

4.4 Description of Inventory and Suitability Mapping

No up-to-date or comprehensive information base on tourism features or operators in the Shuswap region existed prior to this project, and the first step was therefore to compile the required data, both for mapping purposes and to obtain a better understanding of the nature of the tourism sector in the Shuswap region. A detailed **inventory** of tourism operators, and tourism features and facilities was carried out in October to December 2001. Sources of data included (but are not limited to):

- 1995 Okanagan/Thompson Tourism Resource Inventory;
- LRMP datasets;
- published recreation/tourism guides and other secondary sources;
- Ministry of Forests (data and data review with Recreation Officer); and
- interviews with selected industry sources.

The information was mapped onto 1:20,000 TRIM maps of the Shuswap region, to provide a basis for tourism suitability mapping. Tourism features on the base maps include points (e.g. viewpoints, cultural sites), lines (trails, rivers) and polygons (lakes, areas) of importance to tourism operations.

The objective of **suitability mapping** is to identify tourism opportunities that presently exist or have potential to be developed, taking into account the various physical, economic, social, planning and other constraints that will have a bearing on development. The primary sources of information for this assessment are:

- information from prior maps and research undertaken by the Ministry of Forests (e.g., features, suitability), BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and other provincial government agencies;
- published documents; and,
- input and comments from successful tourism operators, recreation organizations, and other informed sources regarding constraints and locations favourable for a specific activity or product.

The next step in the methodology is to identify, for each of the recreation products, those areas that can be classified as **low**, **medium** or **high** suitability for recreation. This assessment takes into account several criteria:

- general biogeoclimatic overview (alpine? subalpine? forest type?);
- presence of suitable features (glaciers, rivers, lakes, wildlife, and heritage among others);
- significance of the features (What is the quality of the features? Are there feature groupings? Are they unique? Are they truly significant to the opportunity being identified?);
- biophysical aspects (slope, aspect, steepness, amount of forest cover); and,

- the presence of supporting resources (trails, roads, huts, lodges, put in and pull out sites, etc.).

Low suitability includes all areas exhibiting the general biogeoclimatic and suitable feature attributes required for an activity or product. **Medium suitability** is defined as areas with suitable features and the biophysical features that heighten the importance of an area for a particular activity or product. **High suitability** areas are determined by where the significant features and supportive resources are.

The final step in suitability mapping is to determine environmental and cultural constraints and how they relate to the areas identified. For the purposes of this analysis, if the constraint was deemed to be significant enough (at the scale of the mapping) then an area may be reduced in significance or eliminated.