areas where local public recreation user groups and guided adventure tourism operators jointly agree, along with local agency staff, that the effort is indeed a priority for them and that they are committed to supporting it.

Recommendation #14: Prioritize LAC planning projects in areas where there are outstanding recreation management issues and/or potential conflicts, rather than areas with approved strategic recreation access and management plans in place.

4. How should areas be chosen elsewhere in BC for LAC projects based on experience in the pilot selection process?

Recommendation #15: ILMB regional planning staff should initially, and then in conjunction with local organizations, evaluate the need for LAC projects based on a risk assessment; this process should ideally involve the Inter-Agency Management Committee (IAMC).

Recommendation #16: Following Recommendation #15, ILMB should prioritize projects (with the assistance of provincial bodies such as JSC) in consideration of regional and local-level evaluations of recreation/ tourism priorities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction.....	9
Background regarding LAC.....	10
Overview of Pilot Projects	11
Recommendations based on the Pilot Projects	12

ACRONYMS

BC	British Columbia
GBRAC	Golden Backcountry Recreation Access Committee
GBRAP	Golden Backcountry Recreation Access Plan
ILMB	Integrated Land Management Bureau, MAL
JSC	BC Government and Tourism Industry Joint Steering Committee
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BC)
MOE	Ministry of Environment (BC)
MOFR	Ministry of Forests and Range (BC)
MTSA	Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Arts (BC)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to:

- Julie Chace (ILMB), Project Manager for the LAC Project, and previous Project Managers Tuan Bui and Trish Stirloff;
- Leah Malkinson, Anette Thingsted, and Diane Teterenko (ILMB) for chairing the Johnstone Strait LAC pilot;
- Sangita Sudan and Harry Mitchell (ILMB) for chairing the Golden/Windy Creek LAC pilot;
- Members of the Working Group for each pilot project, which included staff in various agencies, guided adventure tourism operators, public recreation and conservation organizations, and First Nations, who are acknowledged individually in the respective Status Reports for both pilots;
- The over 60 participants who attended various workshops in support of the pilot projects who are also acknowledged individually in the respective Status Reports for both pilots;
- First Nations representatives for their active involvement and contribution to the Johnstone Strait pilot;
- Members of the JSC LAC Steering Committee for their considerable efforts helping to launch this LAC Project and support for the pilots; and
- Dave Butler (JSC) and Gary Townsend (ILMB) for co-championing this LAC Project.



INTRODUCTION

Demand for commercial and self-guided recreation activities such as wilderness hiking, backcountry skiing, heli-skiing, snowmobiling and sea kayaking continues to increase in British Columbia (BC). The provincial government's goal to double tourism revenues by 2015 will be partially met by taking advantage of this demand from the general public as well as domestic and international tourists.

Increased demand and intensified use requires better management and protection of the resources as the quality of the recreation experience depends to some degree on the excellence of these resources – today and into the future. This objective led the BC Government and Tourism Industry Joint Steering Committee (JSC) to propose that the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) system be pilot tested in BC as a planning approach to better manage public and commercial recreation use on Crown land. The LAC system focuses on defining desired outcomes and managing recreation use impacts to maintain or attain desired resource and social conditions.

The JSC formed the LAC Steering Committee (a subcommittee of JSC) who developed a LAC Pilot Project Charter in 2006. The Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB), in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA), secured resources in 2007 to conduct two pilot projects: one in the Johnstone Strait area and one in the Golden/Windy Creek area.

The primary objectives¹ of the pilot project are:

- To test the utility of the LAC system for tourism and recreation management in BC; and
- Propose how LAC can be used in other areas of BC considering the lessons learned from the pilot projects.

Two LAC Pilot Working Groups consisting of commercial operators, public recreation interests, First Nations, agency staff and other interests were formed and Chair persons for each pilot were identified. The Working Group identified a number of individuals to invite to the pilot project workshops. Working Group meetings, targeted interviews with project participants and other support work complemented the workshops. The pilots were completed in February 2008 with the completion of

¹ Another objective was to provide LAC training material and training sessions in ILMB regions.

Status Reports for each area. The Status Reports and other project documents are posted on the ILMB LAC website <http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/rcsd/lac/index.html>

The purpose of this LAC Pilot Project Final Report is to provide conclusions and recommendations about how LAC could be used in other areas of BC considering the lessons learned from the two pilot projects.

BACKGROUND REGARDING LAC

The LAC system was designed in the mid-1980's to respond to increasing calls to establish a recreation "carrying capacity" particularly in designated wilderness areas, and on wild and scenic rivers in the US². Prior to LAC, with the dominance of applied fields of biology that often used the notion of carrying capacity to formulate strategies for managing animals, recreation managers adopted the notion of 'carrying capacity' as a means to address increasing levels of recreation on public lands. Despite the limited success of the search for what eventually came to be known as "magic numbers", managers continued to seek ways of limiting use. For a variety of reasons, limiting use did not achieve the goal of protecting resources and recreation experiences.

Research demonstrated that the relationship between use level and the amount of biophysical and social impact was complex, nonlinear, and mitigated by a number of intervening variables. They also noted that recreation use occurs in a dynamic ecological context as change in natural conditions was always occurring (regardless of the presence of recreation), and that changes in social conditions are also dynamic. The problem, as they saw it, was identifying the recreation-induced change and determining how much of that change was acceptable.

In response to these observations, the LAC system was developed and tested in the mid-1980's as an alternative approach to 'carrying capacity'. At the conceptual level, LAC was viewed as the amount of human-induced change due to recreation use that is acceptable. Because low amounts of recreational use can lead to disproportionately high amounts of impact, preventing impacts is not necessarily the issue, but managing them is. The central question addressed by LAC was, "How much impact is acceptable and what strategies should be taken to avoid unacceptable impacts?" This

² Adapted from *An Assessment of Frameworks Useful for Public Land Recreation Planning*. 2007. S.F. McCool, R.N. Clark and G. H. Stankey. USDA PNW-GTR-705.

refined the earlier ‘carrying capacity’ question from “How many is too many?” to understanding: “What is appropriate or acceptable? and for whom?”

At the practical level, to answer the LAC question, the following 9-step process was developed:

1. Identify issues & concerns
2. Define and describe a diversity of opportunity classes
3. Select indicators of resource and social conditions
4. Inventory existing resource and social conditions
5. Specify standards for resource and social conditions
6. Identify alternative opportunity class allocations
7. Identify management actions for each alternative
8. Evaluate and select a preferred opportunity class alternative
9. Implement management actions and monitor conditions

The question LAC seeks to answer are value laden (i.e. how much impact is acceptable) consequently the supporting steps in the process require a collaborative approach in order to be effective where public and commercial recreation users, First Nations, agency managers, and others work together in an effort to reach shared agreement. The involvement and dialogue among those affected by a decision leads to social learning about the various dimensions of that decision, which then tends to lead to an agreement and support on the ‘right’ decision to pursue.

OVERVIEW OF PILOT PROJECTS

Two very different pilot project areas were chosen by the LAC Steering Committee and ILMB to pilot test the LAC process in BC: Johnstone Strait and the Golden/Windy Creek area.

The Johnstone Strait area was selected as a pilot because of its reputation for sea kayaking associated with whale watching opportunities in the Strait. A mixture of tenured commercial operators and private groups use the area for sea kayaking and camping. There is growing concern over the type and amount of use of certain shorelines for campsites and the need for a system to better distribute sea kayaking camping and improve coordination of trip planning. There is relatively little guidance

for water-based recreation/tourism and camping in Johnstone Strait's existing land use plans. LAC planning was seen as a potential and practical way of involving a wide range of stakeholders in collaborative planning to address recreation management issues before they become untenable.

The second LAC pilot area, Golden/Windy Creek, was selected to test the application of LAC on an existing strategic recreation land use plan, the Golden Backcountry Recreation Access Plan (GBRAP). GBRAP was completed in 2002 after consensus based negotiations between recreation and public stakeholders, in order to address recreation access and management issues over the entire Golden timber supply area. The Windy Creek area supports backcountry motorized and non-motorized recreation during both the summer and winter. Commercial recreation activities include heli-skiing and heli-hiking, and public recreation activities include hiking, ATV use, snowmobiling and fishing.

The results stemming from the projects are described in the Status Reports prepared for each pilot area. The Status Reports describe how the pilots were undertaken, who participated, and results from each of the nine steps in the LAC process.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE PILOT PROJECTS

This section describes key conclusions and recommendations taking into account the lessons learned from both pilots, based on:

- Observations from the 'project team' (i.e. the co-chairs and consulting team) for each pilot with consideration given to planning experiences in general in BC; and
- Participant feedback obtained for each pilot area.

Conclusions and recommendations are drawn by addressing the following questions:

1. Did the LAC process provide a useful (i.e. effective, efficient and affordable) framework for recreation management?
2. How could the nine steps in LAC be improved for use in BC?
3. Did the LAC process add value to an area with an existing approved recreation access and management plan (i.e. GBRAP)?
4. How should areas be chosen elsewhere in BC for LAC projects based on experience in the pilot selection process?

1. Did the LAC process provide a useful (i.e. effective, efficient and affordable) framework for recreation management?

Nine-Step Process in General

Early in the project, the LAC system was described to pilot project participants, in order that they understand each of the LAC steps that subsequently guided delivery of each phase for both pilots. In general, the LAC system made sense to project participants; no one commented that the system (i.e. nine steps) seemed fundamentally flawed. Some participants pointed out that the LAC process is understandable given its clarity and structure. That said, some refinements are recommended to the steps in the LAC process in response to the second question.

Recommendation #1: The LAC system is fundamentally sound as a useful framework. It should be considered for use in addressing recreation access and management issues in BC in appropriate situations (i.e. see other recommendations below).

Project Area

In the Johnstone Strait LAC pilot, the project area included Crown land both inside and outside of parks and protected areas. Consequently, different agencies had responsibilities in different areas. Most LAC applications in the US are solely within one agency's jurisdiction which makes its application much simpler. Even on Crown lands outside of parks in BC, several resource agencies have jurisdictional responsibilities that address recreation; therefore there is a need for inter-agency support and commitment at the outset before a project is initiated.

On one hand, public and commercial recreationists typically want agencies to work together to provide seamless recreation management and communication regardless of agency jurisdiction. On the other hand, a project area involving several agencies further complicates the process. Several agencies working together will likely require a signed agreement by each of the parties. The benefits of a smaller project area involving fewer agencies may better enable a product to be delivered in a timely manner. These considerations should therefore be evaluated carefully before proposing a project area.

Collaborative Aspect

The Johnstone Strait LAC pilot brought commercial and public recreation stakeholders, First Nations and agency staff together for collaborative discussions about an area that all participants care deeply about. The LAC process, similar to other planning processes, allowed active networking and communication between participants; this often has immediate and enduring value. In the Golden/Windy Creek LAC pilot, most of the

participants had worked together for a number of years developing the GBRAP; therefore the value of networking at LAC workshops may not have been as important as it was in the Johnstone Strait pilot. That being said, there were a few attendees who had not been involved in the development of GBRAP; for these people the opportunity to learn about GBRAP and the people that put it together had value.

LAC has a proven ability to significantly enhance networking and communication among participants. LAC should be considered in those situations where potential or real conflict between a diversity of interests would benefit from the collaborative nature of the process. Every effort should be made to engage First Nations and a broad a range of stakeholders to help ensure a diverse range of viewpoints are provided. If significant conflict and/or fundamentally different value sets exist, LAC (like other processes) needs effective facilitation support.

Recommendation #2: The LAC system can be used to enhance networking and communication amongst recreational stakeholders, First Nations, government agencies and other interests, particularly in areas where existing or potential conflicts are significant.

Despite efforts to engage all the key players in the Golden/Windy Creek pilot, some participants perceived a distinct bias towards the commercial recreation side; this was mostly due to the fact that MTSA was a lead agency (and commercial recreation is part of their mandate). Although efforts were made to engage a broad stakeholder group, participant feedback suggested that hunters, anglers, guide-outfitters, motorized public users (snowmobilers, ATVers), trappers with an intimate knowledge of the area also be involved.

In general several key participants were involved in the pilot projects. Both pilots had participation from a variety of public and commercial recreation interests, conservation interests, and provincial government agencies.

First Nations actively participated in the Johnstone Strait pilot project, which added significantly to the overall process. The relationship and value of the process given the status of treaty negotiations in the area, however, were not fully considered.

Although both the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council and Ktunaxa Nation Council have asserted territories that include the Golden/Windy Creek, the area is very remote and far from where they live. Despite efforts to involve First Nations, they chose not to attend the workshops or provide review comments on draft documents. However they were included in all communications sent out throughout the process.

In an important era of “New Relationships”, determining First Nations support for a potential LAC project is a vital consideration. This is particularly so where First Nations are actively involved in treaty negotiations to help ensure that a LAC project is designed to support, and to not interfere with, those negotiations.

In the Johnstone Strait area, a key draw for sea kayakers is whale watching. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) had developed whale watching guidelines to guide boaters’, including sea kayakers’, behaviour in order that their activities minimally impacted whales. Participants generally agreed that adhering to the guidelines were vital in order to protect whales in the area and maintain experiential quality for tourists and recreationists. Participants would have liked DFO staff actively involved in the pilot, but despite attempts to get them involved they unfortunately did not participate.

Local government participated in both pilots; however in the Johnstone Strait pilot, they only participated initially. Local government involvement is generally viewed as important and beneficial to the process. It is important to have local government involved that have a good sense of the land under the LAC process.

Despite efforts to engage all key recreation interests in the Golden/Windy Creek pilot, some groups choose not to be involved. Feedback from one participant expressed concern about a perceived bias towards the commercial recreation side. This may have in part been caused by the JSC origins of the project and/or the lack of participation by some public recreation interests.

The LAC Steering Committee signed a Project Charter in support of the pilot projects. However support from key local participants in both projects did not occur until after the pilots commenced. This issue is further discussed in the context of the Golden/Windy Creek pilot under the third question.

Recommendation #3a: Government-to-government First Nations consultation is needed to determine if First Nations supports an LAC process if appropriately designed to address their interests and concerns.

#3b: With 3a in mind, contact key local stakeholders and agency staff (federal, provincial, local as appropriate) before making a decision whether to proceed with a project since broad representation is crucial to the success of an LAC project.

This may involve the preparation of a protocol agreement with First Nations, local government, and the provincial government on how each party will work together should the LAC project proceed. For example, for both pilot projects, First Nations and local government were invited to be on the Working Groups that helped support the project under the leadership of the ILMB chair.

Timeframe to complete LAC

General feedback regarding duration of the projects was that the pilot timeline was too short to adequately test the nine LAC steps. The first workshop for each Pilot occurred in June 2007 when project participants introduced themselves, were briefed on the LAC process, and then went on to identify local issues (step 1). The pilots ended in February 2008 with the completion of Status Reports. Participants considered the 9-month long process to be rushed where all LAC steps were intended to be addressed; they suggested more time be made available.

One of the problems faced by participants was the crunched timing of participants' availability. Given BC's varied and distinct seasons, both the public recreationists and guided adventure tourism operators had limited availability to attend workshops and provide feedback on documents. This was particularly true for guided adventure tourism operators in the Golden/Windy Creek area, as a good portion of each year is dedicated to providing services for their clients.

Options to address this issue include:

- Extend the timeline to complete an LAC process to 2-years similar to other planning projects in BC. The downsides of this however is that it prolongs the process when participants are anxious to reach solutions and it forces participants, including government, to a longer process when they may not be prepared to do so.
- Target a one-year completion from the start of the first workshop but structure the process so that when participants are engaged that more is accomplished. For example, by having multi-day workshops (instead of the ½ to one days allowed for the pilots), which are supported by more information gathering (e.g. user surveys, inventory) between workshops. This option may involve paying non-government and First Nations participants to attend workshops and review materials, given the impact on their time.
- Ensuring that the agencies involved provide up-to-date inventories, including user surveys, before the process begins. This means that when agencies initiate the process with First Nations and the public, that the process won't be slowed down by having to undertake or compile key inventory information.

Each of the options involves more funds and time to complete the LAC project than was available for the two pilot projects.

Recommendation #4: The LAC process should be at least a one-year commitment,

initiating with the first workshop, which is:

- adequately supported by participants and government in multi-day workshops, and
- where needed information is compiled ahead of time (e.g. inventory)

Field trip

In the Johnstone Strait pilot, a field trip was arranged so that members of the Working Group (including First Nations), could see the area first-hand. Members of the Working Group who knew the area well took the opportunity to inform other members during the tour of key issues, observations, solutions that had or had not worked. The field trip not only helped ensure a better understanding of the area, but it fostered a positive bond and respect among Working Group members for their interests and values. Due to the remote nature of the LAC pilot in Golden, a field trip was not undertaken.

Recommendation #5: Support LAC projects with a field trip so that participants can see the area first hand and learn about key issues. A benefit of this is strengthened participant's capacity and willingness to address difficult issues and work collaboratively.

Continuous improvement

For both pilot projects, participants were provided a series of questions that actively sought their feedback. This was an important part of the two pilots since 'lessons learned' was a key project objective should LAC be used in other parts of the province. Most of the feedback, however, occurred as part of an agenda item at the last workshop that supported the Johnstone Strait pilot. Efforts to solicit post-workshop feedback by e-mail only resulted in a few replies. The feedback that was received was discussed by the project team (i.e. pilot project chairs and the consultants), along with other observations, to help arrive at the recommendations for improvement included in this report.

The feedback from the two pilots, as useful as it has been, should not stop the learning process. Participant feedback should be sought after every LAC project, and that feedback reviewed by the project team with key findings channeled to an on-going group, like ILMB and JSC, so that improvements can be continually made.

Recommendation #6: In order that continuous LAC process improvements can be made, require LAC project teams to:

- seek participant feedback as part of every project;

- develop conclusions considering this feedback and the team’s experience with the project;
- track the benefits and costs of each project; and to
- provide recommendations to an appropriate provincial government/non-government body (like ILMB and JSC) that would be responsible for ensuring suggested improvements are conveyed to those involved in LAC projects.

2. How could the LAC steps be improved?

LAC Step 4: Inventory existing resource and social conditions

In the LAC process, issues (Step 1) and indicators that addressed the issues (Step 3) are identified. Existing resource and social conditions are inventoried (step 4) using the indicators so that baseline information is provided to project participants. Next, standards are specified (step 5) to establish the ‘limits of acceptable change’ for a particular opportunity class or project area.

For both pilots, the second workshop in the fall of 2007 focused on confirming indicators following targeted surveys with project participants. There was insufficient time or resources, however, to actually inventory conditions either because new information was required or the collation of any relevant existing information would take considerable time.³

In the Johnstone Strait pilot, a complementary sea kayaking survey was sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and undertaken by Simon Fraser University. The survey questions were in part designed to address some of the issues raised in the first workshop. However, the results of the survey could not be collated in time to complete step 4 where applicable (e.g. results are expected in April or May of 2008), and the survey itself was designed prior to an agreement reached on indicators. That said the survey was considered a highly valuable source of information



The four major LAC components are addressed using nine action steps:

1. Identify issues and concerns;
2. Define opportunity classes;
3. Identify indicators of resource and social conditions;
4. Inventory existing conditions;
5. Specify standards;
6. Identify opportunity classes;
7. Identify management actions;
8. Allocate opportunity classes; and
9. Implement and monitor.

³ For example, issues (step 1) were identified in the first workshop in June 2007 with a need to confirm standards (step 5) where possible in the second workshop in the fall 2007, leaving only 3-4 months to address steps 2-4 including the inventory.

that should help inform recreation management in the pilot area as it was based on the perceptions and activities of both guided and self-guided sea kayakers.

Recommendation #7: Ensure the project allows for an inventory of resource and social conditions to occur, with the support of a user survey, so that this can inform project participants as they develop standards.

LAC Step 5: Specify Standards for Resource and Social Conditions

As noted above, there was insufficient opportunity to inventory existing resource and social conditions using the indicators to inform and assist project participants in the development of standards. As a consequence, standards often had to be generally worded (e.g. 10 % increase from ‘benchmark’ conditions) since actual benchmarks were often not known. In a few (but not all) cases, in the absence of baseline information, determining standards was like reaching for ‘magic numbers’ (i.e. threshold values) without a clear sense of their justification – a criticism ironically made of the ‘carrying capacity’ approach with respect to determining maximum use levels.

One way to address this step in the absence of baseline information is to note that such standards are a ‘first approximation’ that need to be refined once existing conditions become known. Recommendation #7 above also addresses this issue.

A minor issue is the use of the term ‘standard’ as normal usage of the word is related to something that is acceptable. “Standards” in LAC serve to define the ‘limits of acceptable change’; they are the maximum permissible conditions that will be allowed before management actions are taken and not necessarily objectives or desirable conditions. In BC we sometimes think of LAC ‘standards’ as ‘thresholds’ of acceptability rather than ‘standards’. Despite some confusion regarding the term, with careful explanation, usage of the term ‘standard’ was not believed to be an obstacle in either pilot area. Changing the term could cause greater confusion given the importance of LAC practitioners to communicate with one another, and the possibility that participants involved in an “LAC” process will examine other LAC projects. Therefore no recommendation is provided to change the term ‘standard’.

LAC Step 6: Identify Opportunity Classes

In the original LAC process design, participants were requested to identify alternative Opportunity Class allocations in step 6. In contrast, the LAC pilot projects took advantage of BC’s experience in land use planning, which suggests that identifying and evaluating alternative resource management zone (RMZ) allocations can be

counterproductive when using a collaborative approach. Rather, the approach taken successfully in BC is to have planning tables work together to converge on a desired allocation that all participants can support. Part of the reason for moving toward shared agreement, and not identifying alternative allocations, is to prevent participants from taking strong positions for a particular alternative which may impact negotiations aimed at reaching consensus. For land use plans, normally a proposed allocation is negotiated, and then the socio-economic and environmental impacts are assessed before the planning table recommends a final allocation.

In Step 2, the LAC pilots initially addressed the opportunity classes in broad conceptual terms, by making distinctions based on existing and desired recreation opportunities and experiences. For example, in the Johnstone Strait pilot the preferred set of opportunity classes reflects a distinction between a) camping opportunities along the foreshore, and b) recreation opportunities on the open water, where sea kayaking occurs.

In Step 6, the Opportunity Classes were further refined based on stakeholder input received during the targeted survey and Workshop #2. In the Johnstone Strait pilot, the final proposed set of Opportunity Classes was described for camping, but there was not sufficient time to allocate the classes within the area (Step 8). In the Golden/Windy Creek area, the existing GBRAP zones were used as LAC opportunity classes, so no further work was done on the allocation process. Therefore, nothing in either pilot allowed any lessons to be learned for the sixth LAC step.

That said BC has considerable experience with land use planning throughout the province with largely successful outcomes, so it is recommended that this step in the LAC process be modified for use in BC. In both pilots, based on BC's experience in land use planning, it was suggested that this step be modified and no participants objected to that change.

Recommendation #8: Modify Step 6 in order that the focus is on reaching shared agreement on proposed allocation of opportunity classes, and rename the step accordingly i.e. "Proposed Opportunity Classes".

The impacts of the proposed opportunity class allocations can be reviewed in light of the needed management actions in step 7 before a final allocation is recommended in step 8.

In the Johnstone Strait pilot, there was some confusion about whether proposed opportunity classes would include potentially allocated campsites for commercial and public use. It is important to be clear from the beginning if the LAC process is intended to help address the allocation issue, or if the outcome of defining opportunity classes is intended for use by a post-LAC process that deals with 'allocation' issues.

LAC Step 7: Identify Management Actions

In the context of LAC, management actions are the steps that need to be taken to achieve acceptable conditions, if standards are breached. A suite of actions is typically identified, often beginning with education and information first and leading to progressively more challenging actions such as regulation and enforcement if needed to attain acceptable conditions.

In both pilots, project participants identified a number of important proactive actions even where conditions were considered acceptable, as a way of ensuring that those conditions are retained. There was a general sense that it would be better to prevent conditions from deteriorating to potentially unacceptable levels.

Recommendation #9: Modify step 7 in the LAC process in order to encourage project participants to identify management actions that are both proactive (i.e. those needed to retain acceptable conditions) and reactive (i.e. triggered when standards are breached).

LAC Step 8: Allocate Opportunity Classes

As noted in Step 6 above, there was insufficient time in the Johnstone Strait pilot for either step 6 or 8 to be addressed. Recommendation #4 above is intended to help ensure there is sufficient and effective use of participant time so that these key steps in the LAC process can be addressed. As noted earlier, if significant conflict and/or fundamentally different value sets become apparent, LAC (like other processes) needs effective facilitation support.

LAC Step 9: Implement Management Actions and Monitor Conditions

Participants were informed early in both LAC pilots that the results of the pilots may or may not be adopted by government. If local planning committees and government considered adopting the results of the pilot projects, opportunities for public review and comment and First Nations consultation would be needed before government could consider approving and implementing project recommendations.

Due to the nature of pilot testing, no prior commitment was made to implementing the recommendations. Although this was a necessary aspect of the LAC Pilot Project, some project participants were at times confused about why they should attend; others were concerned that the time and effort they put into the pilot might not lead to anything substantial. A number of project participants believed that plan implementation needed to be articulated at the outset so that it was clear what would happen with the results of their efforts.

Many participants have had experiences with processes that they believe did not result in real positive change. There is a sense of process ‘fatigue’ particularly among non-government participants who volunteer their time. Calling a project a ‘pilot’ can stigmatize a process as it seems to imply it’s just a test. At times it is hard to generate commitment on the part of participants in the absence of assurances that their efforts will lead to improvements.

Recommendation #10: Clarify the project approval process at the outset; provide a clear commitment “in-principle” to project implementation in the early stages of the process so that participant’s have greater security in believing their efforts will be valued and acted on. In turn, this should generate greater participant participation and engagement levels.

Commitment to implement any LAC process outcomes should be made “in-principle” subject to: public review and comment; First Nations consultation; funding availability (should recommendations be made that require additional resources); and other key caveats that may be applicable to a particular project area. It is important that those directly involved in the process know these things before decisions are made:

- those not directly involved (i.e. general public, other stakeholders) will have an opportunity to review the outcomes and that
- government has a duty to consult with First Nations.

The implementation steps in terms of overall project approval should be made clear at the outset, with more detailed implementation steps identified during the LAC process (such as the monitoring plan) itself left to project participants.

Recommendation #11: That public involvement be an integral part of the entire process including project approval where:

- Public review and comment opportunities are provided so that interests not directly represented in the process have an ability to comment; and
- Government-to-government First Nations consultation occurs to help ensure aboriginal interests and concerns are fully considered.

When discussing implementation and the monitoring plan in the pilot projects, there was a tendency for participants (including agency staff) to think about government’s role, rather than to gravitate to partnership role where stakeholders, First Nations and government work together to support implementation and monitoring. First Nations, in

particular, can play a key role to help ensure cultural heritage values are not impacted by recreation activities such as the removal of artifacts that was raised as major concern in the Johnstone Strait pilot.

Recommendation #12: Promote implementation and monitoring as a partnership activity that involves commercial and public recreation stakeholders, First Nations and the provincial government.

Monitoring of indicators to assess if standards are breached is integral to the LAC process and therefore project implementation. There needs to be a clear commitment by agencies to support a partnership approach to monitoring for the process to be effective.

3. Did the LAC process add value to an area with an existing approved recreation access and management plan (i.e. GBRAP)?

The Golden Backcountry Recreation Access Plan (GBRAP) was initiated in 1999 and approved by government in 2002. The plan addresses public and commercial recreation use in order to protect valuable recreation experiences, promote and manage tourism (by increasing certainty for investment of public and commercial recreation activities), and minimize wildlife impacts. GBRAP provides direction on both ground and aerial public and commercial recreation access for summer and winter use. The Plan provides direction to support decision-making regarding:

- Guided Adventure Tourism tenures and
- Public recreation use.

To assist in monitoring and revision of GBRAP, a Golden Backcountry Recreation Advisory Committee (GBRAC) was formed from the stakeholder groups involved in creating GBRAP. When GBRAC was informed that ILMB and the LAC Steering Committee had decided to make the Windy Creek area an LAC pilot project area, concern was raised about how the GBRAP plan would relate to the LAC project. GBRAC members were worried that the LAC project might undo the strategic balance reached in GBRAP that took several years of effort to achieve. An e-mail was therefore prepared by the ILMB to clarify linkages for GBRAC (Box A). As a consequence the primary focus of this LAC pilot was to develop indicators, standards and management actions that would assist implementation of GBRAP in the Windy Creek area.

GBRAC is working to promote GBRAP implementation; however limited funds make it difficult to provide maps, brochures and signs needed to raise awareness about the plan to local residents and area visitors. In addition, prior to the announcement of the LAC pilot in Windy Creek area, GBRAC was actively engaging the public in a review of a proposed amendment to the plan in a highly used area close to the community of Golden. In contrast, the remote Windy Creek area experiences relatively low levels of public use and therefore public awareness.

Many members of GBRAC volunteer their time to support GBRAP implementation; they had spent considerable time already in the development of GBRAP. There is limited capacity on the part of volunteers to be continuously engaged in planning-related processes; excessive demands on their time can result in volunteer 'burn-out'. Consequently, it is important to select recreation management projects in areas where local recreation planning tables, if formed (like GBRAC), determine or agree there is a real need; their support and involvement is critical to the success of the project.

Although GBRAC was not approached to determine the need for an LAC pilot in the Windy Creek area, with the linkages made clear that the strategic decisions made in GBRAP would not be re-visited, they kindly volunteered time to attend workshops, being interviewed, and reviewing draft material stemming from the pilot. The project team for the pilot are extremely appreciative of the time they were able to spare.

Box A - ILMB Email to GBRAC Members

To be clear, LAC will be tested using existing GBRAP zonations and objectives while providing indicators and standards for the attainment of those objectives.

In other words, the GBRAP broadly fulfills the first two steps of the LAC process - the identification of area issues and concerns and definition and description of opportunity zones. The intent of the LAC study is to explore opportunities to better define existing plan zonations and to promote effective implementation and monitoring through the use of indicators and standards.

Recommendation #13: Undertake LAC planning projects in areas where local public recreation user groups and guided adventure tourism operators jointly agree, along with local agency staff, that the effort is indeed a priority for them and that they are committed to supporting it.

Recommendation #14: Prioritize LAC planning projects in areas where there are outstanding recreation management issues and/or potential conflicts, rather than areas with approved strategic recreation access and management plans in place.

Although the provision of indicators, standards and management actions can add value in most situations, there are likely many areas in the province without strategic recreation guidance where significant issues need to be more urgently addressed. For more discussion on how areas could be chosen, see discussion and recommendations under section 4 below.

4. How should areas be chosen elsewhere in BC for LAC projects based on experience in the pilot selection process?

Consistent with the lessons learned from the pilots and ILMB's New Directions for planning⁴, it is recommended that ILMB regional planning staff, in consultation with other agencies such as MTSA, ILMB adventure tourism staff and MOE in the region, undertake a review of priorities for LAC projects considering the guidance below. Consistent with recommendation #3, this internal review can then be shared with First Nations to determine if a project could be designed to address their interests and concerns. Local commercial operators and recreation user groups, local government, and other interests should then be contacted to determine whether there is agreement on the need for an LAC process in their local area.

Local level assessments regarding need for LAC projects should be guided by risk management principles that consist of two elements:

⁴ A New Direction for Strategic Land Use Planning in BC.
http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/lup/policies_guides/new_direction/index.html

- (1) **Sensitivity due to likelihood of loss or damage** occurring to recreation/tourism opportunities and/or that recreation/tourism use might impact other values (e.g. sensitivity of area to impacts on environmental and cultural heritage values, or desired opportunities) given any applicable guidance or direction in land use plans; and
- (2) **Significance (or magnitude) of the consequences** should the loss or damage occur (e.g. significance of the recreation/tourism opportunities, or the environmental and cultural/heritage values that could be impacted by use).

	High sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Low sensitivity
Very High significance	1	1	2
High significance	1	2	3
Moderate significance	2	3	4
Low significance	3	4	4

Using these two criteria, four categories emerge to help guide priorities for selection:

- 1 High Priority – areas that most require LAC projects
- 2 Medium Priority – areas that should have LAC projects
- 3 Low Priority – areas where LAC projects may be needed
- 4 Unlikely – areas where LAC projects may not be needed

ILMB can then ‘roll-up’ local level determinations of the need for LAC projects and prioritize areas for funding consideration with input from existing provincial government/stakeholder groups such as JSC and other organizations (e.g. Outdoor Recreation Council to get a public recreation perspective, and MOE from an environment/park perspective). This would help ensure that provincial level organizations could influence final project selection decisions and that local assessments of need (e.g. using above matrix) would be reasonably similar from region to region.

Recommendation #15: ILMB regional planning staff should initially, and then in conjunction with local organizations, evaluate the need for LAC projects based on a risk assessment; this process should ideally involve the Inter-Agency Management Committee (IAMC).

Recommendation #16: Following Recommendation #15, ILMB should prioritize projects (with the assistance of provincial bodies such as JSC) in consideration of regional and local-level evaluations of recreation/ tourism priorities.