



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

March 5, 2020

The Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier, Government of Alberta
By email: premier@gov.ab.ca

The Honourable Jason Nixon
Minister of Environment and Parks
By email: aep.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Premier Kenney and Minister Nixon,

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) believes the government's decision to remove 164 sites from the Alberta Parks system has crossed a line that will compromise the intrinsic values Albertans associate with the Parks system and threaten the integrity of Alberta's protected areas network. We firmly believe that closing provincial parks won't save money, benefit Albertans, or improve tourism.

Parks and protected areas are not an enterprise. They are an investment in the health and well-being of Albertans. There has been no financial accounting provided for these projected savings; a true cost/benefit analysis would have considered the potential impacts to municipalities, economic losses to gateway communities, and the loss of mental and physical health benefits provided by outdoor recreation.

It is unacceptable that there was no public consultation leading up to this major decision on a vital public resource. Based on the widespread outcry, it is clear this decision is not in the public interest.

At a time when the Government of Alberta has committed to protecting 17 percent of the province by 2021, it is irresponsible to be removing parks and protected areas from our network. The claim that the 164 sites are "mainly underutilized provincial recreation areas" buries the plan to remove nine Natural Areas and ten Provincial Parks, which provide critical ecological and recreation values. In addition, while PRAs are generally small, they provide important camping opportunities and reduce the burden on neighbouring natural areas.

Finally, little to no information has been provided on how the sites removed from the Parks system will be managed. Protected areas operate under a legislated framework to conserve their natural heritage and provide recreation opportunities where compatible with environmental sustainability; the government's decision provides no indication these vital principles for protection will be honoured or required in this plan.

For the sake of our future health and wealth, we must safeguard our existing natural treasures which provide a plethora of benefits for all Albertans. We look forward to meaningful participation in this process.

Yours truly,
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

Grace Wark, Conservation Specialist

cc: MLA Marlin Schmidt, Critic for Environment, Marlin.Schmidt@assembly.ab.ca
MP Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca