



Land use planning

Land use regional planning is important to establish the long-term sustainable development of a region and for considering the cumulative effects of activities on the landscape. In Alberta, regional planning has been slow to proceed, and completion of several plans is long overdue. Of the seven regions described in Alberta's Land-use Framework, only two have completed regional plans, both of which have already reached or are quickly approaching the 10-year review necessitated under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA). The 2023 mandate letter for the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas includes a direction to "establish new land-use plans and review existing land-use plans," and ALSA states that the Stewardship Minister must "ensure that appropriate public consultation with respect to the proposed regional plan or amendment has been carried out" before a regional plan is made or amended. We request that regional planning be completed with urgency and that final plans account for responsible and sustainable development, protecting and/or recovering Alberta's wildlife and wilderness ecosystems, while including significant and diverse perspectives through public consultation.

Indigenous-led conservation

We would like to see Alberta continue to expand its support for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives. Indigenous-led conservation is a highly effective way to steward ecosystems and promote biodiversity while advancing reconciliation. The Government of Alberta has stated that it is: "committed to collaborating with Indigenous communities and walking the path toward reconciliation together." Lands managed by Indigenous peoples are often healthier and more biodiverse. Nationally and internationally, the establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) is acknowledged as playing a role in preserving biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and protecting culture. Still, despite several proposed IPCAs, Alberta has yet to formally establish an IPCA. AWA urges Alberta to prioritize greater support and consideration of Indigenous rights, especially in management and stewardship of lands.

Wildlife

Biodiversity loss is a major threat, and as development and extraction activities continue to intrude on the remaining natural landscapes, many species are facing extirpation and extinction. Alberta's wildlife policy and strategy need to be reviewed and aligned with increasing interest in sustainable wildlife conservation.

Caribou

Alberta has a responsibility under the Alberta-Canada Conservation Agreement for Woodland Caribou to manage and recover caribou populations in the province. Despite this, only two of eleven caribou range plans have been finalized, and annual reporting on the implementation of the agreement is overdue. AWA is concerned about persistent delays in the protection and recovery of Alberta's caribou population. We request that the draft Upper Smoky sub-regional plan and 2021 Annual Report under the Section 11 agreement be released without further delay.





Bison

Bison evolved with the prairie landscape, and their presence can increase biodiversity, benefit other species and enhance drought resilience. Reintroduction of bison is occurring throughout North America, and Alberta needs a strategy to manage free-roaming bison herds, particularly where they wander outside designated reintroduction zones or across borders. Currently, Alberta does not recognize plains bison as wildlife. We ask for Alberta's bison policy to be reviewed, and the classification reconsidered.

Sage-grouse

Sage-grouse are an iconic prairie species and are highly sensitive to development and disturbance in their habitat. In Alberta, sage-grouse range and populations have declined by over 90% in the past few decades and shown few signs of recovery. Populations are facing increasing pressure from renewable and non-renewable energy, helium extraction, and agricultural and infrastructure expansion. We continue to advocate for stronger protections on the remaining sagebrush habitat, including ceasing disturbance in sage-grouse range until such time as the species has recovered to a stable and sustainable population.

