
Plan for Parks

Engagement guide





Land acknowledgement

All Alberta is Treaty land. We are all Treaty people. We acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10. First Nations have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. Métis people have also shaped these lands and Alberta. We acknowledge Inuit, who share a long history and connection with this land. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us.

Alberta's parks are utilized, cherished and enjoyed by all people. We are committed to honouring the legacy of caring for the land and water, to ensure Alberta's parks can be enjoyed and protected now and into the future.

The Plan for Parks Engagement Guide



The Plan for Parks Engagement Guide was developed to:

- describe the engagement process;
- provide background information, including useful links to websites and resources;
- inspire curiosity and encourage participation;
- provide a preview of the engagement survey questions so you can spend more time reflecting on your responses before starting the online survey; and
- provide more information on the Plan for Parks engagement process and ways to participate.



What is a park?

There actually isn't one definition that everyone uses for "parks", so parks are explained differently all over the world. In Alberta, we have the *Provincial Parks Act*, which helps us to describe and manage three kinds of parks: provincial parks, provincial recreation areas and wildland provincial parks. All these parks are created because of their outstanding natural and cultural features, to welcome and educate visitors, to support recreation and the conservation of Alberta's natural heritage.



Alberta’s provincial parks

Throughout this guide, you’ll see reference to provincial parks, provincial recreation areas and wildland provincial parks. These three classifications of park are defined in legislation (the *Provincial Parks Act*), and the kinds of activities you can do in each of these areas is defined in regulation. Parks legislation and regulations work together to effectively manage Alberta’s natural heritage.

Park classification	What do they do?	What do they look like?	What can you do there?
<p>Provincial Parks (PP)</p> <p>Often the busiest, most visitor-experience focused sites, with significant conservation and recreation features.</p> <p>There are 78 PPs in Alberta.</p>	<p>Conserve provincially or globally significant natural and cultural heritage, while supporting recreation, education and tourism experiences.</p>	<p>Welcoming sites with a mix of facility areas and natural areas. Guided programs, trails, signage and parking areas are common in provincial parks, and help to manage impacts to sites that get a lot of visitors.</p>	<p>Compatible recreation – activities that won’t damage the natural and cultural features conserved within the park. Facilities such as Visitor centres, campgrounds, trails and day use areas provide engaging visitor experiences.</p>
<p>Provincial Recreation Areas (PRA)</p> <p>Often busy, developed sites with nature-based recreation as the main attraction.</p> <p>There are 193 PRAs in Alberta.</p>	<p>Support recreation and tourism, often near lakes, rivers, reservoirs or adjacent Crown land.</p>	<p>Rustic to developed sites with trails, campgrounds and staging areas that provide access for nature-based recreation.</p>	<p>Diversity of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities, including hiking, biking, camping and boating.</p>
<p>Wildland Provincial Parks (WPP)</p> <p>Often remote, undeveloped sites for nature-based recreation and conservation of natural landscapes</p> <p>There are 34 WPPs in Alberta.</p>	<p>Conserve large, remote wilderness and support backcountry recreation.</p>	<p>Natural environment, wild, remote. Little to no facilities.</p>	<p>May support a combination of hiking, equestrian, motorized access, hunting, fishing, backcountry camping and wilderness adventure.</p>

Learn more about parks classifications in Alberta visit albertaparks.ca



What is the new Plan for Parks?

The new Plan for Parks will be Alberta's strategic direction for sites managed under the *Provincial Parks Act*. This includes provincial parks, provincial recreation areas and wildland provincial parks. The new Plan for Parks will provide the vision and guiding principles for managing increased visitation and evolving recreation opportunities within Alberta's parks, without compromising their natural and cultural legacy. The plan isn't about any single park or site. It will consider how parks across the province work together to provide conservation, recreation, education and cultural values and then set goals to maintain and enhance them.



Why write a new Plan for Parks

The original Plan for Parks launched in 2009 as a 10-year plan and the time has come to renew this strategic direction. The original plan supported important changes like the creation of the online camping reservation system, and policies that enhanced inclusion and accessibility of programs, services and facilities. The new Plan for Parks will set meaningful direction so that current and future generations can continue to discover, value, protect and enjoy Alberta's parks and the benefits they provide.





Who should participate in this engagement?

Do you have ideas for how Alberta's parks can better help people enjoy the outdoors? Do you want to learn more about how parks support conservation? By participating in this engagement, your perspectives will help shape the new Plan for Parks.

Engagement on the Plan for Parks will:

- Ensure the new plan is informed by feedback from Albertans across the province;
- Explore opportunities for advancing reconciliation in parks;
- Seek to understand new and emerging trends in recreation and camping;
- Enable sustainable development of programs and services in parks; and,
- Support the long-term success of parks, in an environmentally responsible way.



How can someone provide their input?

Share your input by completing the online survey through Alberta.ca/PlanforParks. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, though some people may want to spend more time sharing feedback.

If you do not have access to a computer, hand-written responses to the questions in this guide can be returned during the 60-day engagement period (June 19 to August 18), to any Alberta Parks Visitor Centre during business hours or by mail to:

Parks Division
9th Floor, Oxbridge Place, 9820 – 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J6
Attention: Plan for Parks

Where can you find more information?

For more information about this engagement or about the Plan for Parks, you can:

- visit our Plan for Parks engagement webpage Alberta.ca/PlanforParks;
- stop by any Alberta Parks Visitor Centre during operating hours; and
- call the Alberta Parks Contact Centre: 1-877-537-2757.

Alberta's parks and protected areas system

Did you know?



Alberta's parks range in size and purpose, from small recreation sites to large, remote wilderness areas and cover over 4.5 million hectares, or about seven per cent of the province.

The total area of parks under the *Provincial Parks Act* has almost doubled since 2009, growing from 2,029,774 hectares in 2009 to 3,825,390 hectares in 2024 – an 88 per cent increase in total area.

- Provincial parks areas cover 248,615 hectares (218,661 hectares in 2009).
- Provincial recreation areas cover 89,042 hectares (82,443 hectares in 2009).
- Wildland provincial parks cover 3,487,732 hectares (1,728,668 hectares in 2009).

The remaining parks and protected areas are managed by other legislation, and together, these sites create a parks and protected areas system that supports a variety of biodiversity conservation, recreation, education and tourism goals across the province.

The remaining parks and protected areas are wilderness areas, ecological reserves, heritage rangelands, natural areas and the Willmore Wilderness Park.

Parks, protected areas and public land are part of a large network of Crown land, which makes up about 60 per cent (~39.7 million hectares) of the province.



There are 305 parks under the *Provincial Parks Act*, that make up two-thirds of the entire parks system:

- 78 provincial parks
- 193 provincial recreation areas
- 34 wildland provincial parks

DID YOU KNOW?

Parks are protected areas that showcase the natural and cultural features of Alberta. For example, Alberta's badlands are protected in Kleskun Hills Provincial Park, Alberta's newest Provincial Park! Badlands are also protected in Dinosaur Provincial Park, which protects and preserves fossils, evidence of early life in the prairies and endangered species within the badlands landscape.

Camping is very popular in Alberta, and Alberta Parks currently provides about 14,000 campsites, 201 backcountry camping sites, 74 comfort camping sites and 162 group camping areas.

Since 2009, Alberta's population has increased over 24 per cent from 3.7 million to 4.6 million in 2023. Park visits, interest in camping and other recreation opportunities in our parks are also growing. With this Plan for Parks engagement, we want to better understand the changing needs of Albertans.

We will soon celebrate Alberta's parks 100th anniversary! By participating in this engagement, you are helping to shape the next 100 years!





We want to hear from you

Engagement survey questions

The Plan for Parks engagement survey questions are included below. Please complete the survey online at Alberta.ca/PlanforParks to ensure your feedback is instantly received. You are invited to read through this guide and reflect on your responses before starting the online survey.

Alberta's Parks

Parks are places where people can discover, learn about and connect with Alberta's natural and cultural history. What people value about Alberta's parks can influence the kinds of experiences and information they look for.

1. Over the past 12 months, how often have you visited provincial parks, provincial recreation areas or wildland provincial parks?

- Haven't visited in the past 12 months
- A few times
- Once a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

2. What do you most value about Alberta's parks? Select all that apply:

- Creating memories with family and friends
- Health benefits of nature-based recreation (e.g. physical or mental health)
- Protection of biodiversity and representative landscapes
- Importance of parks for learning and research
- Access to nature-based recreation (e.g. camping, skiing)
- Protection of ecosystem functions (e.g. water storage and filtration, flood control, pollination)
- Access for ceremony and spiritual connection in nature
- Importance of parks for hunting, fishing and trapping
- Family-friendly programming (e.g. interpretive programs, visitor centres)
- Connection to the past (e.g. local history, ancient artifacts, cultural resources)
- Extraordinary visitor-attracting sites (e.g. scenic drives and views)

3. In a few sentences, what else do you value about Alberta’s parks?

Vision

The vision for Alberta’s parks was originally launched in 2009. A vision statement is used to clarify what an organization is aiming to achieve. The proposed vision statement now includes the addition of “cultural benefits” provided by parks for current and future generations. This small change creates a commitment to ensuring parks are an important part of Alberta’s culture.

Updated vision statement

Alberta’s parks inspire people to discover, value, protect and enjoy the natural world and the cultural benefits it provides for current and future generations.

4. Thinking about the updated Vision statement for Alberta’s parks, I am:

- a. Not in support
 - a.a What would you add or change about the updated vision statement? Why?

- b. Neutral
- c. In support
 - c.c What do you like about the updated vision statement? Why?

- d. Unsure

5. What will Alberta’s parks look like 100 years from now, if this vision is achieved?

Guiding principles

Guiding principles were first introduced in the 2009 Plan for Parks to help address challenges and navigate decisions involving diverse and sometimes competing needs in Alberta’s parks. The following guiding principles are proposed for the new Plan:

Accountability: Albertans are informed and engaged on park issues. Decision making and reporting on progress is transparent, accurate and readily available.

Equitable access: Parks are inviting, safe, inclusive and accessible – regardless of who you are or where you live.

Reconciliation: Parks are welcoming and vital spaces for modern and traditional Indigenous cultural activities.

Sustainability: Current and future generations can visit, be inspired by and support continued conservation and access to parks.

6. To what degree do you support the proposed guiding principles for Alberta’s parks?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Accountability				
Equitable access				
Reconciliation				
Sustainability				

7. Do you have any suggestions for any of the proposed guiding principles? Only select those that apply:

- a. Accountability
 - a.a What would you add or change about “Accountability”?

- b. Equitable access
 - b.b What would you add or change about “Equitable Access”?

- c. Reconciliation
 - c.c What would you add or change about “Reconciliation”?

- d. Sustainability
 - d.d What would you add or change about “Sustainability”?

8. Do you have any suggestions for other possible guiding principles?

Accountability

Albertans are informed and engaged on park issues. Decision making and reporting on progress is transparent, accurate and readily available.

9. Which of the following ways to enhance accountability and transparency around planning for Alberta’s provincial parks are important to you?

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important	Unsure
Increase opportunities for Albertans to provide input into decision making for provincial parks.				
Establish clear deliverables and milestones in the new Plan for Parks.				
Consistently report Plan for Parks progress and achievements.				

10. What other ways could accountability and transparency around planning for Alberta’s provincial parks be enhanced?



Equitable Access

The ability to access and enjoy parks may be impacted by location, financial status, mobility and other factors. Alberta Parks is committed to ensuring parks are fun, safe, inclusive and accessible, regardless of who you are or where you live.

11. To what degree do you support creating more equitable access to Alberta's parks in the following ways?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Enhanced internet and cellular connectivity to access information and services				
More accommodation types for visitors without camping equipment (e.g. comfort camping)				
More accommodation types for visitors with disabilities (e.g. accessible, inclusive lodging)				
More park access options without a personal vehicle (e.g. shuttle service)				

12. To what degree do you support increasing campsite availability in Alberta's parks in the following areas?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Nearby to where I live (within 100-150 km)				
Near popular areas for recreation (e.g. fishing destinations, beaches, hiking areas).				
In backcountry settings (e.g. areas typically accessed by hiking, biking or horseback)				

13. What other ways could equitable access to parks be enhanced?



Reconciliation

Alberta Parks play an important role in supporting Indigenous peoples as they practice traditional land uses, including the exercise of First Nation Treaty rights and Métis harvesting practices.

Alberta Parks is committed to working with Indigenous communities and organizations to advance reconciliation in parks.

14. Which of the following three (3) options are most important for Indigenous reconciliation in Alberta's parks?

- Early input from Indigenous communities and organizations is used in park decision-making (e.g. conservation policy development)
- Indigenous cultural information shared in parks is provided by local Indigenous communities.
- Expanded Indigenous park employment opportunities
- Contemporary Indigenous land use policies for parks are developed collaboratively (e.g. traditional harvesting, hunting, ceremony, etc.)
- Limit public access to Indigenous ceremonial and sacred sites upon request, where possible.
- Indigenous communities design and present their own cultural heritage programming in parks.
- Introduce policy for Indigenous-led park conservation, tourism and collaborative management.

15. What does Indigenous reconciliation in parks look like to you?

Sustainability

Sustainable recreation and camping opportunities ensure parks can be enjoyed by current and future generations. Maintaining affordability for a financially stable parks system is critical. Costs to deliver services, programs, facilities and conservation actions (e.g. invasive species management) continue to increase.

Currently, partnerships play an important role in delivering park programs and services. There may be other opportunities to explore ways to ensure access to parks are maintained for generations to come.

16. Which of the following campsite development options would you support in Alberta's parks?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Build less costly basic campsites (no power/water) for more affordable camping.				
Build more costly serviced campsites (with power/water) for higher fee and amenity-rich camping.				
Invest in more costly, high service, barrier-free amenities (e.g. lodging) for more inclusive overnight stays.				

17. Would you support visitors paying additional user fees where visitor and recreation demands are greatest in Alberta's parks? Exemptions to fees may be considered for identified categories of individuals or activities.

Yes

Why wouldn't you consider paying additional user fees?

No

Why would you consider paying additional user fees?

Unsure

What information would you need to decide whether you would consider paying additional user fees?

NOTE: this would be in addition to existing user fees for some provincial parks (e.g. Canmore Nordic Centre trails pass)

18. Are you familiar with the role “Friends of” partner groups play in enhancing Alberta’s provincial parks?

- Not at all familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Very familiar

Are you currently, or have you previously, been involved with a “Friends of” provincial park group?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

19. Do you support expanding the role of partner-provided services, programs and conservation efforts in Alberta’s parks? (e.g. “Friends of” groups, facility operators)

- No

Why don’t you support expanding partnerships?

- Yes

Why do you support expanding partnerships?

- Unsure

What information would you need to decide whether you would support expanding partnerships?

20. How else could the financial sustainability of recreation experiences be maintained?



Increasing Access

Alberta Parks is exploring ways to improve access to tourism opportunities, in alignment with Alberta’s Higher Ground: A Tourism Sector Strategy, released in 2024.

21. Which of the following options to enhance tourism and local visitor experiences would you support in Alberta’s parks?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Expand Indigenous cultural, conservation and economic development opportunities				
Collaboratively improve research and information sharing to enhance tourism and visitor experiences				
Expand small-scale commercial development in high-demand visitation areas (e.g. local guiding, dining or recreation)				
Allow more large-scale commercial developments in high-demand visitation areas				

22. What other ways could tourism and local visitor experiences be enhanced?



Recreation Opportunities

Alberta's Parks wants to offer a range of recreation opportunities to meet the diverse and changing needs of visitors.

23. Which of the following options to improve the diversity of recreation opportunities available in Alberta's parks would you support?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Support private recreational development in parks				
Improve and expand trail connections to day-use facilities (e.g. playgrounds, picnic areas).				
Enhance water-based recreation (e.g. access/hand-launch for kayaks, canoes, etc.)				
Create opportunities for recreation with electric-powered equipment (e.g. hoverboards, e-scooters).				
Expand equipment and accommodation rentals (e.g. "comfort camping", bike rentals).				
Expand trail networks within provincial parks.				
Provide opportunities for quiet and mindful nature interactions.				
Create more opportunities for motorized recreation.				
Expand permitted hunting opportunities in more provincial park areas.				

24. What other ways could recreational diversity be enhanced?



Nature-based Experiences

Parks conserve nature and connect people with nature. Providing access to a variety of nature-based experiences for current and future generations, conserving nature and building an appreciation for natural values in parks is a key priority.

25. Which of the following options to enhance nature conservation and education in Alberta's parks would you support?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Create more parks to increase conservation and nature access.				
Collaborate to improve how information about conservation activities in parks are shared.				
Expand interpretive and educational programs to inform and inspire visitors.				
Add volunteer opportunities to promote hands-on nature and conservation education.				

26. What other ways could nature education and conservation be promoted?

Improving Legislation

Alberta’s *Provincial Parks Act* is one of the oldest pieces of parks legislation in Canada, first established in 1930 and most recently amended in 2000. Legislation and its associated regulations impact how parks are developed, managed and the rules visitors must follow.

With increasing pressures and growing demand for existing and new activities, there is a need to explore how this legislation can meet new challenges. This will ensure Alberta’s parks are effectively managed for current and future generations.

Legislation and its regulations provide guidance around specific activities and restrictions in provincial parks including recreational activities like boating, camping, day use, horseback riding, fishing and hunting. They establish rules around waste management, fire prevention, quiet hours, pets, motor vehicle use, fireworks, cannabis and liquor consumption.

See a full description of provincial park legislation and regulations at AlbertaParks.ca

27. The legislation and its regulations that set the intent and rules for activities in Alberta’s provincial parks and recreation areas:

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Unsure
Are appropriate and reasonable.				
Support the enjoyment of all visitors.				
Conserve parks for current and future generations.				
Ensure preservation of natural heritage.				
Encourage respect for parks’ cultural significance.				

28. I have experienced barriers to enjoying certain recreational activities in Alberta’s provincial parks because of:

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Unsure
Visitors being unaware of the regulations.				
Regulations deterring or limiting visitor enjoyment.				
A lack of regulations deterring undesirable and/or damaging visitor behaviours.				
Conflict with other visitors.				
Insufficient education about and enforcement of current regulations.				

ENGAGEMENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

**29. Have you experienced barriers to enjoying recreational activities in Alberta's provincial parks?
Please elaborate.**

30. Do you have anything else to share about provincial park legislation or regulations?

About you



31. What are the first three characters of your postal code? (e.g. T5K) *

32. How long have you lived in Alberta? *

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 2 years
- 2 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- More than 10 years
- Prefer not to answer

34. Do you identify as Indigenous?

- First Nations
- Métis
- Inuk/Inuit
- None of the above
- Prefer not to answer

33. What is your age? *

- Under 18
- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- 85 or older
- Prefer not to answer

Conclusion



35. Are there any other recreation, conservation, education or tourism opportunities you would like to see included in the new Plan for Parks?

36. How was your experience sharing your input today?

Poor

What made your experience poor?

Acceptable

Good

What made your experience good?

Thank you for taking the time to share your input. For more information about this engagement or the Plan for Parks:

- Visit [Alberta.ca/PlanforParks](https://alberta.ca/PlanforParks)
- Stop by any Alberta Parks visitor centre during operating hours
- Call Alberta Parks Contact Centre at 1-877-537-2757

