

The Perceived Implications of an Outsourcing Model on Governance within British Columbia Provincial Parks in Canada: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract Good governance is of paramount importance to the success of parks and protected areas. This research utilized a questionnaire for 10 principles of governance to evaluate the outsourcing model used by British Columbia Provincial Parks, where profit-making corporations provide all front country visitor services. A total of 246 respondents representing five stakeholder groups evaluated the model according to each principle, using an online survey. Principal component analysis resulted in two of the 10 principles (equity and effectiveness) each being split into two categories, leading to 12 governance principles. Five of the 12 criteria received scores towards good governance: effectiveness outcome; equity general; strategic vision; responsiveness; and effectiveness process. One criterion, public participation, was on the neutral point. Six criteria received scores below neutral, more towards weak governance: transparency; rule of law; accountability; efficiency; consensus orientation; and, equity finance. The five stakeholder groups differed significantly on 10 of the 12 principles ($P < .05$). The 2 exceptions were for efficiency and effectiveness process. Seven of the 12 criteria followed a pattern wherein government employees and contractors reported positive scores, visitors and representatives of NGOs reported more negative scores, and nearby residents reported mid-range scores. Three criteria had government employees and contractors reporting the most positive scores, residents and visitors the most negative scores, and NGO respondents reporting mid-range scores. This

research found evidence that perceptions of governance related to this outsourcing model differed significantly amongst various constituent groups.

Keywords Governance · Parks · Protected areas · Stakeholders · Profit-making management · Visitor services · Tourism · British Columbia

Introduction

Protected area planning and management involves two fields; governance and management. Governance deals with how social organizations make important decisions, involve others in the process, and render account (Graham and others 2003). Good governance is of paramount importance to the survival and success of parks and protected areas in achieving the dual mandate of conservation and recreation (Dearden and others 2005). Planning develops long-term goals and management implements those goals. Management is an activity designed to attain organizational goals using people, resources, work, and systems (Worboys and Winkler 2006). All planning and all management occurs within the larger framework created by governance approaches. Therefore, effective conservation as well as recreation planning and management can only occur within the context of appropriate governance. In recent years there has been a concerted effort to develop and implement management effectiveness processes (Hockings 2003; Hockings and others 2000, 2006a, b). However, until recently there has been a comparative paucity of literature on protected area governance (Hannah 2006). There is little literature that documents the views of various stakeholder groups on the governance inherent within parks and protected area management.

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Theoretical Context

Weiss (2000) outlines the evolution of the concepts underlying governance and provides a review of the definitions available. Applying governance concepts in an applied situation requires the use of standard definitions and criteria. The typologies underlying governance for protected areas have been developed through the work of Glover and Burton (1998), Graham and others (2003), More (2005), and Borrini-Feyerabend and others (2006). The most complete treatment of the concept of governance in relation to parks and protected areas is that of Graham and others, produced for the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) as a contribution to the fifth World Parks Congress held in 2003. Their work followed the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) list of good governance characteristics (UNDP 1997) and therefore, is referred to as the UNDP–WCPA approach.

The UNDP–WCPA approach contains 10 criteria within 5 categories (Table 1). The category of legitimacy and voice includes *public participation* and *consensus in decision-making*. Public participation means that potentially all people have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through institutions that represent their interests. Consensus-oriented decision-making is the ability for differing interests to reach a consensus on the best interests of the overall group. An overall *strategic vision* towards decision-making involves looking constructively towards the future, with consideration of the historical, cultural and social complexities of each situation. Performance involves three important governance criteria: *responsiveness* to stakeholders, as well as *effectiveness* and *efficiency* of operations. Responsiveness occurs when institutions and processes serve stakeholders using a proactive manner regarding complaints and public criticisms. Effectiveness involves the capacity to realize organizational objectives. Efficiency refers to making the best use of resources. It is

Table 1 Governance criteria

Combined categories	Basic governance principles
1. Legitimacy and voice	1. Public participation 2. Consensus orientation
2. Direction	3. Strategic vision
3. Performance	4. Responsiveness to stakeholders 5. Effectiveness 6. Efficiency
4. Accountability	7. Accountability to the public and stakeholders 8. Transparency
5. Fairness	9. Equity 10. Rule of law

the capability of acting or producing effectively with a minimum amount or quantity of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort (UNDP 1997; Graham and others 2003; Eagles 2008, 2009).

The accountability category contains *accountability* and *transparency* to stakeholders. Accountability is the requirement that officials answer to stakeholders about the disposal of their powers and duties, act on criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure, incompetence or deceit. Transparency is the sharing of information and acting in an open manner. Fairness deals with *equity* amongst stakeholders and the overall application of the *rule of law*. Equity is just treatment, requiring that similar cases are treated in similar ways. Application of the rule of law refers to legal frameworks being fair and enforced impartially (UNDP 1997; Graham and others 2003; Eagles 2008, 2009). These principles and the associated criteria are widely accepted (Weiss 2000). Graham and others (2003) note that different cultural contexts should be taken into account.

Inherent within this UNDP–WCPA approach is the concept of good governance (Weiss 2000), whereby efforts are made to ensure that actual practice fits the accepted criteria. The UNDP Governance criteria have been used in many analyses of natural resource management, including water management (Sokhem and Sunada 2000), forest management (Agrawal and others 2008), and parks (Shipley and Kovacs 2005; Hayes 2006). Hannah (2006) maintains that an assessment of governance in parks and protected areas is generally lacking. Clark and others (2008) call for more understanding of the “new policies and more diverse, and often complex, governance arrangements” (p. 226). Eagles (2009) used the literature to compare the most commonly-used management models for visitor and tourism management in parks and protected areas according to the IUCN–WCPA governance criteria.

To date, the parks governance literature has not discussed the views on governance held by the members of various stakeholder groups, although research of this type has been conducted in the broader recreation management literature (e.g. Wicks and Crompton 1987). Given the differences amongst the most commonly-used management models, it would be worthwhile to explore these views with each model.

Applied Context

Canada has 10 provincial park agencies, three federal protected area agencies, three territorial agencies, and several regional park agencies. Across the country, many different management models have been adopted by the various governments. Four commonly used management models are: (1) the National Park Model; (2) the Parastatal

Model; (3) the Public and Non-Profit Combination Model; and (4) the Public and For-Profit Combination Model (Eagles 2008, 2009). The *public and for-profit combination model* has government ownership of all resources and management undertaken by a combination of public and for-profit private organizations. This model typically sees finance through a combination of government grants and tourism fees. This model is used for British Columbia Provincial Parks and the BC Parks Agency as the overall manager (Eagles 2008, 2009). In British Columbia, all front country visitor services are provided by for-profit, private corporations (Eagles 2008, 2009; McCutcheon 2009).

A research effort is currently undertaking the evaluation of several of these management models according to the UNDP–WCPA governance criteria. This article reports on an evaluation of the *public and for-profit combination model* as used by British Columbia Provincial Parks.

By 1989, the British Columbia Government had fully shifted from a *national park management model* to one whereby park land was owned by the government, but front-country recreation services were provided by for-profit corporations, a *public and for-profit combination model* (FORUM Consulting Group Ltd 2008). These corporations operate under service contracts detailing their rights and responsibilities. The BC Parks Agency focuses its efforts on ecological and resource management and on monitoring the private contractors. The BC parks management structure is unique in Canada since the members of the public visiting parks typically only come into contact with employees of the contractors. Little public contact is made with the BC park agency directly, except for those staff responsible for law enforcement, planning, and ecological management. The contractors operate the campgrounds, provide information, undertake facility maintenance, do routine site management, and offer interpretation programs (Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks 1996). They charge and retain all entrance and camping fees. In most cases, contractors also receive financial subsidies from the provincial government. This assistance takes the form of deficiency payments, which make up the difference between the money received by the contractors from tourism fees and charges and the costs of offering the services. In this arrangement, all prices are set by BC Parks and the contractors' businesses are not expected to obtain cost recovery (Ministry of Environment 2008).

The change from a *national park management model* to the *public and for-profit combination model* for BC Provincial Parks was done in response to decreased government appropriations and a desire to improve financial efficiency. In the early 1990s, an internal park agency discussion article outlined the many advantages and better capabilities of the commercial sector in providing park recreational services compared to the BC Parks Agency

itself. Recommendations included contracting out basic services (facilities maintenance, garbage collection, fee collection, security, safety, and public relations) and enhanced services (firewood provision, visitor programs, transportation, guiding, and food and accommodation) for which user fees could easily be charged (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division 1983). The discussion article cautioned that BC Parks should retain a regulatory control to ensure overall management control. Conservation efforts, such as research activity, ranger patrols, resource management, and other non-visitor services would continue to be operated and funded by the government through BC Parks and their employees (Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing 1986). By 1989 all park maintenance and operations were being delivered by contractors (FORUM Consulting Group Ltd 2008). Cavers (2004) wrote, "the shift in orientation reflects a desire within BC Parks to separate which services were of public benefit and which were for private gain" (p. 22).

After the privatization of the public recreation services in the provincial parks, the total number and area of parks and protected areas increased while the BC Parks staff and budget decreased (Cavers 2004). From 1991 to 2000, the NDP Provincial Government doubled the size of protected areas in British Columbia to reach 12% of the provincial land base (Ministry of Environment 2008). As of December 2008, British Columbia had 13.5 million hectares of protected land, representing 14.3% of the province in 972 parks (BC Parks 2009). British Columbia consistently reports the second highest visitation level for all park systems in Canada, only behind national parks. Total visitation to BC Parks was over 19,000,000 visits in 2006 (BC Parks 2009). Unfortunately, BC Parks has no publicly available documents regarding the definitions and approaches used for visitor monitoring. However, discussions with knowledgeable personnel led the authors to understand that this high visitation level includes park visitors, as well as entrants that drive through some of the parks on highways that either traverse the parks or serve as main access routes to the parks. An entrant is a person who visits for any reason, including recreation, employment, travel through, and resource extraction. A visitor is a person who visits the lands and waters of a park or protected area for purposes mandated for the area (Hornback and Eagles 1999). Therefore, this visitor use figure is almost certainly inflated by the inclusion of entrants, a figure that normally is larger than that of visitors.

For the year 2007–2008, BC Parks had 220 contracts with 31 private contractors, known as Park Facility Operators (PFOs) (BC Parks 2008a). Most PFOs manage park facilities and services at several parks in a specific area, within a contract arrangement known as a bundle. Twenty two contractors grouped together to be represented by the

Park Facility Operators' Society of BC (BC Society of Park Facility Operators 2008). For the 2008/2009 fiscal year, 30 of the contractors were to receive deficiency payments, and one was to pay the government since high earnings were expected (BC Parks 2008b). The total amount of money paid by the government to the PFOs was budgeted to be \$4,549,989.00 (BC Parks 2008c). It is worthy of note that only 220 parks have PFOs, leaving 673 without such operators. Presumably, these parks have no front country visitor facilities and therefore, no facility managers. What programs and facilities that do occur are managed by BC Parks' staff members.

Parks and protected areas typically have a large number of stakeholder groups. Eagles and others (2002) identified 22 groups that have a direct interest in park and tourism management. Within BC Parks, five major stakeholder groups were deemed to have a key role and interest in the governance of the management model. These stakeholders include: (1) BC Parks' staff; (2) private contractors associated with the park; (3) non-government organizations; (4) the park visitors; and, (5) individuals within the local communities in the vicinity of the parks. The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of the governance of the BC Provincial Parks' management model within and amongst the five different stakeholder groups in order to understand their views of this governance model. Other groups, such as tourism operators and aboriginal groups were not specifically included in this study due to the high cost associated with contacting them.

Methods

The research team developed a survey instrument based on the 10 principles of governance found within the UNDP–WCPA approach. Public participation questions came from Charmley and Engelbert (2005), Rowe and others (2004), and Wang (2001). Consensus orientation questions were based on DeHoog and others (1990), Hornsby and others (1994), and Jones. (1986). Accountability questions came from Kluvers (2003), Schacter (2003), and Wang (2002). Transparency questions were based on Bellver and Kaufman (2005), Drew and Nyerges (2004), and Bladescu and others (2005). Responsiveness questions were based on Parasuraman and others (1988), Glaser and Hildreth (1999), and Wright and others (1992). Effectiveness came from Crompton and Lamb (1986), Petrick (2002), and Vigoda (2000). Efficiency questions came from Mackay and Crompton (1989–1990), Howat and others (2003), and Shneider and others (1980). Equity came from Joshi (1989), Kalmar and Ferris (1991), and Brewer and Selden (2000). Questions on the rule of law came from Fraerich (1993), Rowe and others (2004), and Stolton and others

(2003). Strategic vision questions came from Graham and others (2003), and IUCN (2008).

Initially, lists of relevant questions for each of the 10 areas were developed. These longer lists were condensed and adapted into 3 to 9 questions for each of the governance areas through discussion and debate amongst the research team members. The questions were posed so as to be measured using a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; and, strongly disagree. The options of “Don't Know” and “Not Applicable” were added for respondent who did not know the answer, or felt the question was not applicable. Provision of these two options was deemed preferable to the researchers making a priori judgements as to which items were relevant to individuals within stakeholder groups. An example of a statement posed under the equity governance category is: “At ‘park x’, users receive fair and equal treatment.” After the questions and sections were fully developed, a computer-based survey was written.

Respondents were asked to provide their opinion on each item in the scale within the context of a specific park and a management area within each park, rather than for parks in general. It was felt that this level of specificity would enable most of the respondents to better understand the context of the item within the context of their personal experience. The management areas were divided into two categories; (1) park services; and, (2) park administration and management (Table 2). Each respondent could choose one or two of these management areas. Once the respondent chose a park and one or two management areas, each question in the survey was modified by the computer

Table 2 Park management areas listed on the survey

Park services
• Campgrounds
• Children's Camps
• Education Programs
• Equipment Rentals
• Food Services
• Gift Shops
• Interview Programs
• Resorts or Lodges
• Visitor Interpretive Centers
• Other (please specify context)
Park administration and management
• Park Administration
• Park Staff
• Park Management Plan
• Park Police
• Park Policy Issues (please specify)
• Other (please specify context)

program so that it was clear to which park and which management area the scale item referred. One exception to this rule was provided for those respondents who had abundant experience across the park system and preferred to answer the questions in regards to the entire system of parks or the BC Parks Agency, rather than one specific park. The BC park agency requested this option for the use of its staff. Of the 242 valid responses, 166 (68.6%) chose the “entire system of parks” option. The remainder chose one single park. The data presented in this paper is based on respondents’ first choice for management area.

A pilot survey was administered to an undergraduate park management course. In this class, 37 students completed the survey and provided input regarding the layout, comprehensibility, and duration of survey completion. Minor changes were made to the survey after this pre-test. Examples included ensuring consistency in the colour of the background of the pages and minor wording changes in the introduction to each question to ensure consistency and retention of meaning across criteria.

Three types of organizations were contacted to request their help in reaching potential respondents for the survey. One was the BC Parks Agency. The survey was administered to all staff by the Head Office of BC Parks located in Victoria. The researchers had good cooperation by the officials in the BC Parks Agency. A second group contained the owners and employees of the park contractors. The President of the Park Facility Operators’ Society of BC encouraged participation in the survey by members of the organization. A third group was composed of people who were involved in Non-Government Organizations interested in park management in the province. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represent a wide range of interests in parks and protected areas. In the realm of parks and recreation, NGOs tend to vary along a continuum of interests ranging from wilderness preservation, through environmental conservation, to low impact recreation and then motorized and consumptive recreation (Fig. 1). Groups were contacted in order to represent the full range of NGO interests. Western Wilderness represented the wilderness preservation end of the spectrum. BC Nature was approached to represent the environmental conservation area, but negotiations for involvement of this organization were not successful. The Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia contains 20 member groups and represents the interests of the full range of public outdoor recreation users (ORCBC 2009). The participation

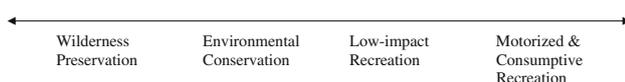


Fig. 1 Spectrum of interests for parks and recreation NGOs

of this council helped ensure that a wide range of interests were represented in the survey.

The NGOs recruited potential respondents by emails and website notices. Interested individuals were then asked to send an email to the researchers’ office, upon which they were emailed access information for the survey and a unique password. The BC Parks Agency had no list of visitors that could be used for the survey. This is an outcome of the agency using contractors for all visitor services. The researchers did not have the resources to contact visitors during their visit to provincial parks. Therefore, the visitor respondents came through information found on the websites of NGOs or through email contact by NGOs. Each person who agreed to participate was asked to self declare “your primary current role at park x” according to one of five categories: (1) parks staff; (2) contractor; (3) member of NGO; (4) visitor; or, (5) nearby resident. A category of ‘other’ was also provided.

All responses were confidential. All methods were approved by the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Data management and statistical analysis was done using SPSS Version 16.

Results

A total of 324 people sent emails to the researchers indicating willingness to participate in the survey. A total of 246 completed the survey, a 76% response rate (Table 3). Each person was contacted through one of three channels: the park agency; the contractor association; or, the NGO groups. However, each contacted person self-declared their

Table 3 Survey response rate by contract group

Subgroup	Survey distribution	Completed surveys	Response rate (%)
BC Parks Agency staff	66	61	92
Parks contractors	22	19	86
NGO members	236	166	70
Total	324	246	79

Table 4 Survey responses by self-declared stakeholder group

Subgroup	Responses
BC Parks Agency staff	62
Parks contractors	22
NGO members	35
Local resident	15
Park visitor	112
Total	246

primary role at a specific park or within all parks. Of the 246 respondents, the largest group was that of park visitor, with 112 responses (Table 4). The smallest group was composed of nearby residents, with 15 responses. There were also 62 park staff, 35 NGO members, and 22 contractors.

Prior to data analysis, items with scores of “Do not know” and “Not applicable” were removed. These responses were most prevalent with respect to public participation, transparency, and consensus orientation.

The range of governance scores could range from 1, strongly agree with the statement, to 5, strongly disagree with the statement. All statements were worded such that agreement indicated good governance and disagreement indicated weak governance. The neutral score was 3.

As noted earlier, three to nine questions were developed for each of the 10 governance criteria. Although these questions exhibited strong content validity, it was not the intent of this research to develop and refine a standardized governance scale. Prior to data analysis, principal

components analyses were run on each group of questions for the 10 governance criteria. For eight of the 10 governance criteria, a single factor emerged. The remaining two governance criteria, effectiveness and equity, each split into two separate factors (Table 5). Effectiveness split into two distinct factors, regarding outcome and process. Effectiveness outcome was comprised of three items designed to measure the quality of visitor services. Effectiveness process, comprised of five items, measured processes. For equity, the first factor was comprised of seven items designed to measure concepts of equity such as; equal treatment at the park, fairness in setting priorities, resolving conflicts, and the use of services. Therefore, this factor was named equity general. The second factor for equity was comprised of two items designed to measure financial aspects of park management, such as user fees and tax revenues to cover costs. Therefore, this factor was named equity finance. As such, 12 stakeholder group comparisons were conducted.

Table 5 Principal component analysis of governance scores

Ten governance principles		Number of items within factor	% of variance explained	Alpha
Responsiveness		8	68.91	.93
Effectiveness	Outcome	3	55.08	.88
	Process	5		
Equity	General	7	50.52	.90
	Finance	2	13.61	.61
Efficiency		4	73.19	.83
Public participation		7	57.17	.91
Consensus orientation		4	61.11	.90
Transparency		8	74.25	.95
Rule of law		6	68.67	.91
Accountability		6	80.64	.95
Strategic vision		5	86.23	.81

Table 6 Mean governance criteria scores for entire population

Criterion		Mean	SE	SD	N	Not applicable	Do not know
Effectiveness	Outcome	2.52	0.05	0.82	245	1	0
	Process	2.80	0.06	0.89	239	4	5
Equity	General	2.52	0.05	0.81	237	5	3
	Finance	3.55	0.07	1.02	199	11	38
Responsiveness		2.79	0.06	0.90	238	4	3
Strategic vision		2.75	0.06	0.96	242	0	4
Public participation		3.00	0.06	0.84	207	3	34
Transparency		3.03	0.07	0.99	202	1	42
Rule of law		3.05	0.06	0.96	227	0	18
Accountability		3.09	0.07	0.99	225	6	15
Efficiency		3.17	0.04	0.66	242	3	2
Consensus orientation		3.24	0.06	0.81	184	5	56

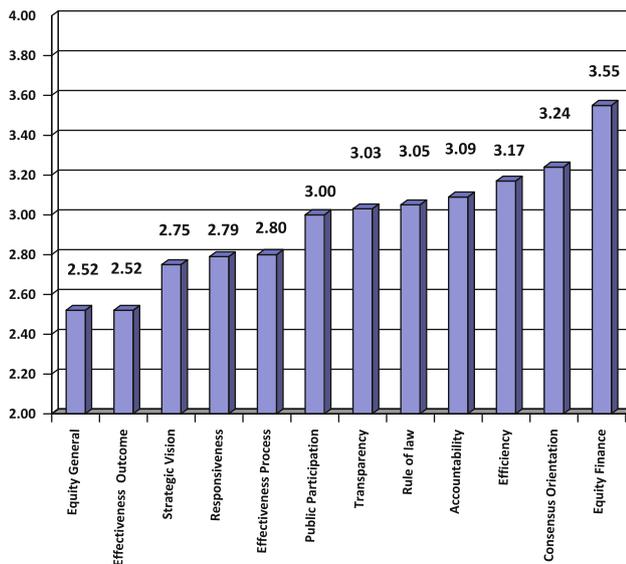


Fig. 2 Graph of mean governance scores for total population

For the entire population, the mean governance scores ranged from a high of 2.52 for effectiveness outcome and equity general to a low of 3.55 for equity finance (Table 6 and Fig. 2). This shows a moderate amount of divergence from the neutral point of 3. Five criteria were ranked above neutral, more towards good governance: effectiveness outcome (2.52); equity general (2.52); strategic vision (2.75); responsiveness (2.79); and, effectiveness process (2.80). One criterion, public participation (3.00), was on the neutral point of the five point scale. Six criteria were ranked below neutral, more towards weak governance: transparency (3.03); rule of law (3.05); accountability (3.09); efficiency (3.17); consensus orientation (3.24); and, equity finance (3.55).

The highest level of disagreement amongst the respondents was for the equity finance criterion ($SD = 1.02$). The highest level of agreement was for efficiency ($SD = 0.66$).

Between stakeholder group differences were examined using an analysis of variance with a Duncan's Multiple Range post hoc test. For 10 out of the 12 governance criteria, the between group differences for the five subpopulations were statistically significant ($P < .05$). Efficiency ($P = .09$) and effectiveness outcome ($P = .10$) did not show differences indicating that all five stakeholder groups' mean scores were not different from one another.

However, visitors and NGOs descriptively appeared to be more negative.

The responses which indicated that the respondents felt that the measures were not applicable were quite low in number, averaging only about 3 out of 246 responses (Table 6). This provides evidence of content validity for the model used in this research. The responses from respondents that indicated they did not know were much higher than not applicable. Five criteria had not applicable responses under six (effectiveness, equity, responsiveness, strategic vision and efficiency). In all of these six cases, the not applicable responses were also quite low. This suggests that for those six criteria the respondents were able to provide responses. Conversely, for two criteria, public participation (35) and transparency (42) the numbers of "do not know" scores were quite high. That approximately 15% of respondents selected "do not know" for these elements suggest that public awareness may be problematic and in need of remedial action on behalf of BC Parks.

An analysis of the mean governance scores amongst the five subpopulations revealed two groupings. One group of three criteria has the park agency staff and contractors aligned with higher scores, and visitors at the opposite extreme with lower scores. The NGO members and nearby residents have scores in between these two opposites (Table 7). This pattern occurs with public participation, consensus orientation, and transparency. These three criteria might be called process elements of governance; those activities that are critical to decision-making. This finding revealed that for these three process governance criteria, the visitors were much more critical of these decision-making processes than the park agency staff and contractors. Since the park staff and the contractors are the two groups that have the park decision-making powers, this reveals an important difference of opinion on these process governance criteria. For public participation, the visitors were significantly more negative than the other four groups, showing a major perception gap between the visitors and everyone else. This reveals that the visitors are strongly inclined to see the BC parks management model representing low levels of public participation, consensus and transparency.

A second group of nine criteria generally has park agency staff and contractors aligned together with higher

Table 7 Subpopulation's mean scores for process areas of governance

Criterion	F score	P	Staff	Contractors	NGO members	Nearby residents	Visitors
Public participation	19.44	<.001	2.41 ¹	2.82 ^{1,2}	2.91 ²	2.98 ²	3.47 ³
Consensus orientation	15.87	<.001	2.68 ¹	3.01 ^{1,2}	3.38 ^{2,3}	3.53 ³	3.64 ³
Transparency	24.62	<.001	2.27 ^{1,2}	2.72 ^{1,2}	3.12 ^{2,3}	3.48 ³	3.60 ³

Means scores which share superscripts are not significantly different ($P < .05$) using Duncan's Multiple Range test

Table 8 Subpopulation's mean scores for outcome areas of governance

Criterion		<i>F</i> score	<i>P</i>	Staff	Contractors	Nearby residents	Visitors	NGO members
Effectiveness	Outcomes	1.96	<.102	2.48	2.26	2.20	2.57	2.74
	Process	6.02	<.001	2.70 ^{2,3}	2.23 ¹	2.26 ^{1,2}	2.94 ³	3.13 ³
Equity	General	4.17	<.003	2.28 ¹	2.24 ¹	2.30 ¹	2.66 ^{1,2}	2.79 ²
	Finance	2.50	<.044	3.57 ^{1,2}	3.18 ¹	3.05 ¹	3.54 ^{1,2}	3.95 ²
Responsiveness		17.48	<.001	2.27 ¹	2.17 ¹	2.48 ¹	3.14 ²	3.17 ²
Accountability		28.62	<.001	2.24 ¹	2.64 ¹	3.25 ²	3.57 ²	3.47 ²
Rule of law		13.36	<.001	2.48 ¹	2.60 ²	3.05 ^{2,3}	3.39 ³	3.45 ³
Strategic vision		9.69	<.001	2.22 ¹	2.48 ¹	2.65 ^{1,2}	3.00 ^{2,3}	3.14 ³
Efficiency		2.07	<.085	3.07	2.95	2.99	3.24	3.34

Means scores which share superscripts are not significantly different ($P < .05$) using Duncan's Multiple Range test. Principle components analysis suggested that the effectiveness and equity criteria reflected two facets each. Each facet for these two criteria was treated as a factor for the analysis. The remaining eight criteria were treated as single factors

scores, whereas the NGO members and the visitors usually have the lowest scores. The visitors are aligned with the NGO members in all cases. With respect to these nine criteria, the nearby residents are usually in between the two extremes, sometimes aligned with the staff and contractors, other times aligned with the visitors and NGO members (Table 8).

There is one exception to this finding. For equity finance, the nearby residents have the most positive scores, while the NGO members have the most negative. However, the nearby residents' scores are not statistically different from the contractors, staff or the visitors in holding these more positive views. It is important to note that for equity finance, all the groups' scores are below the neutral point (3.0) suggesting that all five groups have negative opinions on these important criteria.

The NGO members have the most negative scores for seven of the outcome areas of governance. The visitors have the most negative scores for the other two areas. In all cases, differences between NGO members and park visitors are not statistically different.

For effectiveness process, equity general, responsiveness, and efficiency the contractors have the highest scores, all above the neutral point of 3.0. For accountability, rule of law and strategic vision, the park agency staff members have the highest scores, all well above the neutral point of 3.0. Only in two of these seven criteria are the differences between the contractors and the park agency staff statistically significant. The contractors see much higher effectiveness process outcomes (2.23) than do the park agency staff members (2.70). The park agency staff members have a much higher perception for the rule of law (2.48) than did the contractors (2.60).

These nine criteria might be considered to be outcomes of decision-making, suggesting that the visitors and the NGO members felt less positive about these processes

when compared to the staff and contractors, the two groups who largely manage those processes that produce the outcomes.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study reveals that the BC provincial park system is perceived by the total population of respondents as having good levels of governance for five governance criteria: effectiveness outcome (2.52), equity general (2.52), strategic vision (2.75), responsiveness (2.79), and effectiveness process (2.80). In the research, effectiveness refers to the capacity to realize organizational objectives. Equity is just treatment, requiring that similar cases be treated in similar ways. These findings reveal that the system is seen as being both effective, in process and outcomes, and also with good levels of equity general for the manner in which people are treated.

Responsiveness occurs when institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders using a proactive manner regarding complaints and public criticisms. The survey respondents saw the system as having good levels of responsiveness. Strategic vision refers to a broad and long term perspective on good governance including an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded. While the participants ranked strategic vision as slightly above neutral, this criterion had one a high level of variance, suggesting that there was a wide range of opinion on this criterion.

One criterion, public participation, was ranked at the neutral point of 3.00. The study found six criteria which were ranked below neutral, thus more towards weak governance: transparency (3.03); rule of law (3.05); accountability (3.09); efficiency (3.17); consensus orientation (3.24); and, equity finance (3.55). Three criteria have mean

scores that are only slightly below the neutral point of 3.0. Since transparency is the sharing of information and acting in an open manner, this may indicate somewhat of a problem in regards to BC parks management in regards to a low level of transparency. Accountability is the requirement that officials answer to stakeholders on the disposal of their powers and duties, act on criticisms or requirements made of them and accept responsibility for failure, incompetence or deceit, and is similar in concept to transparency. Therefore, the low ranking for accountability also indicates a governance problem in the parks system as it is not perceived to be accountable in a transparent fashion. Since the rule of law refers to the legal frameworks being fair and enforced impartially, the finding suggests there are some negative perceptions of this important criterion in regards to BC parks.

The three lowest-ranked governance criterion and, therefore, those that indicate the most in need of remedial action are efficiency, consensus orientation, and equity finance. Efficiency refers to making the best use of resources. It is the capability of acting or producing effectively with a minimum amount or quantity of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort. The major justification for the use of the public, profit-making sector in the delivery of park visitor services in British Columbia is to improve financial efficiency of the park system. However, the overall population of respondents to the survey ranked efficiency as the third lowest governance factor. This finding suggests that this public policy goal has not been achieved by BC Parks according to the opinions of the stakeholders tested in this study. The second lowest-ranked governance factor was consensus orientation. Consensus-oriented decision-making is the ability to mediate differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group. This reveals that the system is not perceived as being managed according to consensus. Equity finance is just treatment, requiring that similar cases be treated in similar ways. The comparatively lowest scores the governance factor equity finance is in line with the expectations of the privatization as highlighted by More (2005) who stated that one of the criticisms of privately-operating recreation programs is the concept that the higher fees and charges that typically come with private operation will reduce equity. It is important to note that in BC provincial parks, all fees are regulated by the provincial government and kept at low levels. Therefore, the low ranking of equity finance is not necessarily due to high prices, since the camping fees in BC parks are quite low by Canadian standards.

The authors would like to remind the reader that these three lowest-ranked factors are only 3.17, 3.24, and 3.55 on a scale that extends to 5.0. Therefore, in an absolute sense, the degree of ranking is only mildly negative.

The scores that might have occurred for BC parks when they were operated under the national parks model before the 1980s are not known. Therefore, it is not possible to assess whether the current scores are an improvement or deterioration compared to the earlier model. The current scores provide a baseline from which future comparisons can be made.

This research partially contradicts the conclusions of Eagles (2009) who provided, based on a literature review, governance scores for the *public and for-profit combination model*, for the original 10 criteria. This current research found lower scores, than suggested by the literature, for 8 of 10 criteria. This suggests that the management model is perceived more negatively in this case study than the literature indicates.

The research also found important differences in the opinions of the various stakeholder groups studied. The findings reveal that the visitors hold the most negative feelings in regards to three governance criteria dealing with decision-making process: public participation; consensus orientation; and, transparency (Table 7). They are aligned with the nearby residents and the NGO members in two of these. The staff and contractors, who have the greatest management responsibility for most in-park decisions, rank the management model with higher scores. This shows that the visitors are much more negative about the decision-making processes involved with public participation, consensus orientation, and transparency than are the staff and contractors. This finding provides important information for the decision-makers within the park system that can be used to improve these processes. Interestingly, the NGO members were more aligned with the contractors than with the visitors in this regard. This may reveal that the NGO members feel more involved in the decision processes, similar to the staff and contractors, in contrast to the more negative feelings of the visitors. Since all of the NGOs contacted for this survey maintain active lobby activities aimed at government policy on park management and outdoor recreation, the members who closely identify with these organizations appear to feel that these activities put them into a decision-making role, similar to the government staff and the contractors. The odd people out in this situation are the visitors, who identify a lack of involvement. This research shows that the visitor group needs special attention within future park policy decision-making processes undertaken by British Columbia Provincial Parks.

The findings reveal that for four outcome criteria, equity (general and finance), responsiveness, and strategic vision, the staff, contractors, and nearby residents are grouped together with higher governance scores. Conversely, the NGO members are the most negative, and are typically grouped with the visitors in this view (Table 8). This shows

that for these four process governance criteria, those respondents who have management responsibility for the parks feel that this management model is much more equitable, responsive and with a strategic vision than do the two outside groups, the visitors, and the NGO members. This demonstrates that those who use the parks are more negative about the outcomes of management than do those who produce those outcomes. This important finding needs to be considered in regards to the operation of these management processes. For one outcome, accountability, the staff and contractors provide more positive scores, while the residents, visitors, and NGO members agree on more negative scores. This shows two different opinions on the accountability of this management model, with the staff and contractors seeing higher levels than the other three stakeholder groups. With regard to rule of law, park agency staff members and contractors see higher levels, while residents, visitors and NGO members see significantly lower levels. Clearly, the park agency staff opinions are in marked divergence from the other groups. The park agency staff members need to evaluate the reasons for the difference of opinion on this important criterion of rule of law. The staff and contractors see good levels of strategic vision; the NGO participants see lower levels, while the nearby residents and visitor are in the middle ground. We wonder if the NGO's simply do not accept the strategic vision of the current government policy, the use of the *public and for-profit combination model*, rather than feel there is not a strategic vision.

The finding of significant differences amongst stakeholder groups in regards to most of the 12 governance criteria is important. This reveals that a unique and diverse understanding of governance comes from the different points of view of the stakeholders involved.

This research does not support the grouping of 10 governance criteria into the five categories outlined by Graham and others (2003) as shown in Table 1. Most of the criteria would have been masked if they had been merged into only the five categories outlined by Graham and others (2003). For example, in the Graham and others (2003) approach, public participation and consensus orientation are merged under the grouping legitimacy and voice. In our research, consensus orientation is the second lowest ranked criterion, while public participation is mid-range with a neutral score. In another example, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency are grouped by Graham and others (2003) into the group entitled performance. In our research, effectiveness breaks into two categories, with effectiveness outcome tied as the highest ranked criterion, responsiveness is also positive, while efficiency has the third lowest ranked score. In these two examples, merging of these criteria during measurement would have obscured these important differences. In addition, this research revealed

that the 10 governance criteria outlined by the UNDP (1997) may actually form 12 criteria in regards to parks, with 2 sub-categories within each of the governance criteria of efficiency and equity. The finding of 12 criteria provides for a much more precise and nuanced view of governance than would occur if the Graham and others (2003) approach of only 5 criteria were used.

Crompton and Lamb (1986) maintain that since efficiency and equity measure very different factors, that if management emphasizes one, the other will likely suffer. For example, to achieve high levels of social equity across a population, the cost may be high leading to low efficiency. Our research provides insight on this point. In our study, efficiency is the second lowest-ranked governance criterion (3.17) and equity general is the highest ranked factor (2.52). This suggests that for the *public, profit-making combination management model* used in British Columbia, the stakeholders feel that the efficiency and equity general are opposites. Interestingly though, the scores are the reverse that might be expected from such a management model. In BC equity general is given a relatively higher score, while the literature suggests that private operation may lead to lower equity. However, low equity was found to be present in regards to the value participants felt they received in regards to the finance of the operation. In the case of BC Parks, efficiency was given a lower score, although private operation is supposed to lead to higher efficiency.

As a general rule in prioritizing performance indicators, the most emphasis should be placed on equity, then effectiveness, and finally efficiency (Crompton and Lamb 1986). Using this rule as a guide, the BC provincial parks management model is partially successful, since equity general is the highest ranked criterion tied with effectiveness outcome followed by effectiveness process.

This is the first study of its type which asked key stakeholders in parks to evaluate one commonly-used park management model according to standard governance criteria. This research contributes to the emerging literature on the governance of the management models commonly used for parks and protected areas, and most specifically the widely used *public, profit-making combination management model*.

The research reveals that the BC Provincial Parks management model, with the public profit-making sector providing visitor services, a government agency handling resource management, and government owning the land, is perceived by key stakeholders as having quite different levels of scoring for each of the 12 governance factors. These significant differences in the rankings of each governance criteria according to five stakeholder groups provide a nuanced view of the management model, providing support for some aspects, but also providing critical

comment on other aspects. The findings provide valuable information that can be used by the government, the park agency, and the private sector operators, the three key groups with power, to improve governance, especially in the areas of transparency, rule of law, accountability, efficiency, and consensus orientation. The research also provides information that can be used by nearby residents, visitors, and members of NGOs to make positive suggestions for improvement of the management model or, for the replacement of this model with another.

The research determined that an opinion gap exists between the park staff and contractors, who were aligned with a more positive view, and the visitors and the NGO members, who were typically aligned with a more negative view for most of the governance criteria. It appears that the park agency staff and the contractors share similar views because of a like mindset. Both have vested interests in the current management model. The contractors need this model to stay in business while the park agency staff members were given the role by the government to monitor and manage the contractors. Therefore, similarity between these groups is not surprising.

The research revealed that there is major gap between the park agency staff and the park visitors, almost certainly due to the management model used. Since all visitor services in the parks are provided by private contractors, the park agency staff members have no direct day-by-day contact with the park visitors. In addition, the formal public participation activities that are used for policy discussions also appear to leave the visitors feeling out of touch. This leaves the visitors as one group that sees the management model as being negative for most decision-making processes. We suggest that the park visitors are poorly serviced by the model, contrary to the prevailing view that the private-sector delivery of visitor services is the best approach for consumers. We wonder if this reveals a general bias in park management with many different management models, where visitors are given lower priority than other more powerful groups such as park agency staff, private contractors, nearby residents, and NGO members. Future research will be needed to assess if this is a widespread phenomenon.

The finding that efficiency is the third lowest ranked governance criteria suggests that the *public and for-profit combination model* is not providing the efficiencies it is designed to deliver. Importantly, all stakeholder groups expressed agreement with this low score.

Crompton and Lamb (1986) maintain that budgetary restraints have often forced public sector managers to increase emphasis on efficiency. This is certainly the case with BC provincial parks. Crompton and Lamb (1986) states that “*too much* emphasis, in fact, is often placed on evaluating a program in terms of its *efficiency* and

insufficient attention is given to evaluating the *effectiveness* of a program’s impact on clients” (p. 80). Our research suggests that in BC provincial parks the very strong emphasis on efficiency lowered the program’s emphasis on other governance principles. Hopefully, the results of the research may assist in rebalancing the management effort in this regard.

The finding of a major gap in opinion between the park staff and contractors, the major decision makers in this management model, and the visitors and the NGO members, the major consumers of the park services, suggests that a policy revision is necessary. The decision makers should revise processes in order to reduce the gap, or a different management model could be considered. Changes in overall governance are within the authority of the Provincial Government so the implications of this research go beyond the capabilities and authority of the current park agency. Government policy change is needed for full implementation of any changes suggested by this work.

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