

Castle Parks Management Plan

Annotated Draft Table of Contents

*Note: the Management Plan will include the sections listed below. Management goals and objectives will be developed for each section. Italicized text boxes below demonstrate recommended management intent for the Minister’s consideration; however, if desired, intent can be modified to better reflect Minister’s direction (i.e. whether OHV and/or hunting are permitted in provincial park). Many sections have standard wording that is used in all management plans, and so these sections were left blank.

Glossary of Terms

Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

Purpose and Objectives

Management Vision

- *Conservation of nature will be the primary, overriding objective of both parks. Compatible, nature-based recreation will be permitted and responsibly managed, provided it is aligned with the overall conservation intent.*
- *Prioritized management intent for both parks:*
 1. *Conservation*
 2. *Headwaters protection*
 3. *Indigenous rights*
 4. *Grazing*
 5. *Hunting*
 6. *Outdoor recreation/tourism*
- *The provincial park would provide facilities and infrastructure to support a front-country experience (e.g. auto-accessible campgrounds, staging areas, picnic areas, information, etc.). The provincial park would be the focus for any educational or informational programs provided for visitors.*
- *The wildland provincial park would provide for back-country and wilderness experiences where facilities, including trails, would be compatible with protection of conservation values. There would be limited built infrastructure, if any, and visitors, depending on the mode of travel could experience day length trips to multi-day length trips that require a high level of self-reliance.*

Guiding Principles

- *Describes planning principles utilized in development of management direction, including:*
 - *Environmental leadership: management and operations demonstrate environmental leadership and showcase best practices in energy and water efficiency, environmental design, construction practices and products.*

- *Evidence based decision-making: decision-making is informed by natural and social science, evidence and experience, which includes traditional knowledge.*
- *Integrated management: management decisions consider the combined impacts of environmental, economic and social factors.*
- *Accountability: milestones and deliverables are established and Albertans receive timely information about progress in achieving desired outcomes.*
- *Collaboration and citizen engagement: the decision-making process is inclusive and transparent. Through greater collaboration we create increased value for visitors and achieve common goals.*
- *Inclusion: we work to ensure facilities and programs are designed so that everyone's needs are considered.*

The Planning Process

- *Milestones:*
 - *Pre-planning (includes development of planning strategy and engagement) – 3 months, March-May*
 - *Issues identification and planning strategies (includes engagement) – 4 months, June-September*
 - *Drafting of the plan – 4 months, October-January 2017*
 - *Consultation on the draft plan – 2 months, February-March 2017*
 - *Finalizing the plan – 1 month, April 2017*
 - *Public release of approved plan*
- *Public/stakeholder involvement points*
 - *Early engagement of user groups will be key in the planning process to ensure their concerns and issues are considered in the development of management options. This will include workshops to test various scenarios related to conservation and recreation outcomes.*
 - *Partnerships in information gathering will be pursued, for example with academia, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, recreational users, etc.*

Alberta's Provincial Parks System

Vision

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

Desired Outcomes

- *There are three desired outcomes for the provincial parks system:*
 - *People friendly communities and recreational opportunities;*
 - *Healthy ecosystems and environment; and*
 - *Sustainable prosperity supported by our land and natural resources.*

Natural Regions Framework

- *One of the main purposes of the Alberta parks system is to preserve the natural*

landscapes, features and processes that represent the province's environmental diversity. In Alberta, the Natural Regions Framework describes that environmental diversity. The Natural Regions Framework is a landscape classification hierarchy that identifies landscape types based on natural characteristics including: landform, hydrology, climate, geology, soils, and vegetation.

- *This section will describe the specific natural subregions for the Castle parks.*

Role in the System Statement

- *Is a succinct statement that describes the overall purpose of the site in the larger provincial parks network. For example, the role in the system statement for the Castle parks will identify that the primary objective for the Castle parks is for conservation, and the value of these parks for biodiversity conservation, headwaters protection and ecological connectivity.*

Site Significance Statement

- *Summarizes the important natural, cultural, and recreational values of the parks. The site significance statement helps to succinctly describe the individual site attributes and associated site management.*

Park Classification, Legislation and Policy

Integration with Regional Planning Initiatives

- *Describes the interface with adjacent Public Land use Zones, the surrounding landbase and municipalities, including any alignment of objectives such as alignment of education and enforcement efforts with the adjacent Porcupine Hills.*
- *Where possible, trail networks would be linked between the parks and Public Land use Zones; recreational uses that are inappropriate for the parks could be redirected to these Public Land use Zones if considered appropriate uses for those areas.*

Regional Context

Location and Access

Site History

2.0 Conservation and Protection

Geology, Landforms and Soils

Biodiversity

Flora and Vegetation

Fauna

Species at Risk

- *Protect critical Westslope Cutthroat trout habitat which is aligned with the recent federal announcement regarding the changes to the Species at Risk Act.*

Cultural Heritage

- Listing of Historical Resources in the Parks
- Current and Historical Indigenous traditional land uses
- Treaty Rights and traditional land uses
- Cultural practice sites

Climate Change

Headwaters and Water Resources

- Protecting the headwaters to sustain southern Alberta through increased management of surrounding land use.*

Vegetation Management

General

- A vegetation management strategy will be developed, with the primary objective of conserving biodiversity. It will address issues such as invasive species, fire and grazing, in more detail, including permitted locations and conditions for ongoing harvesting of Christmas trees and firewood.*

Invasive Species

Fire

Grazing

- Grazing is a permitted use in both parks, with conservation of biodiversity as the primary objective. AUMs will be monitored and adjusted if necessary, to meet this primary objective. Best practices in livestock management will be encouraged, to minimize impacts to water quality, fish habitats, and to prevent the spread of invasive species or manure pollutants. For example, by limiting access of livestock to riparian areas.*
- Grazing will be managed in collaboration with the grazing allotment holders to ensure protection of biodiversity.*
- New grazing in the provincial park will be subject to a grazing suitability assessment. No new grazing will be permitted in the wildland provincial park.*

Adjacent Land Use and Development

3.0 Tourism and Community

Park Facilities and Infrastructure

- See bullets on recreation*

Tourism Services and Facilities

- Major Tourism facilities such as golf courses or hotels would be directed to neighbouring communities and would not be permitted within the parks.*

- *Tourism services such as guiding or outfitting would be permitted in both the parks, subject to standard EP conditions.*
- *Development of a hut-to-hut network for non-motorized recreationalists may be considered, similar to what is in national parks and BC Parks, so long as primary conservation objective is not impacted.*

Community Engagement

4.0 Learning and Engagement

- *All messaging would connect to the primary objective of conservation for the parks. More detailed messaging would be provided on the importance of headwater protection and recreating responsibly. Collaboration will be sought with nearby First Nations and communities to partner on messaging, and to participate in each other's information, stewardship and outreach programs.*

Interpretive Programming

Information Services

Environmental Education and Stewardship

Outreach

5.0 Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living

Recreation

- *The recreational experience in both the provincial park and wildland would be considered 'rustic'. Recreational activities in the Wildland will also be wilderness oriented, and require self-reliance.*
- *Formalized campgrounds will continue in the provincial park, and may include expansion of capacity and addition of modern services such as electricity.*
- *Random camping within the provincial park will be managed via designated 'random camping areas' which will be predetermined based on location, historical use and their ability to sustain ongoing camping. Within the designated area, campers will be able to organize into groups of units, or not, and limited services such as a toilet or garbage may be provided. See attached designs.*
- *Random camping within the wildland will only occur in designated backcountry camping areas. These backcountry areas may be accessed by motorized recreational users, non-motorized users, or both, depending on the trail used to access the site.*

Trails System

Motorized trails

- *Highway vehicles of any sort (e.g. 4x4s, jeeps) would not be permitted on the designated trail network.*
- *OHV use will continue in both the WPP and PP, but the existing trail network in the would be assessed and trails (and other linear disturbances) would be reclaimed to a trail threshold that supports protection of biodiversity, species at risk habitat (i.e. grizzly bear and Westslope Cutthroat trout), headwaters and appropriate visitor experiences.*

- *Most of the motorized trail network would be in the provincial park designation. The OHV experience in the wildland provincial park would be geared toward destinations (e.g. designated backcountry motorized access campground, viewpoints) within the wildland connecting to and accessed from a broader trail network in the provincial park and on adjacent land. There may be limited connectivity to OHV trails within the wildland park to help support the destination oriented OHV use.*
- *OHV use will be on designated OHV trails only.*
- *Seasonal restrictions may be placed on OHV trail use to ensure protection of conservation values.*

Non-Motorized trails

- *Staging areas would be located in the provincial park with supporting infrastructure (i.e. information, washrooms, etc.).*
- *Provincial park would support a higher density of trail network to support non-motorized trail uses offering opportunities for short day use (front-country) to multi-day use that connect to the wildland provincial park.*
- *The existing trail network within the wildland provincial park would be assessed and trails (and other linear disturbances) would be reclaimed to a trail threshold that supports protection of biodiversity, species at risk, headwaters and appropriate visitor experiences.*
- *The trail network would also be assessed to identify opportunities for compatible multi-use trails and where user conflicts can be minimized.*

Hunting

- *As in all wildlands, hunting will be a permitted use in the Castle WPP where not prohibited due to public safety concerns.*
- *All access for hunting would be restricted to designated trails only.*
- *As a longstanding historical activity, hunting will also continue to be a permitted activity in the Castle PP. However it will be managed with public safety as primary objective and precluded from areas in the provincial park where public safety is a concern. This includes public roadways, facility zones and occupied buildings.*
- *Firearms discharge permit would be required to hunt within both parks.*
- *Where necessary, collaborate with Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch regarding seasons and licence allocations for WMU 400.*

Access

Public Safety

- *Similar to Kananaskis, public safety services would be provided in the Castle parks, such as search and rescue.*
- *Enforcement will be critical to ensure user safety and help change user habits to manage use and minimize environmental impacts.*

6.0 Park Zoning Framework

7.0 Research, Monitoring and Adaptive Management

- *The Castle parks can serve as benchmarks to compare changes in biodiversity outside of the parks caused by climate change and management techniques*
- *Prioritized science and research questions*
- *Monitoring and reporting needs*

8.0 Implementation and Review

References

Maps

Appendices

Permitted Uses Table:

| Permitted Use | Provincial Park | Wildland Provincial Park |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Motorized Recreational Use | Yes, on trails designated for that use OHV Staging areas (or on adjacent public lands) | Yes, on trails designated for that use |
| Mountain Biking | Yes, on designated trails only | Yes, on designated trails only |
| Equestrian Use | Yes, in designated areas | Yes, in designated areas |
| Hiking | Yes | Yes |
| Climbing/Caving | Yes | Yes |
| Water Based Recreation | Yes | Yes |
| Auto Access Camping | Yes, in designated areas | No |
| Random Camping | Yes, in designated camping areas | Yes, in designated camping areas |
| Hunting | Yes, where not precluded for public safety reasons | Yes |
| Grazing | Yes, existing New, subject to a grazing suitability assessment | Yes, existing |
| Tourism Development | Yes, tourism infrastructure and facilities | Yes, tourism products |

Designated Un-Serviced Camping Areas – Draft Design

VISITOR EXPERIENCE:

This type of completely rustic and unstructured facility area would cater to current random camping users, who are fully self-supported and looking for a less formal, road-access camping area that provides access to the backcountry/wilderness trail system (motorized and non-motorized) and natural features of the Castle.



LEGEND:

- O.H.V. TRAIL HEAD
- CAMPERS, TRAILERS OR MOTOR HOMES
- FIRE PIT RING
- TENTS
- TRAILS
- CAMPING BOUNDARY
- NO CAMPING WITHIN FORESTED AREA

NOTES:

- NO GARBAGE FACILITY
- NO WASHROOMS
- NO RUNNING WATER
- NO POWER
- NO FIREWOOD

DESIGNATED UN-SERVICED CAMPGROUND CONCEPT

SCALE: 1:500
DATE: JULY 31, 2015

VISITOR EXPERIENCE:

This type of basic road-access facility would cater to visitors looking for a rustic camping opportunity with some minimal support (such as pit toilets and fire pits) and access to the mid-country and backcountry trail systems (motorized and non-motorized). Facilities in existing provincial recreation area campgrounds could be augmented by the addition of new limited-service campgrounds that could be designed to accommodate much larger camping units and could include motorized or equestrian staging and access to trails.



LEGEND:

- O.H.V. TRAIL HEAD
- VAULT TOILETS
- WASTE BINS
- CAMPERS, TRAILERS OR MOTOR HOMES
- FIRE PIT RING
- TENTS
- TRAILS
- CAMPING BOUNDARY
- NO CAMPING WITHIN FORESTED AREA

NOTES:

- NO RUNNING WATER
- NO POWER
- NO FIREWOOD

DESIGNATED LIMITED SERVICE CAMPGROUND CONCEPT

SCALE: 1:500
DATE: JULY 31, 2015