



Alberta Wilderness Association  
*"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"*

## BIGHORN COUNTRY



Photo © AWA Files

Bighorn Country offers a significant opportunity for careful, well reasoned management for this world class wilderness area.

"Protection for the Bighorn Wildland and its watershed has been on AWA's agenda for 50 years. I've personally worked for it for that long. Now that designation is dangling before us, I feel overwhelming nostalgia. The Bighorn is a splendidly wild land, the last of Alberta's Rockies still as they always were. Alberta's best kept secret of nature is about to be both protected and unveiled," reflected Vivian Pharis, AWA Board of Directors.

"The natural and pristine resources of this region are priceless. From secure clean water, to vibrant healthy forests and wildlife that has room to roam Bighorn Country is long overdue. The plan looks very much like the area proposed and shown on road maps in 1986," said Joanna Skrajny, AWA Conservation Specialist.

Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park, and Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ) on lands east of the park will help manage and enforce the impacts of land uses.

The following pages are some of the facts that are often being misrepresented in the press and in social media and we are sending them to you in hopes they will help in the stories you will write in the coming days. We are more than happy to have you call us for an interview.

As well, AWA recently created a video on Bighorn Wildland available at this link:

<https://youtu.be/FnX9iKK71C0>

**For more information contact:**

Joanna Skrajny, Alberta Wilderness Association, 403.283.2025

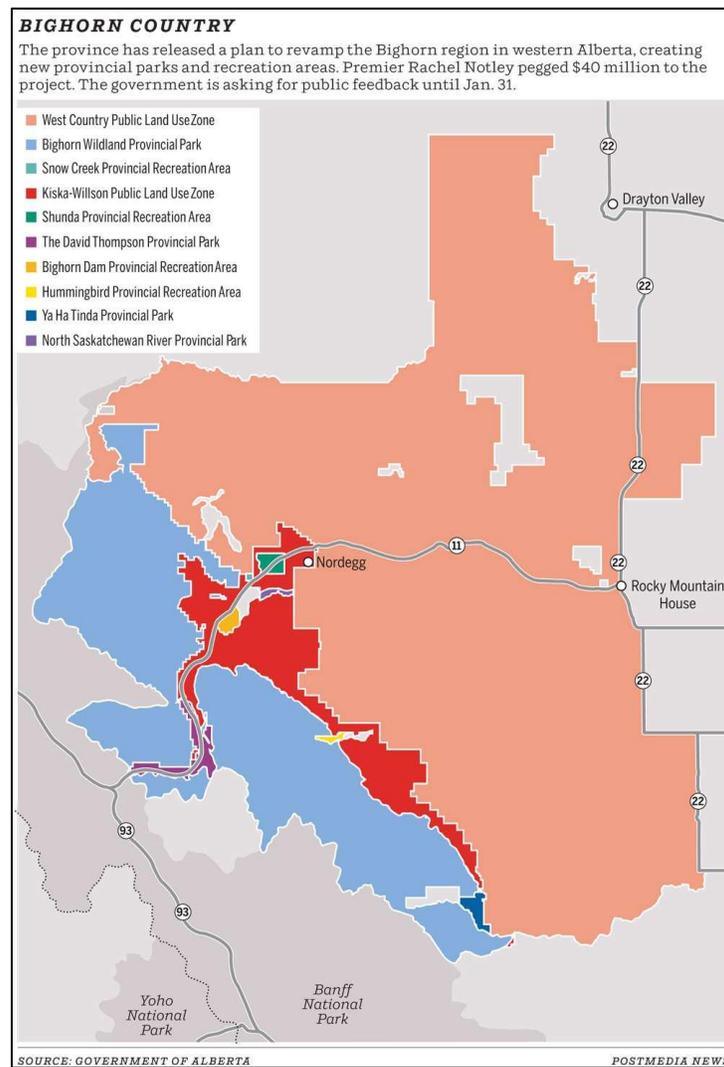
Vivian Pharis, Alberta Wilderness Association, 403.932.2124

January 31, 2019

## BIGHORN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

The Bighorn Country proposal will expand, amend or create four parks, four recreation areas and two public land use zones.

“For most users, the proposal means little or no change to the activities currently allowed in the area. Trails will not be closed, random camping will still be allowed, industrial development will continue and Indigenous traditional practices will be supported.” <https://talkaep.alberta.ca/bighorn-country>



Map credit: Postmedia

## BIGHORN WILDLAND PROVINCIAL PARK

The **management intent** for the park is "the conservation of biodiversity in an undeveloped natural landscape that retains the character that drew users to the area in the first place". Read the full site profile here: <https://www.albertaparks.ca/.../b07a-siteprofile-bighorn-wpp....>

**Myth 1 – Impacts to Recreation:** The Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park would limit recreation

**Fact:** Current recreational activities will continue. The proposal for the Wildland Park states:

- Hiking: “permitted on all trails and throughout backcountry”
- Hunting: “permitted”, “provincial regulations apply”
- Fishing: “permitted”, “provincial regulations apply”
- Motorized recreation: “would continue to be permitted on designated trails”
- Backcountry Camping: “permitted”

All uses that are currently allowed in the area will continue within the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park.

<https://www.albertaparks.ca/media/6495875/b07a-siteprofile-bighorn-wpp.pdf>

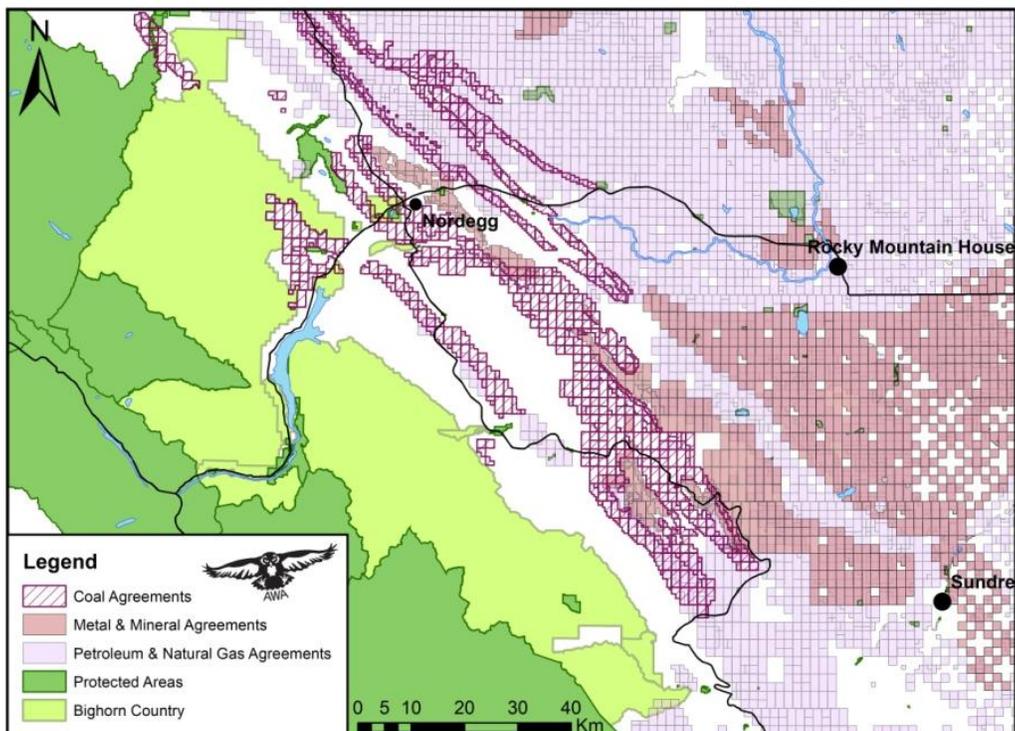
Current State of trails: <https://talkaep.alberta.ca/6512/documents/13072>

Future State of trails: <https://talkaep.alberta.ca/6512/documents/13073>

**Myth 2 – Impacts to Industry:** The Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park would have impacts on industry

**Fact:** Due to the 1984 Eastern Slopes Policy, there is little to no industrial activity within the area.

- **Coal, Metallic and Industrial Metals:** There are currently no leases within the proposed park area. The status of these leases will change from "not permitted" currently to "not permitted" within the park.
- **Petroleum & Natural Gas:** There are almost no leases currently within the proposed park area. Any leases within the park boundaries will still be honored.
- **New Petroleum & Natural Gas** is "not permitted"; meaning new leases would not allow surface access. This should not be a concern based on current lease locations (which are also mostly located outside the park, see map, below).



Author: Alberta Wilderness Association

Date: January 28, 2019

Sources: Alberta Environment and Parks, 2019  
Alberta Energy, 2019

- **Forestry:** Due to the 1984 Eastern Slopes Policy, there are no forestry tenures in the area. The status of forestry will change from "not permitted" currently to "not permitted" within the park. Source: [https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/.../\\$FILE/FMA-Map-June2018.pdf](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/.../$FILE/FMA-Map-June2018.pdf)

**Sources:**

- 1) Interactive Map of Petroleum and Natural Gas agreements: <https://www.energy.alberta.ca/AU/Services/Pages/InteractiveMaps.aspx>
- 2) Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park <https://www.albertaparks.ca/media/6495875/b07a-siteprofile-bighorn-wpp.pdf>

**WEST COUNTRY PUBLIC LAND USE ZONE (PLUZ)**

The management intent for the PLUZ is that “current uses would continue with collaboration between users to better integrate recreational activities with other uses” such as industrial development. Read the full site profile here: <https://www.albertaparks.ca/media/6495886/west-country-pluz2018.pdf>

**Myth 1 – Impacts to Industry:** The West Country PLUZ will impact industry

**Fact:** The proposed West Country PLUZ will allow industry to continue, while providing more certainty for recreational users (Table 1). Under the PLUZ designation, there are no new “regulatory hurdles” for industry to surpass.

**Table 1.** Current and proposed uses in the West Country PLUZ. Source: Alberta Environment and Parks

| Type of Use                                     | Current State | Proposed Management Direction |
|---|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Petroleum and Natural Gas                       | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| Metallic and Industrial Minerals (MIM) and Coal | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| Freehold Minerals                               | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| Surface Materials (Sand and Gravel)             | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| Commercial Forestry                             | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| Grazing   | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| • <a href="#">Recreation Access Legislation</a> |               |                               |
| Registered Trapping                             | Permitted     | Permitted                     |
| • Provincial regulations apply.                 |               |                               |
| • <a href="#">Alberta Regulations</a>           |               |                               |

**Sources:**

- 1) Alberta Environment PLUZ info: <http://aep.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/recreation-on-public-land/public-land-use-zones/about-pluz-regulations/default.aspx>
- 2) West Country PLUZ page: <https://www.albertaparks.ca/media/6495886/west-country-pluz2018.pdf>

**Myth 2 – Impacts to Recreation:** The West Country PLUZ would remove Recreation

**Fact:** Recreation would continue in the proposed West Country PLUZ. “All land users share responsibility for land management and will play a role in developing future land use plans over a multi-year process. As this is a new designation, government wants to take some time to hear perspectives on how this area can best be managed into the future and build a plan that is driven by local voices.”

The proposal for the PLUZ states:

- Hunting: “permitted”
- Fishing: “permitted”
- Motorized Recreation: “would be permitted on designated trails”
- Backcountry Camping: “permitted”
- Auto Access Camping: “permitted”
- Equestrian Use: “permitted on and off designated trails”

**Source:**

West Country PLUZ page: <https://www.albertaparks.ca/media/6495886/west-country-pluz2018.pdf>

## GENERAL FAQs

For more than 50 years AWA has been part of the effort to conserve the Bighorn with everything from garbage cleanup, hiking and equestrian trail maintenance, to monitoring and research. The efforts of many have kept the Bighorn a treasure and will help create a legacy everyone will be proud of.

**Q: If it appears that there is no change, what is the benefit of establishing the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park? Don't the current policies offer enough protection?**

**A:** The current policies don't offer permanent protection. For example, the Eastern Slopes Policy also said that motorized recreation was prohibited from the Bighorn Wildland. Obviously, [this is no longer the case](#); in 2003, the government established a series of motorized trails in the area. Establishing a formal protected area would guarantee protection for the future in a way that policies can't.

**Q: Does Alberta Wilderness Association support the commercialization of the area?**

**A: No.** AWA does not support the commercialization of any of Alberta's protected areas, from National Parks to Provincial protected areas. We have raised these very concerns in our letter to the government on the Bighorn proposal, where we advocated for less commercialization and greater support for local communities and economies: <https://albertawilderness.ca/re-bighorn-country/>.

“From backcountry huts, ongoing helicopter tours, to increased development within the west planning area the ideas may not match the vision and the details need work. AWA believes development should be focused within adjacent public land use areas and nearby gateway communities in order to support local wilderness economies; not in the Wildland Provincial Park. Development within this Wildland paradise will degrade the very wilderness values that legislated designation and Wildland Provincial Park protection is meant to provide.”

**For more information:**

Alberta Wilderness Association 403-283-2025