

After-Action Review Report

Incident Date and Name	August 11, 2014 - Sikome Lake Drowning Fatality Fish Creek Provincial Park - Kananaskis Region
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1. Scope

This Report will consist of a review of the: applicable policies, programs and safety procedures that were in effect at the Sikome Lake Aquatic Facility on August 11, 2014 (the “Review”). The scope of this Review may also include the provision of operational recommendations to Alberta Parks’ service objectives prior to the next operational season.

2. Background

Sikome Lake (the “Lake”) is a 9.5 acre man-made lake that first opened in 1978. Water for the Lake is supplied by three wells located around Fish Creek Provincial Park. In 1987, the Lake underwent renovations which included the installation of a plastic liner beneath the sand and the addition of a water treatment plant. The water treatment plant filters and chlorinates the water; the water is refreshed approximately every eight days. In 2005, the Lake was partially flooded. A berm was constructed on the eastside of the Lake, to prevent damage from future flood events. In 2007, the Lake was closed for renovations to the surrounding area and an overhaul of the Lake’s liner. A ten foot tall chain linked fence which surrounds the Lake was installed at that time. The fence controls access to the Lake, creating two primary access points located at the north and south end of the Lake.

3. Daily Operations

Alberta Parks has installed a combination of prepositioned observation points around the facility. Positions at the “spot deck” (in the aquatic building), “tower” (located between the northern and southern portions of the Lake), “chairs” (located on the beach in prepositioned locations), on paddleboards in the lake or through walking patrols assist in monitoring visitor activity. The spot deck, which is located on the second floor of the main aquatic building, is always staffed. The spot deck person can only watch the northern portion of the lake and manages communications for the team. In the event of an emergency, the spot deck person has access to the Public Address (“PA”) system to make announcements, and the phones to call for additional emergency response agencies such as police, ambulance and the fire department. When the southern portion of the Lake opens, Aquatic staff are assigned to the south spot deck, which is located at ground level.

Rotation times are typically twenty minutes in length and depending on how many Aquatic staff are on duty that day, at least one person, is on a “break” and this person(s) is able to respond to

any questions that come in to the swim centre, attend to any first aid issues brought to the swim centre or assist with rescues.

Depending on the visitation or the availability of parking, Conservation Officers may open the southern gate and permit access to the south parking lot and southern portion of the Lake. Opening the south parking lot without opening the beach and / or waterfront is standard practise. As visitation increases and if staffing permits, the southern beach and waterfront are opened by removing the “Beach Closed” signage. If the southern portion of the Lake is opened, Aquatic staff are stationed in key locations in the southern portion of the facility.

Alberta Provincial Parks legislation does not require the use of either life jackets or personal flotation devices by swimmers recreating in the Sikome Lake Aquatic Facility or any other Alberta Parks waterfront facility. Alberta Parks – Sikome Lake in cooperation with the Royal Canadian Life Saving Society supports the “Kids Don’t Float” program and the “Lifejacket Loaner Stations” program. The latter program supplies free of charge, life jackets which are available in a kiosk located immediately upon entry at the north gate access. Adult sized life jackets are available through request to an Alberta Parks staff member. There are Lifejacket Loaner Stations in 16 Provincial Parks across Alberta.

4. Incident Summary

On Monday August 11, 2014, the day of the drowning (the “Incident”), both gates were open to accommodate visitor parking. The southern portion of the Lake was closed however, and signs indicating the closure had been placed on the beach¹. Staff on duty at the time of the Incident included: five Aquatic staff, one Aquatic staff supervisor, one gate attendant, two Conservation Officers and two seasonal Park Rangers. This was the standard compliment of staff for the type of weather and day of the week. The gate staff member estimates that there were approximately 1500 visitors at the Lake that day.

At approximately 3:50 p.m. a family of three adults and one infant were discovered in distress close to the centre of the Lake. The family, all non-swimmers, had been in a large inflatable raft; no one in the raft was wearing a life jacket. One adult male had reportedly fallen into the water and not resurfaced; an adult male and an adult female, with an infant in her arms, had jumped into the Lake in an attempt to rescue him. Alerted to the calls of distress, Sikome Aquatic staff responded to the scene and rescued the infant and two adults. They were unable to rescue the third adult, who had slipped beneath the water and could not be located. His body was not located until August 13, 2014, when an aerial reconnaissance flight by the City of Calgary Police helicopter directed searchers to his position.

Upon discussion with the Calgary Police Service lead investigator, the following additional information about the Incident was provided to the Department. At some point prior to visiting the Lake, the family purchased a large inflatable raft and entered the facility through the south

gate, which Conservation Officers had opened earlier that day. The family set up their personal items, inflated the raft, bypassed a “Beach Closed” sandwich board and entered the southern portion of the Lake; this was at approximately 3:40p.m. CPS investigators have deduced through eyewitness and family statements that the victim had been jumping from the raft into the lake. On his last jump, the victim was witnessed performing a “back flip” off of the raft, pushing it away from his immediate reach. The victim was in immediate distress and his family began yelling for help, identifying that he was a non-swimmer. The victim’s brother, and wife (with their six month old infant in her arms), jumped into the Lake to assist the victim and also became in immediate distress. It is speculated that the family had unknowingly drifted into a deeper portion of the Lake. Sikome Lake Aquatic staff responded and were able to rescue the infant and two of the adults. They were unable to locate the victim, who had been below the surface and could not be located. The family indicated to the Calgary Police Service and to Conservation Officers that none of the occupants of the raft could swim and none of them were wearing life jackets.

Review of the Witness Statements indicates that one of the Aquatic staff raised the initial alarm and commenced the response. This employee stated that he had observed a boat with six people on board with one male was jumping in and out of the boat, which he viewed as normal behaviour. Upon a return visual scan the employee heard cries for “help” from the southern end of the Lake and observed multiple individuals in obvious distress. The employee made an emergency radio call, indicating there was an emergency in the south end of the Lake, blew his whistle three times, as per protocol and responded to the location with a paddle board. As the infant and two adults required immediate attention, the Aquatic staff focused their initial rescue efforts on saving their lives. Once the Aquatic staff were able to transfer patient care of the infant and two adults to emergency responders on the beach, they returned to the point of last scene and began searching for the victim. Additional Aquatic staff entered the water and assisted in the search for the victim, who they were unable to locate. Aquatic staff reported that this continued for approximately one hour until the City of Calgary dive team requested that they stop the surface water search.

Review of the Alberta Parks Aquatic staff statements and the Aquatic Staff Handbook indicates employees followed established protocol and procedures, responding appropriately to the emergency. One can only speculate if the outcome may have been different if the infant and two adults had remained within the safety of the raft; rescue efforts were initially focussed on these individuals who were visible and in obvious distress. While one life was tragically lost, it should not be forgotten that three lives were saved and Aquatic staff should be commended for saving those lives.

5. Training Requirements

Alberta Parks provides highly trained employees to assist in the daily operations of the Sikome Lake facility, some of whom are hired as seasonal staff. Alberta Parks does not offer or advertise “supervised” swimming; “Non-Lifeguarded” signs are posted at both the north and south gates and throughout the facility. All members of the Aquatic staff possess lifeguard certification and are able to perform rescues when called upon. In addition to managing the day

to day operations at the Lake, Aquatic staff provide public education, first aid and search for missing persons.

Aquatic Staff Hiring Requirements – minimum hiring standards.

A current pool or waterfront National Lifeguarding Society (NLS) Certification, Standard First Aid and Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) certification, and Basic CPR Level-C certification are all required to be considered for this position, plus 1 to 2 years lifeguarding experience. Candidates must be 18 years of age or older and have completed high school or equivalent. Good communication and teamwork skills are essential.

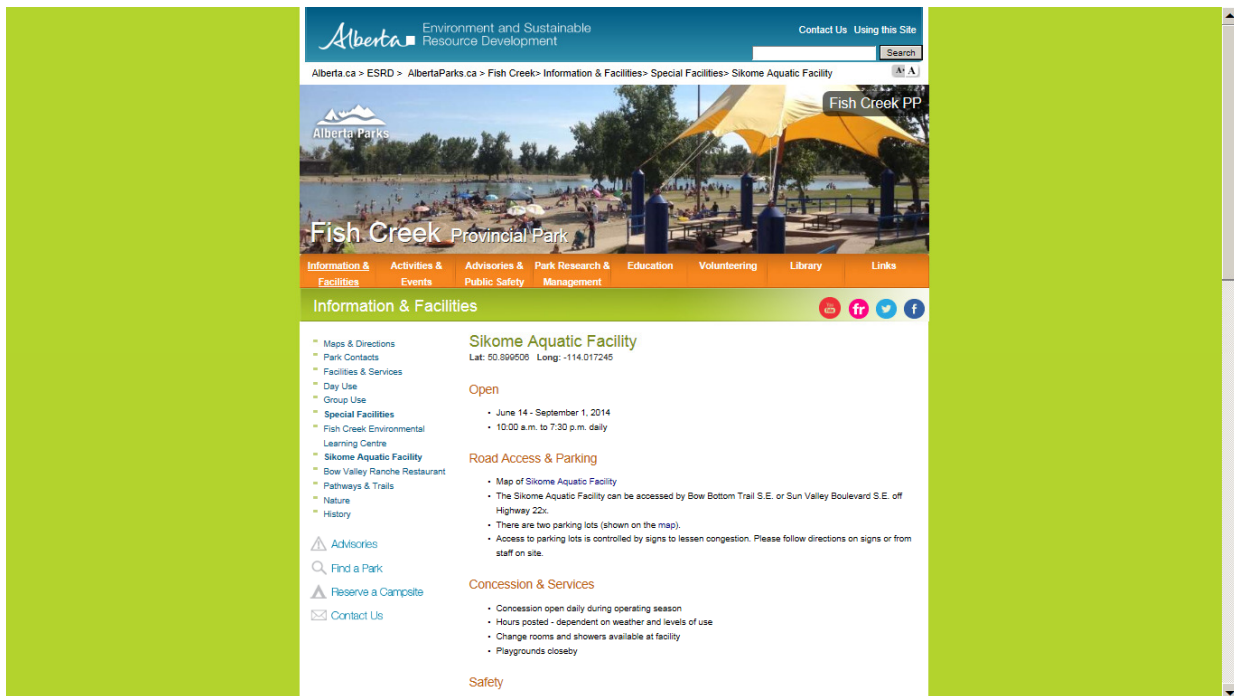
Aquatic Staff Supervisor Training Requirements – minimum hiring standards

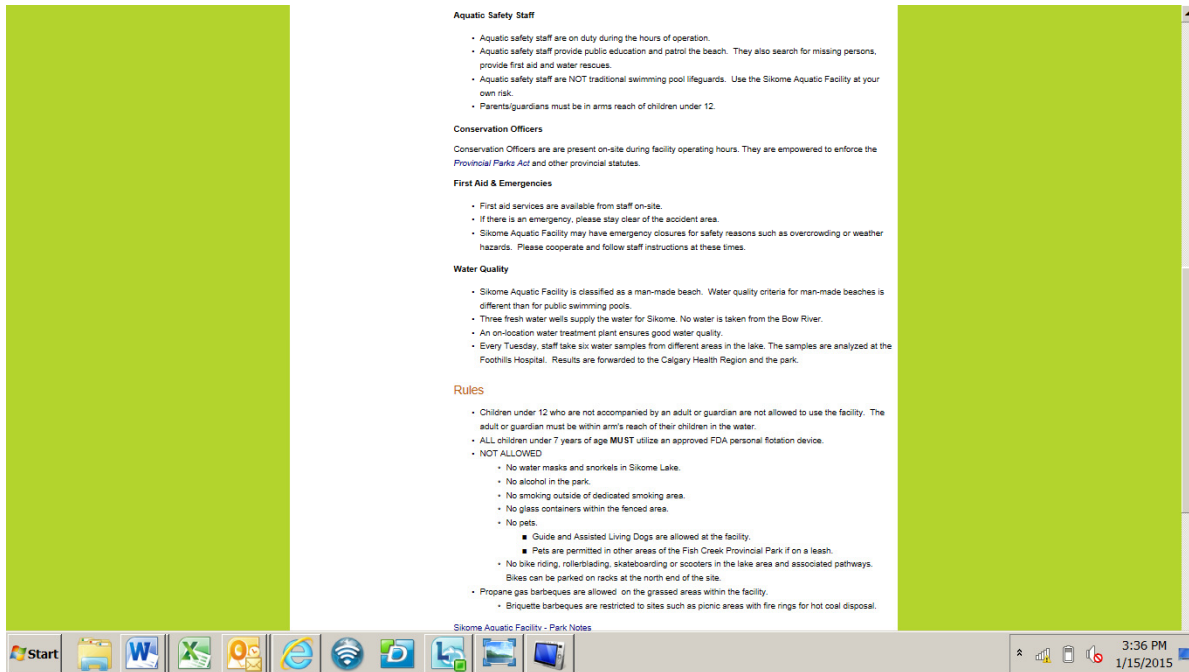
A current pool or waterfront National Lifeguarding Society NLS Certification, Standard First Aid and Automatic External Defibrillator AED certification, and Basic CPR Level-C certification are all required to be considered for this position, over 2 years lifeguarding experience and at least 2 years' experience specifically at the Sikome Aquatic Facility. Candidates must be 18 years of age or older and have completed high school or equivalent. Good communication, time management, and teamwork skills are essential.

5. Public Messaging

Alberta Parks provides public facing messaging about Sikome Lake Facility on the Environment & Sustainable Resource Development corporate website; an example is included to demonstrate the type of information available.

Alberta Parks Website (<http://www.albertaparks.ca/fish-creek/information-facilities/special-facilities/sikome-aquatic-facility.aspx>)





The following content is contained on the above Alberta Parks website;
Safety

Aquatic Safety Staff

- Aquatic safety staff are on duty during the hours of operation.
- Aquatic safety staff provide public education and patrol the beach. They also search for missing persons, provide first aid and water rescues.
- Aquatic safety staff are NOT traditional swimming pool lifeguards. Use the Sikome Aquatic Facility at your own risk.
- Parents/guardians must be in arms reach of children under 12.

Conservation Officers

Conservation Officers are present on-site during facility operating hours. They are empowered to enforce the [Provincial Parks Act](#) and other provincial statutes.

First Aid & Emergencies

- First aid services are available from staff on-site.
- If there is an emergency, please stay clear of the accident area.
- Sikome Aquatic Facility may have emergency closures for safety reasons such as overcrowding or weather hazards. Please cooperate and follow staff instructions at these times.

6. Resources

Alberta Parks Employee Assignments on Monday August 11, 2014

Resources on scene

6 Alberta Parks Aquatic and 1 gate staff

2 Alberta Conservation Officers & 2 Seasonal Park Rangers

Upon dispatch of the incident;

City of Calgary Police Services

Alberta Health Services (EMS)

Alberta Parks Area Management

Incident Command lead by the City of Calgary Fire Department Dive Rescue team

Tuesday August 12, 2014

Resources on scene

Incident Command lead by City of Calgary Fire Department Dive Rescue team

Calgary Police Service

Alberta Conservation Officers

Kananaskis Public Safety

Alberta Parks Area Management

Wednesday August 13, 2014

Incident Command - Alberta Parks

Command scribe

Calgary Police Service

Alberta Conservation Officers

Kananaskis Public Safety

City of Calgary Dive Team

Calgary Police Service – Victim Services Unit

7. Conclusion / Recommendations

Aquatic staff performed well on the day of the Incident and within the established standard operating procedures. The staff members involved in the rescue efforts should be recognized for saving the lives of the infant and two adults.

Overall, Alberta Parks provided the level of service that was advertised to the public and quickly responded to the emergency. As with incidents of this complexity there are always incremental improvements that can be recommended for review, discussion and potential adjustment; these are included below.

- Alberta Parks should consider developing additional public messaging in drowning prevention. Alberta Parks has a strong relationship with the Royal Canadian Lifesaving Society, as exhibited by the Lifejacket Loaner Station Program. Alberta Parks could work with the Society on expanding the program to other Alberta Parks waterfront facilities or on the development of brochures / public information messages that focus on drowning prevention at all Alberta Parks' waterfront facilities.

Alberta Parks Conservation Officers and Aquatic staff can better coordinate the opening of the southern parking lot and gate access as well as the beach and waterfront access at the Lake. While the opening of the south gate to permit travel convenience is not considered a factor in the Incident, Alberta Parks should consider as a standard practise, not opening the south gate and permitting public access for convenience, unless the beach and waterfront is opened for public use. Sikome Lake has an extensive trail network and members of the public who park in the south parking lot can use the trail network to gain access through the primary north gate access point.

- Sikome Lake aquatic staff should consider a formal daily briefing session as employees come on shift to ensure that the daily operations and objectives are clearly available to all staff upon the start of their shift.
- Radio channel synchronicity amongst work units would be more efficient with a software update to the radio channel guides. While this issue did not negatively affect operations on the day of the Incident, commonly named channels will aid in daily operational efficiencies.