

## **Please Complete the Alberta Government's Outdoor Recreation Survey**

*December 22, 2020*

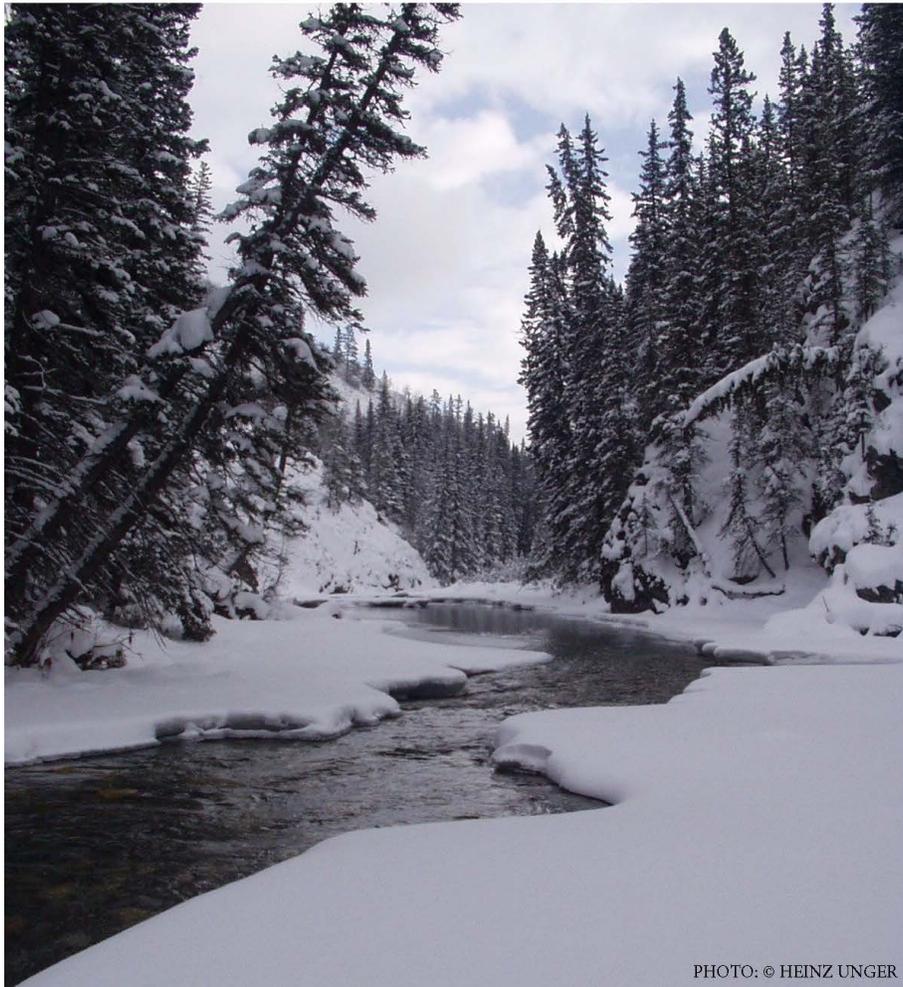


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The Alberta government's "Alberta Crown Land Vision" and a survey on outdoor recreation – an integral part of that vision – are two issues figuring prominently in the December version of the Wild Lands Advocate. (I'm optimistic the online version of the issue will be available by Christmas Eve.)

The December issue critically considers both the government's vision and the

survey. To put it bluntly, the Alberta government already has decided what its approach to public lands should stress. As for the survey, the government's questions are designed to steer our responses in the directions the government prefers.

The survey, in other words, is flawed.

But, it is essential we complete it. We treasure Alberta's landscapes in part for the outdoor recreation opportunities they offer us. Each of us needs to identify for the government what we believe to be the essential components of a sustainable approach to outdoor recreation in Alberta.

So please...set aside the few minutes it will take you to complete the survey. **January 15, 2021 is the deadline for completing the survey.** The link to the survey is [here](#). The link to the government's vision for public lands is [here](#).

When AWA staff responded to the survey we made the points listed below in our answers to the questions. If they coincide with your views, please use them. Regardless, let the government know what you think.

As always, we love to hear back from you with your ideas and thoughts, and especially your stories about why these areas are important to you. Please feel free to write to me at [awa@abwild.ca](mailto:awa@abwild.ca)

### **Points Made in AWA's Response to the Survey**

1.) Question 1 – Partnerships: they must incorporate conservation objectives and follow the *Provincial Parks Act*; they should be limited to providing maintenance/operational services for campsites in provincial parks and provincial recreation areas; they should not have any responsibilities on other public lands (such as Public Land Use Zones); partners must collaborate and take direction from Alberta Environment and Parks; partners should be held to performance measures that include those conservation objectives; we are concerned that partnerships through mechanisms such as Delegated Administrative Organizations will lead to the privatization of public lands (authority for trail management in the provinces lauded by the survey effectively is delegated to trail associations).

2.) Question 2: AWA strongly disagrees with the idea of collecting more user fees as the right approach to enabling sustainable recreation activities on

public lands.

3.) Question 3 – Other preferred tools or approaches that should be utilized? More taxpayer dollars should be devoted to enforcement and campsite infrastructure. Measures – including fines – must be introduced to manage random camping on public lands.

4.) Question 4 – where should fees be applied and on what activities? All three factors listed are “most important;” none are “least important.”

5.) Question 5 – other factors to consider? Ecological values such as species at risk, watershed integrity, and landscape thresholds must trump trail development. Remember here that the UCP declared in its platform that OHV user fees would be devoted to “restoring and creating OHV trails.” (my emphasis) Environmental assessments of proposed trails must be conducted to ensure these ecological values are respected.

6.) Question 6 – Ranking priorities for funding: number one is protection of the environment. The other two in AWA’s top three were enforcement to promote public safety and amenities and services.

7.) Question 8 – anything else to tell us about outdoor recreation in Alberta? Low impact recreation should be prioritized. This is the form of recreation that is most likely to be sustainable. This priority also is suggested by a 2017 survey conducted for Alberta Culture and Tourism. That survey reported that approximately 53% of households participate in day hiking, 10.3% participated in cross-country skiing, and 14.7% participated in motorized recreation.

Wishing you the very best for the holiday season,  
Ian Urquhart  
Conservation Director



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