Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area is forests, pastures and wetlands. It is a multiple use area that supports a variety of activities, including agriculture, wildlife management, natural gas extraction and outdoor recreation.

Active wildlife management programs in the area have created a wide range of habitats that support numerous wildlife species. Recreational opportunities include horseback riding, cross-country skiing, hiking, mountain biking and snowmobiling. The area provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities along its more than 170 km of equestrian and cross-country ski trails. Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area is the site of the Canadian Birkbeiner Ski Festival, held each year in February.

Trail Information

Cross-Country Ski Trails
- Trails are packed and groomed regularly, as snow conditions warrant. Dogs are not permitted on trail-side trails.
- There are trails for both novice and advanced skiers. 6 km trail-side, 30 km packed for skiing, and numerous non-groomed trails. Trails are double tracked for 2-way traffic. Warm-up shelters are provided along trails.
- Skiers should keep left when passing and step aside to allow them to pass. Moose are on the trail, especially for white-tailed deer along this trail.
- Running Dog (3.0 km): runs along north shore of Running Dog Lake. Group shelter just off the trail. There are 11 km of traps along this trail. Some traps are on shouting islands; be on the lookout for white-tailed deer along this trail.
- Spruce Hollow (6.3 km): short connector with views of grassy fields. White-tailed deer and moose are sometimes seen along this trail.
- Running Dog (2.4 km): provides access to Ukrainian Heritage Interpretive Centre located at the Waskehegan Staging Area. Waskehegan Trail (1.3 km) equestrian use permitted north of Central Trail junction.
- Waskehegan (2.3 km) portion runs near east shore of Waskehegan Lake. Main trail section does not receive regular maintenance and is outside the ungulate fence. Excellent wildlife viewing. South portion is for northern-only skiers, north portion is for both equestrian use and skiing.

Central Staging Area
- Skiers and equestrian users share portions of these trails. Skiers meeting horses should stop and step aside to allow them to pass. Moose Link Trail connects Central and Islet Lake Staging Areas. Trails around Central Lake are fairly flat, with one major hill on Beaver Loop heading west from Central Staging Area.
- Beaver Loop (2.6 km): active beaver colonies are numerous along this easy trail.
- Running Dog (3.0 km): main alleyway connecting Waskehegan and Central Staging Areas. Can be accessed from either end. Staging Area.
- Roundup (2.5 km): links central to these in Blackfoot area.
- Waskehegan (1.3 km) equestrian use permitted north of Central Trail junction.
- Running Dog (2.4 km): provides access to Ukrainian Heritage Interpretive Centre located at the Waskehegan Staging Area. Waskehegan Trail (1.3 km) equestrian use permitted north of Central Trail junction.
- Waskehegan (2.3 km) portion runs near east shore of Waskehegan Lake. Main trail section does not receive regular maintenance and is outside the ungulate fence. Excellent wildlife viewing. South portion is for northern-only skiers, north portion is for both equestrian use and skiing.

Equestrian Trails
- Features, alleys, and winter equestrian trails may be used for horseback riding (alleys are also used by snowmobilers). For a quicker ride, use marked equestrian trails from Central and Waskehegan Staging Areas. Blackfoot Staging Area trails are closed to horses from Dec. 1 to Mar. 31.
- Detour (2.1 km): shortens Waskegan loop, following ungulate fence on the inside. Don’t Way (3.7 km): runs along boundary fence from Sheep Hole to Waskehegan. Used for the fall Elk hunt.
- Flattail (5.1 km): named for the beaver that lives in the area (and sometimes drowns trees along the trail).
- Grouse (1.2 km): named for one of the area’s bird species.

Cooking Lake-Blackfoot is open daily from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.
- Garbage receptacles are not provided along trails or in backcountry areas. Please pack out all garbage.
- Open fires are permitted only in tents and stoves provided. For cooking, portable stoves are recommended.
- Staging areas are equipped with shelters and privies. The DJI’s provided at staging areas are inaccessible during winter months. Portable water is not provided in the backyard.
- Dogs or horses are not allowed in Waskehegan. Dogs are considered to be firearms.
- Discharge Permits are available at the Blackfoot Recreation Area Administration Office (780)-822-3539. If no one is in the office, leave your name and number for contact, or contact the Parks office in Edmonton (780)-427-3655.

Hunting
- During hunting season, a valid hunting license is required for the kind of wildlife and the wildlife management unit to which the open season applies. Aboriginal hunting may occur in the area year-round.
- Dogs or horses are not allowed in Waskehegan. Dogs are considered to be firearms.
- Skiers and equestrian users share portions of these trails. Skiers meeting horses should stop and step aside to allow them to pass. Moose Link Trail connects Central and Islet Lake Staging Areas. Trails around Central Lake are fairly flat, with one major hill on Beaver Loop heading west from Central Staging Area.
- Beaver Loop (2.6 km): active beaver colonies are numerous along this easy trail.
- extra food and drinks
- headlamp or flashlight
- lighter or matches
- pocket knife
- vehicle
- map and compass
- hoof pick and leather slicker (equestrian users)
- extra ski tip (x-c skiers)
- cell phone – there is cell coverage in most areas of Blackfoot.

Hypothermia and Frostbite
- Hypothermia, the lowering of body temperature is caused by exposure to cold and can occur even on relatively warm days. As the body cools, its ability to function normally, Symptoms include shivering, confusion and dizziness. To avoid hypothermia, keep warm and dry, dress in layers of loose-fitting clothing and wear a hat. Carry extra socks and an extra sweater or warm jacket.
- Frostbite is the freezing of living tissue. To treat frostbite, gently warm the area by blowing on it or placing it under an arm. Avoid rubbing or massaging the skin—this can destroy skin cells.

Safety
- Travel on recreation area trails can be hazardous. Weather can change quickly. Many of the trails are remote and are not patrolled on a regular basis. It is important that you are prepared by carrying the following in your pack or saddlebag:
  - Ski poles
  - warm clothes
  - extra food and drinks
  - headlamp or flashlight
  - lighter or matches
  - pocket knife
  - vehicle
  - map and compass
  - hoof pick and leather slicker (equestrian users)
  - extra ski tip (x-c skiers)
  - cell phone – there is cell coverage in most areas of Blackfoot.

Recreational Use
- Cooking Lake-Blackfoot is open daily from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.
- Garbage receptacles are not provided along trails or in backcountry areas. Please pack out all garbage.
- Open fires are permitted only in tents and stoves provided. For cooking, portable stoves are recommended.
- Staging areas are equipped with shelters and privies. The DJI’s provided at staging areas are inaccessible during winter months. Portable water is not provided in the backyard.
- Dogs or horses are not allowed in Waskehegan. Dogs are considered to be firearms.
- Discharge Permits are available at the Blackfoot Recreation Area Administration Office (780)-822-3539. If no one is in the office, leave your name and number for contact, or contact the Parks office in Edmonton (780)-427-3655.

Hunting
- During hunting season, a valid hunting license is required for the kind of wildlife and the wildlife management unit to which the open season applies. Aboriginal hunting may occur in the area year-round.
- Dogs or horses are not permitted within 400 metres of staging areas or within 200 metres of backcountry shelters. Boundaries are identified by bright orange-yellow signs. Note: under the Provincial Parks Act, boxes are considered to be firearms.
- Discharge Permits are available at the Blackfoot Recreation Area Administration Office (780)-822-3539. If no one is in the office, leave your name and number for contact, or contact the Parks office in Edmonton (780)-427-3655.

Fire Bans in Alberta
- Toll Free: 1–866–427–3582
- Phone: (780) 427–3652

Emergency (Polices, Fire, Ambulance)
- Phone: 911

Contact
- Information
  - Phone: (780) 865–5600 May–October
  - Phone: (780) 865–5596 October–April

- Campsite Reservations
  - Phone: (780) 865–2154

- General Provincial Park Information
  - Phone: (780) 865–2154
  - Toll Free: 1–866–427–3582

- Alberta Parks Winter Trails
- Web: AlbertaParks.ca