



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

June 28, 2014

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Northeast Region
9503 Beaverhill Road
Lac La Biche, AB T0A 2C0

Email: ParkNews@gov.ab.ca

AWA Comments on Proposed Camping Cabins in Lakeland Provincial Park

Dear Alberta Parks:

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) appreciates this public consultation opportunity to comment on the proposal to build five camping cabins inside Lakeland Provincial Park at Jackson and Kinnaird Lakes.

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA), founded in 1965, works throughout Alberta towards more representative and connected protection of the unique and vital landscapes that are the source of our clean water, clean air and vital habitat for wildlife in each of our six natural regions. With over 7,000 members and supporters, we help Albertans learn more about the value of our wilderness and wildlife, and participate in opportunities to protect and care for the legacy that we will leave for future generations.

In AWA's view, the proposed camping cabins will harm the backcountry wilderness character of Lakeland Provincial Park. In addition, they are completely unnecessary from an access viewpoint given the numerous nearby opportunities to enjoy fixed roof camping in RVs and rental cabins in rustic lakeside settings.

The creation of Lakeland Provincial Park was an extremely important step in the preservation of a wilderness area in the southern part of Alberta's large boreal central mixedwood natural subregion. Lakeland Provincial Park, with its diverse topography, water bodies and wetlands, is unusually rich in biodiversity, as identified in the surveys leading to its creation. It is therefore a very important wildlife refuge in comparison to the surrounding industrializing Green Zone and the mechanized recreation emphasized in the large, adjacent Lakeland Provincial Recreation Area (PRA). It is very different from these adjacent areas because of the phaseout of oil and gas development, the absence of oilsands, commercial forestry and hunting, the scaling back of linear footprint and the near elimination of

motorized trail access. Lakeland Provincial Park should remain a backcountry experience with few but well maintained trails aimed at self-propelled recreation, and no fixed roofs to urbanize the experience there.

The overwhelming number of canoeists and hikers in the Provincial Park cherishes its backcountry nature. Instead of Alberta Parks applying a 'facilities upgrade' mission in a way that could destroy this backcountry character, it should upgrade Lakeland Provincial Park's long-neglected trails and docks. From our own staff and members' experiences in June 2014, and from canoeist comments received after the May long weekend 2014, the Park's docks, portage trails and other trails are still in great need of better maintenance. Many users would also like to see either no motor boat access, or at the very least, firm restrictions on motor size in view of the larger and larger motor boats that are now seen on Alberta's only backcountry canoe circuit.

If these camping cabins are built, there will undoubtedly be pressures to ensure they are well booked year round. In pursuit of higher usage numbers, pressures will grow to allow cabin access via motor boats, snowmobiles and eventually ATVs. This will be a great setback for what will soon be the only relatively unmechanized area in the entire Lakeland region outside parts of the Air Weapons Range.

It is misleading to point to the lack of Alberta Parks' backcountry cabins in northeast Alberta to justify Parks' building and operating cabins in Lakeland Provincial Park. There is plenty of fixed roof camping access on the 200 sites now operated by Alberta Parks in the beautiful rustic lakeside RV campgrounds throughout the adjacent Lakeland PRA. Within an hour's drive from the town of Lac La Biche, there are numerous rental cabins available in rustic locations, including Pinehurst Lake (on private lands within Lakeland PRA), Elinor Lake, Whitefish Lake and around Lac La Biche itself. From an access viewpoint, it is completely unnecessary to build and operate cabins inside Lakeland Provincial Park.

We urge Alberta Parks to decide against further urbanization of the rare and important wilderness area that is Lakeland Provincial Park, by not proceeding with the camping cabins proposal. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Carolyn Campbell
Conservation Specialist

cc: Graham Statt, Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Parks
Norbert Raffael, Operations Manager, Alberta Parks Northeast
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