

Alberta ESRD Website Documentation on Provincial Grazing Reserves

Provincial Grazing Reserves

There are 32 provincial grazing reserves located throughout Alberta. They are administered by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Some of the reserves, or community pastures, are natural (native) grassland, while others have been partially cleared and seeded to tame forage. They range in size from 6,602 acres (Seven Persons) to 76,681 acres (Pinhorn). The overall average is close to 22,500 acres.

The main purpose of these reserves is to provide summer pasture for Alberta's farmers and ranchers on public land, enabling them to use their own land for crop and hay production. The reserves also offer a variety of recreational opportunities including hunting, hiking, trail riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and sightseeing. Others who use grazing land are oil and gas well operators, pipeline companies, gravel haulers and seismic crews. Large portions of the reserves also provide excellent habitat for wildlife.

To assist recreational users and other visitors, maps that clearly show access routes are available from the regional grazing reserve office. These access routes are trails that provide the public optimum access to the reserve while minimizing both damage to the grazing lands and conflicts with the livestock operation and other users.

The Alberta Government launched its grazing reserve program at the Twin River site in 1934. With the establishment of the Purple Springs irrigated reserve in 1957, the province initiated the concept of grazing large cattle herds on irrigated pasture. In addition to having Alberta's only irrigated reserves, the Southern region also contains the two largest reserves in the province. The 76,388 acre Sage Creek reserve and the 76,681 acre Pinhorn reserve both surpass the third largest reserve by more than 36,000 acres. The Pinhorn and Sage Creek reserves also encompass two of the largest tracts of intact native prairie left in Alberta.

Through the Grazing Reserve Program, the province has pioneered the development of tame pasture from tree-covered areas on a large scale. The reserves are generally on poor quality soils that are not suitable for annual cropping. If these areas are developed properly, they can yield high quality pasture. Part of the pioneering has been finding ways and means to retain good quality developed pastures, even though nature continues to try its best to re-establish the tree growth that originally existed on these lands.

The newer reserves, developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, posed tough planning problems. The pasture sites were frequently used by hunters and other recreational users. There was also the question of how to maintain wildlife habitat. These and other demands on the land, some of them conflicting, had to be resolved while planning and developing the sites to accommodate the needs of farmers and ranchers who wanted grazing pastures for their cattle. This planning of development initiated the multiple use concept that is now practiced on all public land in Alberta.

On April 1, 1999, the responsibility for the care, handling and management of livestock and the forage resources was transferred to grazing reserve associations. Use of the grazing reserves by the associations is authorized by grazing management agreements.

These agreements outline the responsibilities of the Alberta Government and each grazing reserve association to meet the Provincial Grazing Reserve Program's mission, vision and goals.

Mission

To deliver, through grazing management agreements on 32 provincial grazing reserves, a public land base of 720,000 acres that is managed for a variety of uses in an environmentally sound, sustainable manner, while protecting public investment and providing economic and social benefits to Albertans.

Vision

To have excellent stewardship of the provincial grazing reserves, with optimized forage production, integrated multiple use and environmental protection. Albertans will enjoy economic and social benefits from the grazing and other uses and values of these public lands.

Goals

1. The use of grazing to ensure a productive forage resource through environmentally sound, sustainable resource management.
2. The integration of a variety of land uses and conservation, through objective and unbiased decision making, with input from the grazing reserves associations, general public and other stakeholders.
3. Protect the public's investment by ensuring the grazing reserve assets are properly maintained or replaced as required.
4. Ensure the principles of environmentally balanced pasture and water management by the grazing reserve associations are incorporated into the annual operating plans.
5. Provide areas designated for resource conservation and suitable habitats for wildlife.
6. Provide continued public access by managing to reduce conflict with grazing, other resource uses and conservation.
7. Provide opportunities for the economic and social benefits to users of the provincial grazing reserves.
8. Provide a monitoring program that ensures the mission, vision and goals are being achieved.

From AB ESRD Website Dated October 27, 2006

<http://srd.alberta.ca/LandsForests/ProvincialGrazingReserves/Default.aspx>

Use of PGRs

To All Visitors

You are welcome at all provincial grazing reserves in Alberta, whether you are taking advantage of the recreational opportunities available or just enjoying the scenery and the great outdoors. However, please remember the primary purpose of the reserves is for summer livestock grazing.

For your safety and to avoid any conflicts with the grazing operation, some areas have restricted use during certain times of the year. Maps showing access points and trails are available from this site or from the regional grazing reserve office. Please use the following access guidelines to help you make your trip to the grazing reserve a safe, enjoyable experience.

Please [contact](#) the regional grazing reserve office about any restrictions to the timing, types and areas of recreation activities. You may require a letter of authority stating the conditions of the approved recreation use.

- Pastures that are occupied by livestock are not available to the recreation user. For security reasons and for the safety of the recreation user, these pastures are generally locked during the grazing season.
- Motorized access (including off highway vehicles) is restricted to developed roads.
- Please observe the Use Respect Program in place at grazing reserves by obtaining the necessary approval for access, respecting the land and its resources, and not damaging any property or equipment.

- Please leave gates as you find them and observe any signs that are in place at the access points to the reserve.
- Organized recreational groups will require a letter of authority to use the reserves. Please contact the regional grazing reserve office prior to entering a grazing reserve.
- You are responsible for your own liability while you are on a grazing reserve.
- You will be required to repair or replace any property and/or equipment that you indirectly or directly damage during your visit.
- If you encounter any suspicious hunting or fishing activities on your trip please report these activities to the nearest Fish and Wildlife office or call the 24 hour Report A Poacher line at 1-800-642-3800.
- Please keep the grazing reserves clean of litter and debris by packing out everything that you take in.

Thank you and enjoy your visit.

The application deadlines for the Southeast and Northeast Regions are January 15th and for the Southwest and Northwest Regions are January 31st. Applications can be obtained from and are submitted to the office locations below.

Emergency grazing does not apply to the provincial grazing reserves. All grazing is allocated during the allotment process.

From AB ESRD Website dated January 14, 2008

<http://srd.alberta.ca/LandsForests/ProvincialGrazingReserves/UseOfPGRs.aspx>

Sage Creek Grazing Reserve

Established:	1978
Area:	76,388 acres (30,913 hectares)
Terrain:	Gently rolling to rolling with eroded areas in some of the coulee breaks
Vegetation:	Dry mixed grass
Region:	Dry mixed grass sub-region of the grassland natural region
Nearby municipalities:	32 km from the village of Manyberries
Water bodies:	Nil
Livestock management:	Sage Creek Grazing Association (effective April 1, 1997) Maintains the fences, dugouts, dams, corral systems and the buildings located at the headquarters.
Grazing season:	Mid-May to mid-October
Cattle:	Black Angus Charolais Red Angus

Capacity:	1860 head of livestock
Wildlife and game:	Burrowing Owls Deer Kit Foxes Pronghorn Antelope Richardson's Ground Squirrels Upland game birds
Recreational activities:	Hunting
Industrial activities:	Oil and natural gas production

The Sage Creek Grazing Association, under a renewable grazing management agreement from the government, agreed to accept the responsibility of livestock management on its reserve on April 1, 1997. With this responsibility, the association agreed to maintain the fences, dugouts, corral systems and the buildings located at the headquarters. The headquarter site is somewhat unique in that it's located some distance from either corral system. The primary reason for the location of the building site was the easy and inexpensive access to utilities (power and telephone) and a good ground water supply. This natural region supports an abundance of diverse wildlife, including Richardson's ground squirrels, burrowing owls, kit foxes, deer and pronghorn antelope. As the site isn't close to a city or large town, it doesn't attract a large number of recreational people, but it does offer one of the best locations in Alberta to hunt deer and antelope.

Stocking rates for the pasture were set after making a liberal allowance for grazing wildlife. The allowance agreed to is that the carry-over of the current year's growth is to be 70 per cent. Under normal native range grazing, only 50 per cent carry over is required to ensure plant vigour. The large size of the reserve, coupled with the low carrying capacity, required the establishment of large grazing pastures.

Regulatory Conditions of Recreational Access

Under Sections 9(3) and 9(4) of the Recreational Access Regulation, recreational users must:

- not litter;
- have direct control of any animal brought onto the agricultural disposition land;
- not park vehicles so that they block an approach to land;
- not enter or use any building or improvement on the disposition;
- not cause any damage to the agricultural disposition land or the property of the disposition holder;
- leave gates and other property as they were found;
- comply with an applicable recreational management plan, if any; and
- comply with the restrictions, prohibitions, terms and conditions, if any, imposed by the Local Settlement Officer, or Director.

For more information, see:

- [Recreational Access Regulation](#)

Specific Access Conditions for this Disposition

- LSO conditions - No recreational access is permitted in pastures where livestock are grazing.
- LSO conditions - Recreational motorized vehicles allowed on existing gravel trails and roads only.
- LSO conditions - No fires permitted at any time.
- LSO condition - No recreational motorized vehicles allowed during a fire ban imposed by the Local Fire Authority.
- LSO condition - No overnight camping is permitted.

From AB ESRD Website dated January 14, 2008

<http://srd.alberta.ca/LandsForests/ProvincialGrazingReserves/SoutheastPGRs/SageCreek.aspx>