



Recreation in Alberta's Wilderness

Position

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is committed to the protection of wild lands, waters and wildlife in Alberta. AWA supports recreational activities that do not compromise the ecological integrity of wilderness. Regulations and management based on scientific principles are required to ensure the maintenance of biodiversity and future recreational opportunities.

Points of Emphasis

All forms of wilderness recreation affect the environment. The *Precautionary Principle* must be applied to all recreational use of public land and protected areas to ensure the maintenance of Alberta's natural heritage.

Regulations

- Regulations are required to minimize environmental disturbance and protect environmental values while allowing reasonable opportunities for recreation.
- Cores of protection and buffer zones must be established around key wildlands, sensitive habitat and ecologically significant areas. Designated trail systems that provide for environmental protection and recreational opportunities for Albertans must be developed.
- Enforceable regulations must be implemented to manage recreation on all public lands
- The authority to enforce regulations on all public lands must be given to the applicable law enforcement officers.
- Funds and staff are required to effectively monitor and enforce laws and regulations pertaining to safe and environmentally-friendly recreation.
- Designated routes (and closures) must be clearly defined, signed, publicized and enforced.
- Regular maintenance of all trails and trail infrastructure is required.
- Fines for violations must be appropriate for the offense.

Limits

- Limits/restrictions on recreational use are required within environmentally sensitive areas to protect environmental values and to manage recreation within an area's carrying capacity.
- Zoning is required to allocate appropriate areas to all users and to minimize conflict among non-compatible activities (in cases where zoning exists, such as the Eastern Slopes Policy, existing protection levels must not be downgraded).
- Route planning must be a multi-stakeholder process, coordinated by government and based on independent environmental assessment.



Monitoring

- Monitoring programs to document use patterns and (potential) environmental damage are necessary.
- Strict requirements for restoration (or closure) of damaged trails and access points are required.

Education

- Educational programs must be implemented to increase awareness of the potentially severe impacts of recreation on wildlands, conflicting recreational uses, safety hazards, and existing regulations.
- Programs must educate users in minimizing their impact on the environment, including leave-no-trace principles, fire safety, wildlife interactions and appropriate backcountry use.

