



*May 8, 2009*

## **Busy May long weekend expected on Alberta's roads and public lands**

### ***Preparation is key to ensure responsible stewardship***

*Edmonton...* Many Albertans are gearing up for the Victoria Day long weekend - the traditional start of outdoor summer fun and adventure in Alberta. On a typical May long weekend, thousands of people head out on Alberta roads and enjoy our forests.

The Alberta government is taking steps to remind everyone that responsible behaviour and a stewardship ethic are expected from recreational users. The government is partnering with provincial and local recreation associations to share Respect the Land information.

Enforcement agencies in Alberta Sustainable Resource Development; Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation; Alberta Transportation; Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security; and the RCMP are working together to provide responsible recreation education and enforcement. The interagency task force developed an agreement to coordinate efforts to maximize efficiency and ensure consistency. This coordinated approach has been used for more than 10 years in the southern Rockies and Clearwater areas and is expanding to other areas.

### **Forest Land Use Zones rules and temporary closure notices**

The Alberta government has established a number of Forest Land Use Zones (FLUZ) to create designated trail systems and improve management of the area.

To harden trails and protect the landscape, motorized access is temporarily closed in the Bighorn Dam area of the Kiska/Willson FLUZ from May 1 until June 30. This area is about 20 km west of Nordegg.

The upper portion of the Cardinal Headwaters Trail in the Coal Branch FLUZ will also be closed to motorized users during the May long weekend and until further notice. The closure is to protect the sensitive alpine meadow due to the soft soil conditions and heavy snowfall. This trail is about 12 km south of Cadomin.

Recreational activities will be managed and rules will be enforced on Forest Recreation Trails, and in Forest Recreation Areas and Forest Land Use Zones such as in the Bighorn, Ghost, McLean Creek, Willow Creek, and Castle areas near Calgary; and Rocky Mountain House and Crowsnest Pass. To obtain a map or to find out more about Forest Land Use Zones, visit your local Sustainable Resource Development office or phone 310-0000.

### **Enjoy camping**

Albertans can visit [www.albertaparks.ca](http://www.albertaparks.ca) for information on camping in provincial parks. Use

the Google Maps feature to locate parks and generate driving instructions, or search by activity. Many campgrounds fill up on long weekends, so campers are encouraged to book well in advance to ensure a site. Campsites not reserved may be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis, although they will likely be sold out by Friday mornings.

## **Respect the Land**

Visitors to Alberta's outdoors are encouraged to consider the effect they have on the environment and on other users. Some trip and trail basics include planning ahead and being prepared, minimizing your impact, and managing your food and waste.

All recreationists should stay on trails, share access with others, choose routes with the hardest and most durable surface and use designated bridges and water crossings. All OHVs on public land require headlights and tail lights; valid insurance, registration and visible licence plates; and functional mufflers and spark arrestors. Things to avoid include:

- riding on sensitive terrain, in wet areas or after heavy rain;
- spinning tires and skidding;
- washing vehicles in creeks, rivers or lakes;
- accessing private and leased land without permission; and,
- tampering with gates, fences and structures, and damaging the natural environment.

Campers and OHV riders are reminded to follow the rules on all public lands, including Forest Land Use Zones. Sustainable Resource Development staff will be patrolling public lands to educate Albertans and ensure compliance with public lands and forest legislation. To learn more, visit the *Respect the Land in Alberta* Facebook page at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for Respect the Land.

## **Albertans reminded to engage in safe fire practices**

Campers are reminded that campfires should never be left unattended and all fires should be completely extinguished by soaking, stirring the ashes and soaking again. In provincial campgrounds, always use a designated fire pit.

A valid permit is required in Alberta's forest protection area for any burning (except for campfires) or setting off fireworks. Permits are free and available from local Sustainable Resource Development offices. To find the office nearest you, call 310-0000 or visit <http://srd.alberta.ca/informationcentre/offices.aspx>.

Remember, where the wildfire hazard is high, campfires may be restricted. For information on fire bans, including those pertaining to provincial parks, visit [www.albertafirebans.ca](http://www.albertafirebans.ca) or call 1-866-FYI FIRE.

## **Drive Safely**

According to Alberta Traffic Collision Statistics, alcohol-related collisions, injuries and fatalities increase on long weekends. This May long weekend remember to drive responsibly and play it safe.

- Make the right choice for everyone - don't drive if you have been drinking.
- Buckle up. Seatbelts save lives.
- Child safety seats are required by law for children under 6 years old who weigh less than 40 pounds. Booster seats are recommended for children until 4' 9" / 80 pounds.
- Obey speed limits on all roads, especially those in playground areas, construction zones, and when passing emergency vehicles.
- Use common sense—slow down in bad weather, at night, and when driving on poorly lit roads. Speeding saves little time and increases the probability of death or injury if there is a crash.

- Share the road - look twice for motorcyclists at intersections or when changing lanes.
- Keep your eyes on the road, hands on the wheel - put your focus where it should be. Even a one second distraction can have dangerous consequences.

Law enforcement partners throughout the province will be diligently monitoring public compliance with the rules of the road as part of the **National Road Safety Week** from **May 12 to 18**.

For more information on traffic safety in Alberta, visit [saferoads.com](http://saferoads.com)

## Highway Safety

The Alberta Sheriff Highway Patrol and the RCMP will be out on Alberta's roadways enforcing traffic laws. Aggressive and careless driving and speeding will be targeted this May long weekend in an effort to reduce the number of collisions on Alberta highways. Also, during the entire month of May, Alberta Sheriffs and their road safety partners are focusing their safety message on young drivers.

## Campers reminded to be extra careful to avoid bear encounters

Bears will be at lower elevations this time of year looking for easily available sources of food. To ensure a safe, enjoyable camping experience, follow these BearSmart tips:

- Always store food out of reach of bears, preferably in airtight containers in the trunk of your vehicle.
- Never store food, including pet food, in or near a tent or tent-trailer where you are sleeping.
- Never cook or eat in or near your tent. Do not bury or burn food scraps.
- Do not litter. Place all garbage in suitable containers or take them home.
- Clean fish at designated cleaning stations. If no station is available, dispose of fish remains in proper garbage containers.
- At night, move about the campsite cautiously. Always use a flashlight.
- If camping with a dog, keep it on a leash or in your vehicle. An unleashed dog may irritate a bear and bring it back to camp.
- Keep young children close to you.
- Keep a can of bear 'pepper' spray handy and in your tent at night. Know how to use it!

To learn more, visit [www.srd.alberta.ca](http://www.srd.alberta.ca) and click on Fish and Wildlife.

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## Media inquiries may be directed to:

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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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