



William A. Switzer
Provincial Park



Management Plan Update

October 2008

What's Happening

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is preparing a management plan for William A. Switzer Provincial Park. The management plan will outline the future management direction for the park to support recreational activities while ensuring continued protection. Albertans were asked to provide their ideas and suggestions during June and July 2008. Since that time, staff have been collecting information and recording public input. Now, we would like to update you on recent management plan activities.

Thanks For Your Input!

Thank you to everyone who took time to comment on the future management of William A. Switzer Provincial Park. Public input is a key part of the process of preparing a management plan, so we were happy to hear from so many of you about your recommendations for the park, as well as your concerns. At the June 17th open house in Hinton and at the Park Visitor Centre throughout the summer, we heard from park visitors, cottagers and stakeholders. Many of you also provided written comments in letters, e-mail and through our website.



Here's What We Heard

We received a wide range of comments. Here are a few of the most frequently raised topics:

Facilities

Respondents supported the idea of more facilities in the park, such as expanding the Visitor Centre, more parking at Kelly's Bathtub, a pullout on Highway 40 for the Jarvis Creek canoe route, more washrooms, recycling bins, better access for visitors with disabilities, more signage. There is also a desire to keep camping fees reasonable. Some respondents supported new tent sites or backcountry campsites, while others did not want to see the park develop any more campsites. Others expressed the wish to 'keep the park much as it is today, with present facilities well maintained and staffed' or to have 'no further development of recreation / leisure facilities that impact natural / cultural / heritage values'.

Roads

Respondents stated concerns about highway safety in the park, with strong support to reduce speed limits, some suggestions to widen the highway, and several comments to re-route Highway 40 out of the park.

Staffing

Respondents expressed their support for having more parks / government staff in the park, including more enforcement staff and more heritage appreciation / interpretation staff.

Resource and Cultural Heritage Protection

Many respondents commented on the importance of natural areas and resource protection in the park, with most stating 'it is important to keep the park natural', 'continue to protect natural areas', 'ensure that any changes are sensitive to what make Switzer special' and 'focus on resource protection'. Some commented that they wanted to see the park continue to be 'tranquil' and maintain its 'natural beauty'. Some respondents expressed support for maintaining biodiversity and protecting the habitat of animals and vegetation, as well as maintaining wildlife movement corridors in the park. Others suggested doing more inventory and monitoring of plants and animals. Some respondents supported the protection of cultural and historical sites in the park, including Aboriginal ceremonial sites.





William A. Switzer Provincial Park



Development Adjacent to Park Boundary

Some respondents expressed a desire to limit industrial development (such as forestry, oil & gas wells / pipelines) around the park boundary, with suggestions to designate buffer zones of limited development outside the park boundary to dampen impacts. Some respondents expressed the desire for an expansion of the park boundary.

Connectivity

Respondents supported the idea of increased connectivity within the park, such as better trail connections (including boardwalks) between lakes and/or between sites (e.g., Athabasca Lookout, Blue Lake, campgrounds) and the rest of the park. There were also requests for better connectivity of the canoe routes with portages for Jarvis Creek and water-accessible picnic sites. Cottage owners wanted to continue to have an ATV access route so that they could exit the subdivision to get outside the park.

Next Steps

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is now considering all of the public input as it prepares a draft management plan. Once the draft plan is ready, it will be made available for the public to review and provide comments and suggestions.

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**Visit our website if you are interested in
more information on the
William A. Switzer Management Plan
or for progress updates.**

www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks/consult/Switzer

Recreation Opportunities

Respondents stated that recreational opportunities in the park are important. Most said they would like to see the park maintain or expand its existing recreational opportunities (e.g., cross country ski trails, hiking and biking trails). Some respondents suggested to allow horse use in the park. Other respondents supported continued fish stocking. Some expressed their support for continuing to prohibit ATV or snowmobile use.

Respondents also commented on boating in the park, focusing on the need to have/enforce speed limits, limit/ban motorized boats, and increase non-motorized boating opportunities (e.g., offer canoe rentals, kayak courses).

Heritage Appreciation

Respondents expressed their support of the park's heritage appreciation (interpretation) program, with calls for more nature value messages in the park's interpretive programming and more environmental education programs. The opportunity to share learning about the park's rich Aboriginal culture and heritage was also identified.

