

Glacier Discovery Walk Project Update Newsletter

In January, 2011, Brewster Travel Canada (Brewster) initiated a public engagement process to discuss the proposed Glacier Discovery Walk project with interested stakeholders. Public open houses were held the week of January 31st-February 4th in Jasper, Banff, Calgary and Edmonton.

Through these open houses, Brewster has received considerable feedback from interested parties. The following newsletter has been developed to reflect the feedback received to date and to provide an opportunity to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

Open House Summary

In January and February 2011 four open houses were held in locations across Alberta to discuss the proposed Glacier Discovery Walk. All four open houses were well attended with 142 registered attendees in total.

Feedback received regarding the Glacier Discovery Walk was wide-ranging. Some attendees were in support of the project. They felt it would add a much needed new opportunity for visitors to the Icefields Parkway to learn about the geology, glaciology and social history of the region and to experience the landscape in a way not previously accessible to many visitors. Some attendees had suggestions for the Project Team regarding interpretive elements, off-season site access, bicycle access and general operations. While other open house attendees shared concerns about the project which included:

- Restriction of public access to the viewpoint
- Use of free shuttles for site access
- Impacts on wildlife
- Impacts on vegetation
- Visual disturbance
- Design and aesthetics
- Project need

Incorporation of Feedback

Brewster is reviewing all the feedback received from stakeholders and, where possible, is incorporating feedback into the project design. For example, requests for bicycle access and personal vehicle access off-season and outside of operating

hours are currently being examined by Brewster's traffic engineering consultants for incorporation into project plans. Brewster values all the input received from members of the public regarding the Glacier Discovery Walk project and all comments, questions and concerns will be reflected in the Public Consultation Report being submitted to Parks Canada as part of the Environmental Assessment process.

Frequently Asked Questions

I have concerns relating to charging people to utilize an existing viewpoint that was once free, do I have to pay to use the viewpoint?

No. The current plan for the project is to maintain and enhance the exiting public viewpoint leaving it accessible to all members of the public free of charge. The free public viewing area will be complimented by the addition of the interpretive walkway and glass-floored viewing platform accessible to paying visitors. The views from the free public viewing area will be unobstructed by the paid attraction and the overall free experience will be enhanced by the addition of interpretive elements with the goal of ensuring a base level understanding of the area by all those who choose to enjoy the viewpoint. Today there is no educational or interpretive information available at this location.

In 2007, an estimated 90,000 people enjoyed the Tangle Ridge Viewpoint. Brewster's plan could see up to 250,000 people enjoy the free public viewpoint annually by effectively and efficiently managing the limited available parking resource and introducing mass public transit.

How will the Glacier Discovery Walk offer an experience to visitors that is not already provided by the Glacier Discovery Centre? Why is the project needed?

Brewster feels that the Glacier Discovery Walk presents a unique opportunity to build on existing infrastructure to appeal to a new segment of visitor. The existing Glacier Adventure Tour is popular with organized tour groups. We believe The Glacier Discovery Walk will appeal to a broad cross section of independent travellers that currently drive the Parkway but do not stop for any type of professionally guided interpretive experience. We also believe the Glacier Discovery Walk will appeal to a broad range of family groups, younger travellers, new Canadians and urban dwellers looking for an opportunity to engage with the landscape in a safe manner. The Glacier Discovery Walk will also be fully wheelchair accessible and will enable visitors to Jasper National Park, who are currently unable to access hiking trails, to have a meaningful and educational experience in the Park. Furthermore, a study completed by Brewster, polling over 7800 individuals, revealed that 88% of Alberta respondents would be interested in an attraction similar to the Glacier Discovery Walk, indicating a large degree of interest in the project among the regular park visitors who primarily enjoy organized, front country, low impact and safe activities.

Parks Canada, in its *Icefields Parkway Action Plan*, identified the need to redesign the Tangle Ridge Viewpoint to improve safety, reduce wildlife mortality and enhance viewing. Brewster believes that the Glacier Discovery Walk is in keeping with this policy and supports the stated intent of the *Icefields Parkway Action Plan*: "to strengthen Canadians' connection to place, by such means as providing exceptional experiences, telling compelling stories, encouraging people to spend more time on the Parkway, and inspiring visitors to move toward a stronger relationship with the land and national parks". Brewster is committed to ensuring that all our visitor experiences promote Canada's National Parks values of environmental stewardship and ecological integrity.

Wouldn't the interpretive highlights that Brewster mentions be better seen and grasped at the much more extensive Visitors Centre up the road?

The interpretive component of the Glacier Discovery Walk is still in the early stages of development and Brewster will consult with local guiding, environmental and Aboriginal organizations as well as Parks Canada to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of this information. A preliminary list of proposed topics that will be covered include: ecology, geology, glaciology, Aboriginal history and social history.

Brewster feels that the Glacier Discovery Walk will build on the visitor experience currently available at the Glacier Discovery Centre by providing a guided interpretive walk and an additional opportunity for visitors to engage with the region's dramatic landscape.

Why is it called the Glacier Discovery Walk? Can you see the Athabasca Glacier from this viewpoint?

The name Glacier Discovery Walk is intended to refer to the site's location on the Icefields Parkway as well as its proximity to the glacial fields. While the Athabasca Glacier will likely not be visible from the Glacier Discovery Walk, the hanging glaciers on Mount Athabasca are clearly visible. In addition, the interpretive information will also address the glacial history of the area including the sculpting of the Sunwapta Valley by the retreating glaciers.

Is the Tangle Ridge Viewpoint the same as the Tangle Creek Pullout which provides access to Tangle Falls or the well-known hike over Wilcox Pass? Will the Tangle Creek Pullout also be shut off to the public?

There has been some confusion with respect to the name of the current viewpoint at the project location. The Tangle Ridge Viewpoint is also referred to as the Sunwapta Canyon Viewpoint—Mt. Kitchener which is located on Tangle Ridge. The Tangle Falls parking area, located on Tangle Creek is roughly 1 km further north along the Parkway. The Tangle Falls parking area, with convenience pit toilets, is the trailhead for the Wilcox Pass hike and a number of spectacular climbs and scrambles. The Tangle Falls parking area will be unaffected by the Tangle Ridge Viewpoint enhancements.

In your information materials you indicate that the Glacier Discovery Walk will improve vehicle and animal safety in the area. Do you have any data regarding vehicle collisions at the site to illustrate how the project will reduce wildlife mortality without restricting animal movement?

Preliminary information provided by Parks Canada regarding the number of vehicle collisions indicates that from 2005 -2010 there have been 20 reported motor vehicle collisions and 4 reported wildlife mortalities in the area of the Tangle Ridge Viewpoint. In the last 15 years, there have been 55 reported motor vehicle collisions and 9 reported wildlife mortalities in that area.

Wildlife population and mortality statistics as well as impacts of the project on these populations are being examined by Brewster's environmental consultants.

The results of these studies will be included in the Environmental Assessment which will be made public through the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) process.

What are the visual impacts? What will I see from the highway?

Brewster is sensitive to concerns regarding the visual impacts of this project. We will be using materials and design techniques aimed at reducing visual disturbance and helping the Glacier Discovery Walk blend into the natural environment. Because the Glacier Discovery Walk sits below the level of the highway, the walkway and viewing platform will be less visible from the road. Brewster is conducting a visual impact study as part of the project development. Preliminary renderings completed as part of this study which demonstrate the likely points of visibility from the Icefields Parkway can be found on our website at: www.glacierdiscoverywalk.ca

The colouring, as depicted in the renderings, appears to be obtrusive. How does it blend-in amongst the natural rock and stone?

The primary material selected for the Glacier Discovery Walk is Corten steel. Corten steel is designed to form a protective coating of rust over time as part of a natural weathering process. The bright orange colour of the Corten steel finish will last only 12 to 18 months. Over the next few years it will transform into a dark brown rust colour. The material was selected, in part, because the oxide colour will match the iron oxide staining naturally present in the surrounding cliffs.

What is the process for providing feedback on this proposed project?

Brewster will be reflecting the feedback received from stakeholders in the Consultation Report being forwarded to Parks Canada as part of the regulatory review process. The report will become part of the Environmental Assessment made public through the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) process. Brewster will also provide a link to the report on our website. The public will have three weeks to review the Environmental Assessment and provide comments to Parks Canada that will be considered in their decision-making process.

Will tourists still be able to park at the existing pull-out? How does this proposed project increase traffic safety?

For safety reasons, the site will only be accessible through a free shuttle bus from the Icefields Centre during operating hours.

Brewster is currently examining options to make the site accessible to personal vehicles outside of operating hours.

The proposed project will involve the re-design of the entry and exit points to the viewpoint including the development of a left-hand turn lane and an acceleration lane thereby increasing safety at the point of the pull-out. While this project is not likely to impact overall traffic volumes on the Icefields Parkway, through the use of free public shuttles it will reduce the volume of individual vehicle traffic pulling on and off the highway at the site.

What will Parks Canada get if this proposed project receives approval?

As with all commercial development in Jasper National Park, a portion of the proceeds from ticket sales for the Glacier Discovery Walk will be remitted to Parks Canada. Exact amounts have yet to be determined. In addition, Parks Canada, in its *Icefields Parkway Action Plan*, identified the need to redesign the Tangle Ridge Viewpoint to improve safety, reduce wildlife mortality and enhance viewing. Brewster believes that the Glacier Discovery Walk is in keeping with this policy and supports the intent of the *Icefields Parkway Action Plan*.

Is Brewster proposing this project in an attempt to find another money-making attraction because of the potential loss of the snow coaches on a rapidly receding glacier?

Brewster employs glaciologists who have been studying the Athabasca Glacier for over 22 years. Brewster's experts have indicated that the glacier has a history of growing and shrinking over its' lifetime and that there is no evidence to suggest that Brewster will be unable to conduct the snow coach tours anytime in the foreseeable future.

What happens if the proposed project isn't profitable? Who will be responsible for maintaining or removing this infrastructure?

Brewster has been operating in Canada's mountain National Parks for over 119 years. Throughout this operating history Brewster has maintained a deep respect for the landscape and natural surroundings of these parks. Reclamation is a prime consideration within any licence of operation or operating lease issued by Parks Canada. Brewster will assume responsibility for the maintenance, upkeep and eventual reclamation of the site.



For more information about the
Glacier Discovery Walk Project
please contact us.

Brewster Travel Canada
PO Box 1140
Banff, Alberta T1L 1J3
Phone: 866-816-2758
Fax: 403-762-7494
Email: info@glacierdiscoverywalk.ca

www.glacierdiscoverywalk.ca

