

AWA's Survey Responses to Bighorn Country Proposal

On November 23rd, the Government of Alberta launched a consultation process on *Bighorn Country*. For the consultation process, the government has developed a survey which asks questions about specific areas in the Bighorn.

We have set up a quick online tool for you to write to the Bighorn Consultation team and your local representative at tinyurl.com/bighorncountry

Alternatively, you can write an email of support to aep.bighorncountry@gov.ab.ca

The deadline for public participation is January 31, 2019

Information about Bighorn Country and your opportunity for public comment here:

<https://talkaep.alberta.ca/bighorn-country>

An overview of the whole proposal is available at: <https://talkaep.alberta.ca/6512/documents/12744>

Survey: <https://albertaparks.ca/BighornCountry>

The following are AWA's survey responses along with our rationale.

Q1. Please indicate which areas of Bighorn Country you would like to provide input on.

AWA Response: "all areas of Bighorn Country"

Note: If you are interested in filling out the survey, you have a choice on which questions you would like to respond to.

BIGHORN WILDLAND PROVINCIAL PARK

Q2. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park?

2a) To support conservation objectives: AWA agrees that the mandate of the park must be the "conservation of biodiversity in an undeveloped natural landscape that retains the character that drew users to the area in the first place".

2b) To support recreation objectives: AWA agrees that traditional activities including hiking, horseback riding, backcountry camping, hunting and fishing are compatible with a Wildland Park designation. However, we emphasize that AWA does not support the use of off-highway vehicles for game retrieval or for any other recreational purpose in provincial parks or wildland parks. Traditional forms of game retrieval (by foot or horsepack) are a more compatible use with park values and will have the additional benefit of supporting local outfitters and guides in the area.

Our main concern is that continued OHV use is being proposed for the Wildland Provincial Park without a systematic review of the sustainability of these trails. In addition, AWA opposes the creation of any new designated OHV trails in the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park. Any such trails, and the activity they invite, clearly contradict what the Bighorn Country Proposal document identifies as the Visitor Experience goal of a Wildland Provincial Park: "Protected areas where the primary purpose is the



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conservation of nature on large, healthy landscapes with opportunities for backcountry/wilderness recreation and experiencing nature in a relatively undisturbed state.” Furthermore, it is a serious mistake to limit “direct consultation” to local off-highway vehicle organizations when it comes to developing sustainable trails – our organization has been a steward of the Bighorn since the 1960s and, along with other non-motorized interests, should be part of any trail development consultation.

Since 2003, AWA has monitored OHV traffic levels within and has physically walked the trails of the Bighorn on an annual basis, recording the effects of OHV use (and abuse) on the landscape. In our 14 years of documentation of the Hummingbird Trail system, we are able to say with confidence that the current level of OHV use in the fragile landscapes of the prime protection and critical wildlife zones is unsustainable. Our trail monitoring work makes it abundantly clear that confining OHV use to designated trails is not necessarily a solution to the damage OHVs can do to the land.

2c) To support tourism development objectives AWA believes development must be focused within adjacent public land use areas and nearby gateway communities in order to support the local economy. There is no need to encourage or accept development within the Wildland Provincial Park. Local gateway communities need the support this designation will bring to their amenities, hotels, grocery stores and more. Development within this Wildland paradise will degrade the very wilderness values that legislated designation and Wildland Provincial Park protection is meant to provide. AWA is opposed to the use of helicopters for tourism/recreation purposes over such wilderness lands. Helicopter access to these lands must only be allowed for essential official or safety reasons where it does not adversely affect wildlife, fragile terrain and the human enjoyment of nature by non-motorized means.

Q3. What would be your level of support for the following outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism experiences and services in the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park?

3a) Designated backcountry trail networks AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA agrees that the creation of backcountry trails may be necessary in order to manage high volumes of human use in certain areas but AWA cautions that careful review and deliberation must be taken when considering any level of development in the Wildland Provincial Park. Comprehensive, ecosystem based planning must be done to ensure there are secure corridors for wildlife that are free of any human use.

3b) Designated backcountry non-motorized camping areas including equestrian camping areas AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA agrees that the creation of backcountry campgrounds may be necessary in order to manage high volumes of human use in certain areas but AWA cautions that careful review and deliberation must be taken when considering any level of development in the Wildland Provincial Park. Comprehensive, ecosystem based planning must be done to ensure there are secure corridors for wildlife that are free of any human use.

3c) Backcountry travel opportunities (e.g. guided tours, hut to hut) AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA is supportive of traditional activities, such as local outfitters and guides currently operating in the area, but does not support the development of backcountry huts or helicopter tours in the area as these activities urbanize and can lead to degradation of wildness of the area.



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Q4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park? AWA Response: Very Satisfied From secure clean water, to vibrant healthy forests and habitat for native and threatened species, protection of the Bighorn is long overdue.

DAVID THOMPSON PROVINCIAL PARK

Q5. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for David Thompson Provincial Park?

5a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] AWA objects to the apparent downgrading of protection for the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve, largely because there is discretion in the management zoning compared to a standalone Ecological Reserve designation. The focus of David Thompson Provincial Park should be to ensure this important Montane ecosystem is secure and that ecological value of the area is protected.

AWA is very concerned about allowing hunting in the proposed Provincial Parks. These parks are relatively small, will contain major roadways, concentrated levels of human use, and as far as we can discern will be largely inaccessible for hunting. Hunting is not permitted in the vast majority of provincial parks and we request that, as in the case of Cypress Hills, there must be a strong ecological justification for any hunting permitted in these new provincial parks. In the case of the David Thompson Provincial Park, AWA suggests that the intent may be to provide hunting access to the neighbouring Wildland Provincial Park. If this is the case, AWA suggests the rules that apply to most provincial parks are sufficient for this purpose, "if a hunter is carrying a firearm in a provincial park or provincial recreation areas, or hunting in land adjacent to a park where they are staying, the firearm shall be unloaded and disassembled or fully encased".

5b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] The focus for recreation for this area should be management of high human use while minimizing environmental impacts and retaining protection of the Ecological Reserve.

5c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] The focus of tourism and development of this area should be management of high human use while minimizing environmental impacts.

Q6. What would be your level of support for the following outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism experiences and services in the David Thompson Provincial Park?

6a) Designated backcountry "un-serviced camping areas" AWA Response: Do Not Support In general, AWA believes increased development and urbanization of David Thompson Provincial Park is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas. We request more information on the scope, proposed areas, and intent for this use.

6b) Designated "limited serviced camping areas" AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA is supportive of the proposal to provide "limited serviced camping areas" in order to manage human waste and current use. However, we stress the need to avoid ecologically important areas and to avoid creating new disturbances when creating these opportunities. AWA believes increased development



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and urbanization of David Thompson Provincial Park is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat and rare limber pine) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas.

6c) Designated frontcountry and vehicle accessible facilities and staging opportunities AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA is supportive of the proposal to provide formal frontcountry opportunities in current popular camping areas in order to accommodate current use and demand. However, we stress the need to avoid ecologically important areas and to avoid creating new disturbances when creating these opportunities. AWA believes increased development and urbanization of David Thompson Provincial Park is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas.

6d) Facilities and Services that support Backcountry travel opportunities (e.g. guided tours, hut to hut) AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA is supportive of traditional activities, such as local outfitters and guides currently operating in the area, but does not support the development of backcountry huts or helicopter tours in the area as these activities threaten to urbanize and potentially degrade the wildness of the area. AWA believes increased development and urbanization of David Thompson Provincial Park is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas.

6e) Small-scale eco-lodges, Comfort Camping AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA supports current eco lodges and can accept some diversity of front country camping experiences within the current footprint. AWA believes increased development and urbanization of David Thompson PP is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas. AWA encourages development to be focused within adjacent public land use areas and nearby gateway communities in order to support the local economy. Local gateway communities need the support this designation will bring to their amenities, hotels, grocery stores and more.

6f) Tourism attractions (e.g. via ferrata) AWA Response: Do Not Support AWA believes increased development and urbanization of David Thompson Provincial Park is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas.

Q7. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for David Thompson Provincial Park? AWA Response: Neutral AWA supports the management of human uses and camping within the area. AWA is concerned with the loss of the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve and is opposed to expanding the footprint beyond currently altered landscapes. Urbanization of David Thompson Provincial Park is inappropriate given its ecological value (important Montane habitat) and proximity to the Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas.

YA HA TINDA PROVINCIAL PARK

Q8. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Ya Ha Tinda Provincial Park?

a) To support conservation objectives In order to protect the high conservation value of the Ya Ha Tinda, focus should be placed on protecting wildlife habitat and movement corridors.



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b) To support recreation objectives AWA is concerned with proposals to retain OHV use in the proposed Provincial Parks; not only are these trails nominal and seem to offer OHV recreationists little value, they counter the very purpose of provincial parks. AWA is also concerned about the proposal to allow hunting in the new Provincial Parks. These parks are relatively small, will contain concentrated levels of human use, and are largely inaccessible for hunting to begin with. Hunting is not permitted in the vast majority of provincial parks and we request that, as in the case of Cypress Hills, there must be a strong ecological justification for any hunting season in these new parks.

c) To support tourism development objectives AWA is supportive of low-impact and traditional wilderness economic opportunity including support for local outfitters and guides.

Q9. What would be your level of support for the following outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism experiences and services in the Ya Ha Tinda Provincial Park?

9a) Designated “un-serviced camping areas” AWA Response: Strongly Support AWA is supportive of the proposal to provide opportunities in current popular camping areas in order to accommodate current use and demand.

9b) Designated “limited serviced camping areas” AWA Response: Somewhat Support AWA is supportive of the proposal to provide opportunities in current popular camping areas in order to accommodate current use and demand with no new expansion of disturbance.

9c) Designated backcountry non-motorized camping areas including equestrian camping areas AWA Response: Strongly support The Ya Ha Tinda Provincial Park is an appropriate place to provide equestrian camping areas and opportunities.

9d) Backcountry travel opportunities (e.g. guided tours and activities) AWA Response: Somewhat Support The Ya Ha Tinda is an appropriate location to provide equestrian guided tours; we would recommend supporting the local guides and outfitters that provide these services.

9e) Front Country Fixed Roof Accommodation (e.g., small eco-lodge, comfort camping, bed and breakfast, small cabins) AWA Response: Do Not Support AWA believes development should be focused within adjacent public land use areas and nearby gateway communities in order to support local wilderness economic opportunity; not in protected areas.

Q10. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for Ya Ha Tinda Provincial Park?
AWA Response: Satisfied Due to its extreme popularity, AWA understands the demand to provide front-country and equestrian recreation opportunities in the Ya Ha Tinda.

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK

Q11. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for North Saskatchewan River Provincial Park?

11a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] AWA supports the protection of the North Saskatchewan River Corridor, which includes important Lower Foothills, Upper Foothills, and Montane Natural Subregions.

11b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] The proposal to provide low-impact water-based recreation opportunities is a positive one. AWA is concerned with proposals to retain OHV use in the proposed Provincial Parks; retaining the one trail in this park would be counter to the conservation objectives of this provincial park. AWA is also concerned about allowing hunting in the proposed Provincial Parks. Hunting is not permitted in the vast majority of provincial parks and we request that, as in the case of Cypress Hills, there must be a strong ecological justification for any hunting season in these new parks.

11c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] AWA supports the tourism objective to “focus on existing river-based activities popular in the area including guided experiences such as fishing and paddling activities like rafting, kayaking, and canoeing”. AWA emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the conservation and protection of this important area in all management decisions.

Q12. What would be your level of support for the following outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism experiences and services in the North Saskatchewan River Provincial Park?

12a) Designated “un-serviced camping areas” AWA Response: Strongly Support AWA is supportive of the proposal to provide “un-serviced camping areas” in order to manage human waste and current use. However, we stress the need to avoid ecologically important areas and to avoid creating new disturbances when creating these opportunities. We agree that facility development should be focused within the neighbouring Aylmer Provincial Recreation Area.

12b) Designated “limited serviced camping areas” AWA Response: Strongly Support AWA is supportive of the proposal to provide “limited serviced camping areas” in order to manage human waste and current use. However, we stress the need to avoid ecologically important areas and to avoid creating new disturbances when creating these opportunities. We agree that facility development should be focused within the neighbouring Aylmer Provincial Recreation Area.

12c) Designated backcountry non-motorized camping areas including equestrian camping areas AWA Response: Strongly support The North Saskatchewan River Provincial Park is an appropriate place to provide non-motorized backcountry and equestrian camping areas and opportunities. However, we stress the need to avoid ecologically important areas and to avoid creating new disturbances when creating these opportunities. We agree that facility development should be focused within the neighbouring Aylmer Provincial Recreation Area.

12d) River based travel opportunities (e.g. activity providers, guided tours) AWA Response: Strongly support The North Saskatchewan River Provincial Park is an appropriate place to provide river based travel opportunities.

Q13. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for the North Saskatchewan River Provincial Park? AWA Response: Very Satisfied

Why do you feel this way? – As a “gateway” to the Wildland Park, the North Saskatchewan River Provincial Park is an appropriate place for more tourism-based forms of recreation. AWA emphasizes



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the importance of prioritizing the conservation and protection of these underrepresented Natural Regions in all management decisions.

BIGHORN DAM PRA

Q14. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Bighorn Dam Provincial Recreation Area?

a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] Managing current high levels of human use in the area is an important objective. Consideration must be taken to plan and provide opportunities for secure wildlife movement – Weaver 2017 has identified potential wildlife crossings across Highway 11 to facilitate grizzly bear and wolverine movement in this area. Enhanced enforcement and restoration of damage due to illegal OHV must be a priority.

b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] AWA supports providing “rustic camping” opportunities in this very popular area in a way that minimizes environmental damage.

c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] Providing some visitor services would be appropriate given the location of the Bighorn PRA at the entrance to the Bighorn Wildland. We caution against over development of this area as the main focus should be the provision of responsible rustic camping opportunities.

Q15. What would be your level of support for the following commercial recreation and tourism experiences and services in the Bighorn Dam Provincial Recreation Area?

15a) Range of Fixed Roof accommodation (e.g. comfort camping, lodging, cabin opportunities, etc.)

AWA Response: Somewhat Support We caution against over development of this area as the main focus should be the provision of responsible rustic camping opportunities. Providing a diversity of front country camping experiences within the PRA may be reasonable, but formal fixed roof lodging may be best developed in or near local gateway communities.

15b) Attractions (e.g. zip lines, visitor/discovery centres, etc.) **AWA Response: Somewhat Support** A visitor centre is useful for educational purposes and communicating to park visitors. We are concerned with the area’s carrying capacity and ability to develop any additional developments.

15c) Visitor services (e.g. retail, food sales, rentals, etc.) **AWA Response: Somewhat Support**

We are concerned with the area’s carrying capacity and ability to sustain any increased levels of human use or any additional developments. Small-scale services (such as a canteen within a Visitor Centre) may be appropriate.

d) Front country, vehicle accessible facilities and OHV staging opportunities **AWA Response: Somewhat Support** Due to its extreme popularity and heavy use, AWA supports the need to provide front-country and OHV-based recreation opportunities in the Bighorn Dam PRA while minimizing environmental impacts. We caution against over development of this area as the main focus should be the provision of responsible rustic camping opportunities.



Q16. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for Bighorn Dam Provincial Recreation Area?

AWA Response: Satisfied AWA supports the management of human uses in order to minimize environmental impacts and the provision of camping opportunities within the area. Consideration must be taken to plan and provide opportunities for secure wildlife movement – Weaver 2017 has identified potential wildlife crossings across Highway 11 to facilitate grizzly bear and wolverine movement.

HUMMINGBIRD PRA

Q17. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Hummingbird Provincial Recreation Area?

a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] AWA supports the change in designation for the Hummingbird from the Public Land Recreation Area to a Provincial Recreation Area (PRA) in order to support outdoor recreation and prevent industrial development. Our main concern is that continued OHV use is being proposed for the adjacent Wildland Provincial Park without a systematic review of the sustainability of these trails.

Since 2003, AWA has monitored OHV traffic levels within and has physically walked the trails of the Bighorn on an annual basis, recording the effects of OHV use (and abuse) on the landscape. In our 14 years of documentation of the Hummingbird Trail system, we are able to say with confidence that the current level of OHV use in the fragile landscapes of the prime protection and critical wildlife zones is unsustainable. Our trail monitoring work makes it abundantly clear that confining OHV use to designated trails is not necessarily a solution to the damage OHVs can do to the land. AWA opposes the creation of any new designated OHV trails in the Hummingbird PRA and Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park and recommends the closure of those trails known to be unable to sustain motorized use.

b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] AWA supports the intent of the Hummingbird PRA to provide front country and vehicle accessible camping opportunities. AWA does not support continued OHV use without a systematic review of the sustainability of these trails.

c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] AWA believes that the provision of fixed roof opportunities is unnecessary in the Hummingbird PRA as most visitors are attracted to this region due to its undeveloped nature.

Q18. What would be your level of support for the following commercial recreation and tourism experiences and services in the Hummingbird Provincial Recreation Area?

18a) Range of Fixed Roof accommodation (e.g. wall tents, cabins) AWA Response: Do Not Support AWA believes that the provision of fixed roof opportunities is unnecessary in the Hummingbird PRA. Most visitors are attracted to this region due to its undeveloped nature.

b) Visitor services (e.g. OHV and equestrian support services)

AWA response: Somewhat Support As the entrance to the Wildland Park, AWA believes focus must be placed on supporting sustainable, low impact and traditional recreation opportunities – equestrian use, hunting, hiking, etc. As a result there should be minimal visitor services provided.



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Q19. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for the Hummingbird Provincial Recreation Area?

AWA response: Satisfied AWA supports the intent of the Hummingbird PRA to provide front country and vehicle accessible camping opportunities. AWA does not support continued OHV use without a systematic review of the sustainability of these trails. AWA believes that the provision of fixed roof opportunities is unnecessary in the Hummingbird PRA as most visitors are attracted to this region due to its undeveloped nature.

SNOW CREEK PRA

Q20. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Snow Creek Provincial Recreation Area?

a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] Focusing development away from the Wildland Park and closer to gateway communities will help keep the Wildland protected and will help support local economies.

b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] AWA is supportive of providing year-round recreation opportunities and small-scale tourism facility developments within Snow Creek PRA.

c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] AWA is supportive of providing year-round recreation opportunities and small-scale tourism facility developments within Snow Creek PRA.

Q21. What would be your level of support for the following commercial recreation and tourism experiences and services in the Snow Creek Provincial Recreation Area?

21a) Range of Fixed Roof accommodation (e.g. wall tent, cabin, small-scale eco lodge)

AWA Response: Strongly Support The provision of these types of amenities is most appropriate in Snow Creek and Shunda due to their proximity to gateway communities.

b) Nordic Ski trails AWA Response: Strongly Support AWA is very supportive of providing non-motorized recreation opportunities year-round.

Q22. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for the Snow Creek Provincial Recreation Area? AWA Response: Very Satisfied Focusing development away from the Wildland Park and closer to gateway communities is appropriate and will help support local economies.

SHUNDA PRA

Q23. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Shunda Provincial Recreation Area?

a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] Focusing development in Shunda PRA and away from the Wildland Park will help keep the Wildland protected and will help support local economies.



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b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] Providing a mix of camping and accommodation opportunities within Shunda PRA is appropriate given its front country location and proximity to local communities.

c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] Providing tourism accommodation and facility development opportunities within Shunda is appropriate.

Q24. What would be your level of support for the following commercial recreation and tourism experiences and services in the Shunda Provincial Recreation Area?

a) Range of Fixed Roof accommodation (e.g. comfort camping, lodging, cabin opportunities, etc.)

AWA Response: Somewhat Support The provision of these types of amenities is most appropriate in Snow Creek and Shunda due to their proximity to gateway communities.

b) Attractions (e.g. high quality mountain bike trails, visitor/discovery centre, etc.)

AWA Response: Somewhat Support The provision of these types of amenities is most appropriate here due to the proximity to gateway communities; may also be more appropriate to place visitor centres in the town sites of Nordegg, Caroline, etc.

c) Visitor services (e.g. guided tours and activities, retail, food/fuel sales, etc.)

AWA Response: Somewhat Support The provision of these types of amenities is appropriate here due to the proximity to gateway communities; may also be more appropriate for the town sites of Nordegg, Caroline, etc. to continue to provide these services.

Q25. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for Shunda Provincial Recreation Area?

AWA Response: Satisfied AWA encourages any development to occur within nearby gateway communities in order to support the local economy.

KISKA-WILLSON PLUZ

Q26. What else should we consider to help achieve the stated objectives planned for Kiska-Willson Public Land Use Zone?

a) To support conservation objectives [optional response] AWA would recommend undertaking sub-regional planning initiatives and placing legal limits on all human disturbances – linear, spatial, recreational and industrial – placing these activities in appropriate areas in ways that do not compromise ecological values including species at risk habitat.

b) To support recreation objectives [optional response] AWA suggests there may be a need to provide “rustic group camping” opportunities in highly popular areas for random camping and in order to manage human waste at these sites with the installment of washrooms and garbage receptacles will be required. These should be provided at a low cost and available on a first-come, first served and time-limited basis in order to accommodate local communities and allow the opportunity for a number of visitors.



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c) To support tourism development objectives [optional response] Conservation objectives should be upheld when considering tourism development.

Q27. Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed plans for Kiska-Willson Public Land Use Zone?

AWA Response: Satisfied

WEST COUNTRY PLUZ

The government is in the early stages of a multiyear planning process for the proposed West Country Public Land Use Zone.

Q28. How do you want to be engaged in the West Country Public Land Use Zone planning process?

[optional response] AWA requests to be involved throughout the West Country PLUZ planning process. We request in-person consultation opportunities with regional managers.

Q29. How do you feel Government could provide additional supports for recreation use in the West Country Public Land Use Zone? [optional response] AWA believes that the creation of the West Country PLUZ will make a significant positive difference by providing government staff the ability to manage and enforce the impacts of land uses. Our field tours of this region confirm that these public lands are currently suffering from decades of neglect and abuse. There is a critical need to undertake sub-regional planning initiatives in order to establish legislative limits on linear disturbance and spatial footprint, protect critical bull trout spawning areas and other key conservation values, and invest in enforcement and restoration of damaged landscapes.

Q30. Anything we've missed?

Please share any other thoughts or feedback you have on Bighorn Country below. [optional response]

AWA supports the Bighorn Country vision and hopes that the best on-the-ground outcomes will be achieved without further delay. For 50 years, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) has worked to protect the Bighorn Wildland. Our members and directors – old and new – have spent countless hours exploring and taking care of this last foothold of pristine wilderness in a province that is so largely developed.

The natural and pristine wilderness resources of the Bighorn are priceless. From secure clean water, to vibrant healthy forests and habitat for native and threatened species, protection of the Bighorn Wildland is long overdue. AWA is supportive of the overall concept of Bighorn Country that we believe will recognize and protect this significant missing piece in Alberta's protected areas network. We provided the above comments with hope that Bighorn Country achieves careful, well-reasoned management for its world class wilderness and adjacent public lands.