

# Alberta's Plan for Parks

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the *Plan for Parks*?**

Alberta's *Plan for Parks* is a blueprint for managing provincial parks over the next ten years. It balances conservation and recreation objectives, considering the important role parks play in the environmental, economic, and social needs of Albertans.

### **Why does Alberta need a *Plan for Parks*?**

Alberta's rapidly growing population is putting pressure on our parks. Many existing facilities are strained to meet the increasing and changing demands for outdoor recreational experiences.

The need to manage our natural resources responsibly is equally important. Parks protect ecosystems vital to our province's environmental health. They are home to natural species, historic and cultural landmarks and breathtaking landscapes.

Albertans have a deep connection to the land, and over the next ten years, the province will focus on achieving the vision of the *Plan for Parks*:

*Alberta's parks inspire people to discover, value, protect, and enjoy the natural world and the benefits it provides for current and future generations.*

### **Who did you consult with on the *Plan for Parks*?**

The *Plan for Parks* is based on extensive consultations with Aboriginal communities, stakeholder organizations, park visitors, elected officials, government staff and others.

### **What are the key strategies in the *Plan for Parks*?**

There are four key strategies outlined in the *Plan for Parks*. They are:

#### **Strategy #1: Involve Albertans**

- o Implement a regional planning model
- o Create a Parks Advisory Council
- o Engage Aboriginal communities
- o Develop a process for nominating new provincial parks
- o Ensure accountability through milestones and deliverables

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- o Diversify existing volunteer programs and partnerships

### **Strategy #2: Offer modern facilities, policies and programs**

- o Develop a central reservation system
- o Upgrade, restore and expand park facilities
- o Refine the parks classification system

### **Strategy #3: Provide recreation opportunities**

- o Identify and develop opportunities for recreation
- o Encourage interest and opportunity in parks
- o Implement an inclusion strategy to enhance visitor experiences

### **Strategy #4: Conserve landscapes**

- o Facilitate contributions to parks
- o Balance in the parks system
- o Foster evidence-based decision-making

### **How is the *Plan for Parks* aligned with the Land-use Framework?**

The *Plan for Parks* shares the outcomes of the Land-use Framework, and uses the geographic boundaries introduced in the Land-use Framework.

### **Will Albertans have a say in managing provincial parks?**

The Alberta government is committed to building regional management plans for provincial parks with the participation of the people who live within those regions.

Under the *Plan for Parks*, Albertans will have opportunities to provide input on issues as varied as camping and recreational opportunities, ecosystem conservation and economic development. This is a new approach to parks management.

### **What is the difference between regional plans and site specific management plans?**

Regional plans will provide broad management direction and set overall management parameters for an area. This will help to minimize and simplify the requirement for site specific management plans.

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Regional plans will also contribute to the Land-use Framework regional planning process, which is why the regional boundaries outlined in the *Plan for Parks* are the same as those in the Land-use Framework.

To ensure the management of parks aligns with the Government of Alberta's strategic direction, Alberta's *Plan for Parks* includes key planning elements from the Land-use Framework, and shares its desired outcomes:

- o People-friendly communities and recreational opportunities
- o Healthy ecosystems and environment
- o Sustainable prosperity supported by our land and natural resources

### **How will the Parks Advisory Council work?**

A Parks Advisory Council with representation from the public and private sector, academia, and Aboriginal communities will be appointed by the Minister.

The Parks Advisory Council will draw on the expertise of its members to provide input and advice to the Minister on park policies and initiatives, and provide a forum for discussion of trends, issues and challenges affecting Alberta's provincial parks.

### **Will the Plan for Parks offer new private sector opportunities in parks?**

Approximately 70 per cent of Alberta's provincial park campgrounds are run by private operators, and a large number of guides and outfitters provide recreational opportunities in parks also.

Under the *Plan for Parks*, a policy to encourage innovative private sector involvement in parks will be developed in order to enhance and diversify visitor experiences.

### **Will you be adding new parks to the system?**

Under the *Plan for Parks*, a clear process will be developed for Albertans to nominate new parks, or recommend the expansion of

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existing parks. The local community will be fully engaged in the process of reviewing or nominating new parks in their area.

### **Why does the *Plan for Parks* talk about creating more OHV areas?**

Under the *Plan for Parks*, the province will continue to provide safe, secure opportunities for families to relax and enjoy Alberta's natural surroundings. The province is looking to expand the parks system to accommodate both recreation and conservation needs.

There is limited OHV use in provincial parks and recreation areas. OHV's are allowed on designated trails in some Wildland Parks and two Provincial Recreation Areas. With growing demand for motorized recreation opportunities in Alberta, comes the need to designate and appropriately manage motorized recreation trails.

There are no immediate plans to expand motorized vehicle use in existing provincial parks, however the province is looking for opportunities to connect trails outside of parks to staging areas in some provincial recreation areas.

The province will continue to work with the Recreation Corridors Coordinating Committee and to expand and manage the recreational trails system throughout the province.

### **How will the *Plan for Parks* be funded?**

Budget 2009 proposes more than \$67 million for park programs and operations, and \$18 million to upgrade and maintain park infrastructure.

Over the last five years, the province has invested nearly \$225 million in park facilities and infrastructure. Significant improvements have been made to the parks system, including new visitor centres at Cypress Hills and Writing on Stone provincial parks in southern Alberta, and major park upgrades at Miquelon Lake, Cypress Hills and William A. Switzer provincial parks.

### **What is a province-wide inclusion strategy?**

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A province-wide inclusion strategy will increase available opportunities and invite full participation of Albertans at provincial parks.

This includes not only increasing access opportunities for Albertans with mobility challenges, and encouraging new Albertans to visit parks, but also offering volunteer and employment opportunities at provincial parks.

### **When will the new online campground reservation service be available?**

A new online campsite reservation service for provincial campgrounds will be introduced this year. Twenty five campgrounds with more than 2800 campsites have been selected for the first phase of this project which begins on May 1, 2009. To learn more about the online reservation service, go to [www.Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca](http://www.Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca).

### **How can I get a copy of the *Plan for Parks*?**

The *Plan for Parks* is available online at [www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks/P4P](http://www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks/P4P) or please call 1-866-427-3582 to request a copy by mail.

### **Who do I talk to if I need more information on the *Plan for Parks*?**

Please call 1-866-427-3582 or email [parknews@gov.ab.ca](mailto:parknews@gov.ab.ca) for more information.