

School Group Permits for Kananaskis Country Parks and Protected Areas-Memo

From: Kananaskis Country
Alberta Parks and Protected Areas
To: All Alberta School Boards and Schools

Date: January 4, 2005
Telephone: (403) 678-5508
Fax: (403) 678-5505

As of September 1, 2004 all **custodial school groups** using Alberta Parks and Protected Areas in Kananaskis Country must obtain a free annual School Group Permit. This permit is part of the Guiding and Instruction Permit policy and legislation. A “**custodial school group**” is a school group where at least one person is below the age of majority and that minor is not in the company of his/her parent.

The permit system was developed after input from a variety of schools. The permit system will:

- Assist Parks and Protected Areas to better manage the numbers of visitors to the area, which will in turn enhance visitors’ safety and experiences.
- Help to mitigate environmental degradation of the ecosystem and trails once schools and numbers of individuals are identified through the permit system.

The following material explains the School Permit System. Please read over the material and complete the application process.

Thank you for helping Alberta Parks and Protected Areas to protect Kananaskis Country’s spectacular environment.

Sincerely,

Ray Andrews
Area Manager
Kananaskis Country
Alberta Parks and Protected Areas
Alberta Community Development

School Group Permit

This permit is for ALL field trips conducted in Parks and Protected Areas within Kananaskis Country and the Ghost Area (other than programs booked through the Kananaskis Country Environmental Education program or another permitted guide)

Permit valid for school year: _____

Name of school / school board (Permit Holder): _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone Number (include area code): _____

Fax Number (include area code): _____

E-mail address: _____

Signing this form ensures you agree with the following statement:

I have read the conditions under which this permit is issued and agree to comply with all the applicable conditions stated therein. I will ensure the Key Messages are communicated to all students. I agree that failure to comply with the Department Legislation and the conditions of this permit may result in the cancellation of this permit and/or forfeiture of any applicable bond at the discretion of the Department.

Signature of school or board authority: _____

Print Name _____

Official Position _____

Teachers participating in field trips to Kananaskis Country (which includes the Ghost Area) **MUST carry a SIGNED copy of this form.**

Authorized Department Signature

Send the completed form, by mail or fax, to:

Alberta Parks and Protected Areas
Kananaskis Country
Guiding and Instructing Permit
201-800 Railway Avenue
Canmore, Alberta T1W 1P1
Tel: (403) 678-5508 Ext. 283
Fax: (403) 678-5505

Government of Alberta ■

Important Information

What is a permit?

As of September 1, 2004 all **custodial school groups** using Alberta Parks and Protected Areas in Kananaskis Country must obtain an annual School Group Permit. This permit is part of the Guiding and Instruction Permit policy and legislation. A “**custodial school group**” is a school group where at least one person is below the age of majority and that minor is not in the company of his/her parent.

Why do you need a permit?

A permit ensures that we have a record of user groups in Kananaskis Country. This permit enables us to have a better understanding of school use so we can more effectively manage the ever-increasing demand for the area. **The biggest change for schools will be the number of students allowed on trails and at backcountry campsites.** These limits are in place to minimize environmental impacts, increase the quality of the experience, and to promote personal safety while using the area.

How do you obtain a permit?

Permits can be obtained either through an individual school or through the school board. There is no fee for the permit. To complete the permit, follow the instructions below. Your board or school will receive a **signed copy of the permit from Parks and Protected Areas.**

1. School Board permit option:

- 1.1. The Superintendent or other authorized school district official should read the entire Permit Conditions and Key Messages.
- 1.2. Complete the **School Group Permit** form and send it to the Parks and Protected Areas address on the form.
- 1.3. Make certain that all teachers leading field trips:
 - Have read the Permit Conditions and Key Messages to students.
 - Agree to adhere to all the Permit Conditions and communicate the Key Messages.
 - Carry a copy of the signed School Group Permit during their field trip.
 - Complete the Field Trip Report immediately following each trip and send this completed form to the same office that issued the permit.

2. Individual school permit option:

- 2.1. The principal of the school or other authorized school official should read the entire Permit Conditions and Key Messages.
- 2.2. Complete the **School Group Permit** form and send it to the Parks and Protected Areas address on the form.
- 2.3. Make certain that all teachers leading field trips:
 - Have read the Permit Conditions and Key Messages.
 - Agree to adhere to all the Permit Conditions and communicate the Key Messages to students.
 - Carry a copy of the signed School Group Permit during their field trip.
 - Complete the Post Field Trip Report immediately following each trip and send this completed form to the same office that issued the permit.

Permit Conditions

As a School Group Permit holder it is the responsibility of the school or school board to ensure that their school groups using the Parks and Protected areas within Kananaskis Country adhere to **all provincial legislation** and the following permit conditions. This permit is not valid until both the authorized school authority and the Parks and Protected Areas authority have signed the permit. The conditions are broken into two sections: **General Conditions** (*which every group must follow*) and **Activity Conditions** (*e.g. Hiking, backpacking, etc*)

Part I: General Conditions

1. The School Group Permit coincides with the regular school year and must be renewed every year.
2. All school groups must comply with all applicable Acts and Regulations including the “Alberta School Act” (which includes possessing a valid general liability policy), the “Occupational Health and Safety Act, Code, and Regulations” concerning first aid (part 11) and emergency procedure requirements (part 7), the “Provincial Parks Act” and its regulations, and the “Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas, and Heritage Rangelands Act.”
3. Schools must have **safety plans** that outline acceptable activities, instructor qualifications, emergency contacts, communications, and other pertinent information required to ensure the safety of students. Safety plans must be available upon request by Parks and Protected Areas.
4. While traveling in bear country be knowledgeable of “**Bear Aware**” **techniques and safety measures**, stay closely grouped as opposed to spreading out along the trail.
5. School groups should carry appropriate means of communication (*e.g. radios, cellular phones and/or satellite phones*) as reflected by the school’s safety plan.
6. In the event of an emergency in Kananaskis Country, phone the **Kananaskis Emergency Centre at (403) 591-7767 or phone 911 and ask for the Kananaskis Emergency Centre.**
7. This permit does not give school groups exclusive use of any area or facility. Normal public activity on trails and in facilities must not be interfered with.
8. This permit is for Alberta Parks and Protected Areas within the Kananaskis Country Area only (which includes the Ghost Area Parks) and does NOT include National Parks, public lands, private, or leased lands in Alberta.
9. School groups must camp in designated campgrounds, **random camping is NOT permitted.**
10. Any commercial guide hired by the school to lead groups **MUST** have a valid permit from Alberta Parks and Protected Areas to operate in Kananaskis Country. *NOTE: If your group is using a commercial guide, it is the guide’s responsibility to acquire the permit AND complete all reports.*
11. A School Group Permit is NOT required for programs delivered by the **Environmental Education Staff** in Kananaskis Country.
12. The school group agrees to hold harmless the Minister from any and all third party claims, demands, or actions for which the school group is legally responsible, including those arising out of negligence or wilful acts by the School Group or by the School groups employees or agents. This hold harmless shall survive this agreement.

Permit Conditions

Part II: Activity Conditions

Specific group size trail information and trail locations are available at:

www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/kananaskis - Go to Education, then Environmental Education, then School Permits. Maps in PDF form are also available on this website.

1. Hiking (day use)

- School Groups are allowed to use trails in Kananaskis Country (and the Ghost area) that are designated for either a group size of 35 or 15. These numbers include all members of the group (e.g. students, guides, parents, teachers, volunteers, etc.).
- **Teachers must ensure their group size matches the allowable number for the specific trails they will be using and any other restrictions present for those trails.**
- School groups should contact the **Barrier Lake Visitor Information Centre** at (403) 673-3985 in advance of their trip for recent trail reports or conditions. Trails, facilities, or day use areas may be closed on short notice due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. bear in the area, flooding, etc.).
- Observe all seasonal closures on trails due to wildlife considerations (e.g. lambing). These closures are also listed on our website.
- A School Group Permit is NOT required for programs delivered by the **Environmental Education Staff** in Kananaskis Country or if the group is with a commercial guide possessing a permit.

2. Backcountry Camping (overnight use)

- Groups must camp in designated campsites, random camping for school groups is not permitted.
- **School groups of 35 can stay at the following backcountry campsites:**
 - Point, Forks, Elbow Lake, Tombstone, Quaita, and Mount Romulus
- **All other backcountry campgrounds accommodate groups of 15 ONLY.**
- Campfires are only permitted in provided firepits.
- To make backcountry campground reservations call toll free 310-0000 and then ask for (403) 678-3136.
- Observe seasonal closures on trails due to wildlife considerations (e.g. lambing). These closures are also listed on our website.

3. Cycling

- Cycling is only permitted on designated trails maintained and signed by Kananaskis Country Parks and Protected Areas
- Cycling is not permitted on interpretive trails.
- Observe seasonal closures on trails do to wildlife considerations (e.g. lambing).
- If the school group is cycling on public roads (e.g. Highway 40), approval must be obtained through Alberta Transportation (403) 297-7678.

Permit Conditions

4. Water Activities (canoeing / kayaking / rafting)

- River use by school groups is **only allowed with a permitted guide** in Kananaskis Country.
- Ensure there is **an appropriately trained individual** accompanying the group at all times during water activities on lakes and ponds.
- Large lake use (e.g. Barrier, Spray, Upper and Lower Kananaskis) have **no groups size limit**.
- Small front-country ponds have a **group size limit of 15** (e.g. Grotto Pond, Wedge Pond, Gap Lake).
- All backcountry lakes have a **group size limit of 6** (e.g. Lillian Lake, Elbow Lake).
- All applicable Federal Small Vessel Regulations must be followed.

5. Winter Activities (cross-country skiing / snowshoeing / ski touring)

- Be certain that the school group will not travel in avalanche terrain. If the group leader is unsure of the terrain to be visited, then **an appropriately trained individual** should be hired to guide the group or evaluate the terrain on behalf of the group leader.
- Snow shoeing is not permitted on **groomed** cross-country ski trails.
- Ensure the group leader is knowledgeable about travel and programming in winter environments (e.g. technical abilities, weather awareness, hazard assessment, etc.).
- It is recommended that a qualified guide be hired when any group use outside designated cross-country and snowshoe areas is planned.
- Be aware that cross-country ski fees are in effect for all groomed cross-country ski areas in Kananaskis Country.

6. Climbing Activities (scrambling, rock climbing, technical mountaineering)

- School groups must hire an A.C.M.G. certified mountain guide or a guide with equivalent certification for these trips.

Questions about Guiding and Instruction Permits? Contact:

Alberta Community Development
Parks and Protected Areas
Suite 201, 800 Railway Avenue
Canmore, Alberta T1W 1P1
T: (403) 678-5508 Ext. 283
F: (403) 678-5505
Tammi.Rees@gov.ab.ca

Key Messages

(These messages must be communicated to students visiting Parks and Protected Areas within Kananaskis Country)

1. Alberta's Parks and Protected areas belong to all Albertans and contain many different natural landscapes that are home to numerous plant and animal species. The province's network of parks and protected areas covers roughly 27,500 square kilometers and includes more than 500 sites. This network helps to ensure that Alberta's biodiversity is preserved for future generations.
2. Parks and Protected Areas vision: "Alberta's parks and protected areas preserve, in perpetuity, landscapes, natural features, and processes representative of the environmental diversity of the province."
3. Parks and Protected Areas exist to protect provincially significant natural, historical, and cultural features. They contain a range of outdoor recreation, interpretive, and environmental education opportunities, facilities, and services so that visitors can explore, learn, understand, and appreciate the natural world.
4. The "Provincial Parks Act" and the "Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas, and Heritage Rangelands Act" protect Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas. These legislative acts have guidelines that help keep these lands healthy and vibrant.
5. Feeding of wildlife is not necessary and is potentially dangerous. The ecosystem provides all the food and habitat wildlife requires for their basic needs. Human food does not meet their nutritional requirements and can cause some species to become dependent on humans. Quietly observe all wildlife from a comfortable distance.
6. Take only pictures. Everything, living and non-living, is protected to help preserve the complex living systems that thrive in our Parks and Protected Areas. Students are welcome to share their discoveries, but must remember to leave everything as they found it. Treat plants, insects, and trees gently to avoid unnecessary injury or damage.
7. There are no off-leash areas in Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas. This protects wildlife, as well as domestic pets. Please do not bring pets on a field study as they can be distractions for students and pose a health risk for those allergic to pets. Guide Dogs and Assisted-Living Dogs are the only animals permitted in Park and Protected Areas buildings.
8. Litter must be placed in the rubbish bins or carried out. Human litter is hazardous to plants and wildlife. Outhouse facilities should be used for human waste or students should use properly placed catholes or latrines in backcountry areas.
9. Use only designated fire pits. Open fires are a threat to public safety and wildlife habitat. The burning of vegetation is not permitted.

Post Field Trip Report

Please complete this report immediately following **EVERY** school visit in Kananaskis Country.

Fax form to 403-678-5505 (Attention: Debbie Milhousen)

Permit Holder (School or School Board): _____

School Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Trip Leader(s) (Teachers): _____

Date(s) of Trip: _____

Trip Location (include specific trail(s) by name, river(s), backcountry campsite(s), lake or pond, and/or group use area(s):

Number of Participants:

Students: _____

Adults: _____

General Comments (trail conditions, wildlife sightings, group concerns);

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Parks and Protected Areas
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