

Description of Planned Land Designations

	Provincial Park	Wildland Provincial Park
Purpose and Objective	Primary purpose is the conservation of nature. Offers wide range of nature-based recreational opportunities. Provides road access and opportunities for tourism, facility development, and educational programming that support conservation.	Primary purpose is the conservation of nature on large, healthy landscapes with opportunities for backcountry/wilderness recreation and experiencing nature in a relatively undisturbed state. May provide opportunities for nature-based touring, guiding and outfitting.
Visitor Experience	Wide range of park experiences, which inspire people to reconnect with nature through leisure, learning or recreation activities. Visitors can expect nature-based opportunities, supported by facilities and education programs.	Visitors will experience solitude, challenge and personal interaction with nature. Facilities are limited to trails and backcountry/rustic campsites that minimize visitor impacts on the wilderness values. Nature based ecotourism or adventure tourism trips such as hiking, wildlife viewing, mountain climbing or trail riding are encouraged.
Criteria	Only sites with provincially significant conservation, recreation and tourism values capable of providing high quality visitor experiences. Typically large enough to maintain ecological functions while supporting a diversity of opportunities.	Only sites larger than 5,000 hectares where automobile access is non-existent or limited to the periphery. Visitor numbers may be restricted if there are impacts to conservation objectives or the wilderness experience.
Permitted Uses		
Hunting	Yes	Yes
Off-Highway Vehicles	Yes, on designated trails and areas	Yes, on designated trails
Auto Access Camping	Yes, in designated areas	No
Backcountry Camping	Yes, in designated areas	Yes
Commercial Trail Riding	Yes, in designated areas	Yes, in designated areas
Equestrian Use	Yes, in designated areas	Yes, in designated areas
Fishing	Yes	Yes
Hiking	Yes	Yes
Nature Appreciation	Yes	Yes
Climbing/Caving	Yes	Yes
Snowmobiling	Yes, on designated trails and areas	Yes, on designated trails
Mountain Biking	Yes, on designated trails	Yes, on designated trails
Designated Day Use Areas	Yes	No
Water Based Recreation	Yes	Yes
Commercial Forestry	No	No
Coal and Metallic and Industrial Mineral Extraction of Crown Owned Resources	No	No
Existing Petroleum and Natural Gas Commitments	Yes	Yes
New Petroleum and Natural Gas	Yes, but with no new surface access	Yes, but with no new surface access
Exploration and Development of Freehold (Privately Owned) Minerals	Yes	Yes
Existing Sand and Gravel	Yes	Yes
New Sand and Gravel	No	No
Existing grazing	Yes	Yes
New grazing	Yes, Subject to grazing suitability assessment	Yes, Subject to grazing suitability assessment

Provide Your Input from September 4—October 5, 2015

Online: www.albertaparks.ca
 Email: ParkNews@gov.ab.ca
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 Mail: Attention: Enhancing Protection of the Castle

For more information contact the Land Use Secretariat by phone 780-644-7972 or by email at LUF@gov.ab.ca



The Government of Alberta is committed to enhancing protection of the Castle Special Management Area (the Castle). To achieve this, the government plans to amend the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) and designate the Castle under Parks' legislation as a mix of Wildland Provincial Park and Provincial Park.

This will protect important wildlife populations and habitat as well as important headwaters. This will also enhance the recreation and tourism potential of the area, and help to diversify the local economy into the future.

Enhanced protection of the Castle area will have impacts to existing commercial forestry operations and other resource extraction activities. It will shift our focus to stewardship, conservation, recreation and tourism opportunities for all Albertans.

Importance of the Castle

The Castle is located in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains in southern Alberta. The Castle area borders Waterton Lakes National Park and is located within the Crown of the Continent ecosystem (the area where Alberta, British Columbia and Montana meet) and is the source of the Oldman River Basin headwaters.

The Castle is one of the most biologically diverse areas in Alberta, with over 200 rare or at-risk species. These include species like whitebark pine, wolverine, grizzly bear, bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. It is also key movement corridor for large mammals, including grizzly bear.



Current Designation and Land Use

The Castle is currently a mix of public land use zone (PLUZ) and park designations as identified in the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan. The area has a long history and high demand for multiple uses including commercial forestry operations, oil and gas development, grazing and recreation. There are existing summer and winter trail systems in place that allow for motorized and non-motorized use. Random, un-serviced camping is permitted (with the exception of within one kilometre of provincial recreation areas). Serviced camping is available in the provincial recreation areas.

Planned Designations and Land Use

The Government is planning to expand the Castle Wildland Provincial Park and create a new provincial park. The park designations will add an additional 48,690 hectares. In total, 103,788 hectares of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region and 48 hectares of Parkland (Foothills) Natural Region will be protected. The enhanced protection of the Castle area adds to the protection of these Natural Regions, but also ensures the long-term protection of the rich and unique biodiversity of the area. These two park designations will support conservation management objectives and differentiate and diversify the recreation opportunities and tourism products within the region.

The expansion to the Castle Wildland Provincial Park will include the most critical and sensitive wildlife areas, including the major valleys and front canyons. It will include two major wildlife movement corridors for wide-ranging species such as grizzly bear and wolverine and habitat for threatened species such as bull trout. Off-highway vehicle use will continue, managed to designated off-highway vehicle trails. Development in the wildland provincial park will be limited and be focused on low-impact, low-service facilities such as backcountry camping areas for off-highway vehicles, equestrian users, and backpacking. Trails for motorized and non-motorized uses would also be appropriate and could provide for hut-to-hut traveling. The visitor experiences will be focused on the remote, wilderness nature of the wildland.

The new provincial park will include the existing Lynx Creek, Castle Falls, Castle River Bridge, Syncline, and Beaver Mines Lake Provincial Recreation Areas, as well as trails and areas to accommodate existing off-highway vehicle use. The focus in the provincial park will be services, facilities and infrastructure to support the current use and future demand for recreation opportunities and tourism development and could support more intense development. Highway 774 would remain as the main access through the Castle and the majority of facility and service development would likely be focused along this corridor. Development within the provincial park could include un-serviced, low service and fully serviced automobile accessible camping areas, fixed roof accommodations (such as comfort camping or hotel), staging areas for the variety of trail users, visitor services such as information centre, kiosks, etc., restaurants, concessions, day use and picnicking areas, and trail systems to support a variety of trail users. Beyond the Highway 774 corridor, the remainder of the provincial park could continue to support low-impact motorized and non-motorized recreation in a mid-country/backcountry setting and provide access to the more remote wildland provincial park.

The changes will help meet the demands for a wider range of recreation opportunities, help support tourism development in this part of the province and diversify the local economy. However, development of recreation and tourism facilities and services will require careful planning and years to implement.

Once designated, a park management plan will be developed for both the provincial park and wildland provincial park. Planning for recreation and tourism facilities and services will occur during this process. The park management planning process will invite Albertans to provide input into decisions about how to manage the natural, cultural and recreational values of parks to meet current and future demands and expectations. The park management planning process will likely begin in 2016.

