



Enhancing Protection of the Castle Area What We Heard Summary

On September 4, 2015, the Government of Alberta announced its intention to enhance protection of the Castle region. Since then, government has turned its attention to delivering on its commitment by consulting and engaging Albertans on recreation, tourism and conservation values in support of the new Castle area under Parks legislation.

Government has heard from thousands of Albertans on their values for the Castle and has taken all feedback into consideration for the future state and management of this important landscape.

Mechanisms for public input and feedback have included:

- A 30-day public input period was held from September 4 to October 5, 2015. Input was provided to government in a variety of ways including an online survey, written and email submissions, phone calls and meetings. There were approximately 3,400 responses to the online survey.
- In addition to the online survey, written submissions regarding the enhanced protection of the Castle area were received via email and mail.
- Separate Indigenous consultation was held from September 4 to November 9, 2015 as per the *Government of Alberta's First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development* and associated guidelines.

Below is a summary of what Albertans told us as we move forward with protection and management of the Castle:

- Many Albertans and their families enjoy recreating in the Castle area and want to ensure the area is conserved for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.
- Headwaters protection within the Castle is a crucial component of securing clean and clear water for downstream communities.
- Further industrial use and recreation access needs to be managed to support the ecological value of the area.
- Low-impact recreation and tourism is favoured due to the ecological importance of the area. Opportunities for limited or un-serviced camping in the area and non-motorized backcountry camping should continue, but random camping should stop. *The majority of respondents (64 per cent) to government's Castle online survey support un-serviced camping opportunities in the Provincial Park while only 36 per cent support backcountry off-highway vehicle camping in the Wildland Provincial Park.*

- The Castle area needs better management and increased enforcement including heavy fines and seizure of equipment. *Government has already enhanced enforcement on the Eastern Slopes.*
- Off-highway vehicles must remain on designated trails and the designated trail system must consider wildlife habitat and migration patterns, infrastructure, maintenance and enforcement to ensure compliance. Designated trails need to avoid ecologically sensitive areas.
- Off-highway vehicle use on non-designated trails must stop.
- Albertans recognize the importance of managing forest health to prevent wildfire, insect or disease, but welcome the decision that commercial forestry will be stopped in the Castle area due to the environmental impacts of commercial and/or clear-cut logging.

A summary of the September 2015 online survey is captured below:

- **Protect the Castle by amending the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and designate the Castle a Provincial Park and Wildland Provincial Park.**
1452 strongly/somewhat agree and 423 neutral out of 2648 respondents – 55% strongly/somewhat agree
- **Backcountry non-motorized camping areas in the new Provincial Park.**
1749 strongly/somewhat agree and 335 neutral out of 2630 respondents – 67% strongly/somewhat agree
- **Designated un-serviced camping areas in the new Provincial Park.**
1683 strongly/somewhat agree and 314 neutral out of 2630 respondents – 64% strongly/somewhat agree
- **Backcountry non-motorized camping areas in the expanded Wildland Provincial Park.**
1680 strongly/somewhat agree and 349 neutral out of 2626 respondents – 64% strongly/somewhat agree
- **Designated limited service camping areas in the new Provincial Park.**
1438 strongly/somewhat agree and 477 neutral out of 2627 respondents – 55% strongly/somewhat agree
- **Serviced campgrounds in the new Provincial Park that could include concessions, power/water hookups, RV waste transfer stations, etc.**
886 strongly/somewhat agree and 407 neutral out of 2629 respondents – 33% strongly/somewhat agree
- **Backcountry off-highway-vehicle camping areas in the new Provincial Park.**
994 strongly/somewhat agree and 281 neutral out of 2622 respondents – 38%

strongly/somewhat agree

- **Backcountry off-highway-vehicle camping areas in the expanded Wildland Provincial Park.**
952 strongly/somewhat agree with 257 neutral out of 2629 respondents – 36%
strongly/somewhat agree
- **High service accommodations or services such as hotels, restaurants, etc. along the Highway 774 corridor within the new Provincial Park.**
492 strongly/somewhat agree and 486 neutral out of 2630 respondents. 19%
strongly/somewhat agree

The Government of Alberta is appreciative of all stakeholder feedback. The rich engagement that has resulted in the designation of these new parks is reflective of a shared passion for this area.