



## **Redevelopment of Lower Kananaskis Lake Campgrounds in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. What was initially proposed?**

To increase camping capacity, enhance visitor experience, reduce the risk of negative encounters between people and bears, and increase grizzly bear habitat security in the Lower Kananaskis Lake area in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park Alberta Parks proposed several changes to area campgrounds. This area is very popular as a summer camping destination, but it also contains critical grizzly bear habitat. This requires extensive management of bears and people to ensure camper safety. Alberta Parks proposed adding 34 RV-accessible sites with power and washroom/shower building to a new campground loop in Boulton Creek Campground. This project also proposed to remove 13 lakeside campsites from the Lower Lake Campground; these sites are continually at high risk of negative encounters between people and bears due to their proximity to high-quality bear habitat. Alberta Parks proposed to keep the Mt. Sarrail walk-in tenting campground open and to provide upgrades to increase camper safety and comfort. Lastly, Alberta Parks proposed to designate an overflow campground in a currently under used parking lot in Boulton Creek Campground. This overflow would serve as emergency camping only when all other campsites in the area are occupied.

#### **2. Did Alberta Parks conduct consultation on the Proposal to redevelop these campgrounds?**

Alberta Parks conducted public consultation on the Proposal from December 7, 2016 to February 13, 2017. First Nations consultation with the Treaty 7 First Nations also took place. The feedback for this plan has been positive overall, and Albertans have been supportive of it.

#### **3. What is Alberta Parks planning for the redevelopment of the Lower Kananaskis Lake area?**

Based on feedback, changes were made to the plan details to accommodate the needs of Albertans. The plan now involves:

- Constructing 34 RV-accessible sites at Boulton Creek campground. Six of these sites will meet accessibility standards for people with limited mobility. These sites will also accommodate a medium sized tipi.
- Closing 12 campsites at the Lower Lake campground that are most at risk for encounters between people and bears due to bear movement and habitat-use patterns.
- Installing bear-proof food storage bins at Mt Sarrail for each campsite. Storage bins will be located in each section of the campground and surrounded by fixed picnic tables.

- Designating an official campground overflow in the Pocaterra day use area. This area will be seasonally designated for overflow camping from May 1 to October 15. Overflow campers will be limited to a maximum stay of two nights; a maximum of 30 units will be permitted in the overflow.
- Designating two new “Preservation Zones – Wildlife Corridors” around these human-use areas to provide bears with space to navigate the landscape without encountering people as frequently.

#### **4. Where is the project area located?**

The Lower Kananaskis Lake area is located in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. A beautiful and popular recreation destination, there are several campgrounds that surround Lower Kananaskis Lake. Lower and Upper Kananaskis Lakes are the heart of recreation opportunity in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. The lakes are located along the Kananaskis Lakes trail/highway AB-742, about 80km south of the TransCanada Highway (see [Map 1](#) for the regional project location). Boulton Creek Campground is located on the east side of the Kananaskis Lakes Trail, whereas the Lower Lake Campground and Lower Lake Day Use Area are located on the west side closer to the lakeshore. Mt. Sarrail is located between upper and lower Kananaskis Lakes near the south shores of Lower Kananaskis Lake.

#### **5. Why is Alberta Parks choosing to close some of the most popular campsites in the Lower Lake Campground?**

These campsites are located in very close proximity to the critical high quality bear habitat that lines the lakeshore. Current grizzly bear GPS collar data shows that bears use this area extensively through the summer month for eating and traveling along the lakeshore. In addition, these sites are frequently the focus of Parks Staff attention for aversive conditioning, which is essentially hazing or guiding bears away from human use areas and working to keep them away. Parks Staff also invest considerable capacity working with campers to reduce the amount of unnatural attractants, such as unattended coolers or dirty campsites, that may attract bears to campsites. As a result, Alberta Parks staff devote considerable time and energy in this small area of the park.

Removing these campsites will ensure bears have access to important natural feeding opportunities without being chased away by people. This will also help keep campers safe by ensuring some natural separation between bears and people. Campers may still use the Lower Lake shore as a day use area, but are encouraged to prioritize bear habitat use and movement when possible.

#### **6. How will expanding Facility Zones around Boulton and Mt. Sarrail campgrounds impact habitat availability for wildlife?**

The Facility Zone expansions are being kept to an absolute minimum. It is important, however, that Alberta Parks amend Facility Zones to ensure access to underground infrastructure for maintenance and to surround the new campground loop. In addition, the creation and formal designation of two new wildlife corridors as Preservation Zones will increase the amount of secured wildlife habitat over the long term.

#### **7. Why were communal kitchens at Mt. Sarrail removed from the final plan?**

Recent bear monitoring data show that bears do not use habitat in the Mt. Sarrail Campground, but they do still move around the campground. Currently, each campsite at Mt. Sarrail has a picnic table and firepit. Campers frequently leave coolers unattended after eating or going to sleep, which increases the risk of a negative encounter between campers and bears. While communal kitchens would reduce this risk, they would also create new operational challenges. To compromise, Alberta Parks decided to provide enough, centrally located bear-proof food lockers for campsites and surround them with picnic tables. Fire pits at individual campsites will remain in place. It is critical that Mt. Sarrail retain its walk-in tenting and quiet campground characteristics.

**8. Will the new campsites be available on the Reserve Alberta Parks (RAP) website?**

Boulton Campground is already on RAP and the new campground loop will be added to this system. Lower Lake and Mt. Sarrail will remain first come-first serve.

**9. Why was the location of the overflow campground changed?**

The proposed location of the designated overflow campground was the secondary parking lot at Boulton Creek Campground. This parking lot may not be of sufficient size to accommodate the number of sites required for overflow camping. In addition, its configuration could lead to significant traffic congestion around the campground entrance during busy summer weekends. The Pocaterra day use area has been used for overflow camping in the past. With a few minor changes, this day use area can easily be converted to an official overflow campground for the summer months (from May 1 to October 15). Overflow campers will be limited to a maximum stay of two nights; a maximum of 30 units will be permitted in the overflow.

**10. How does this Project enhance recreation opportunities?**

This project enhances recreation opportunities in the Lower Kananaskis Lake area in several ways. First, providing for additional RV-accessible serviced campsites at Boulton Creek directly addresses a growing demand for this form of camping opportunity. It also helps diversify the Boulton Creek Campground offer, which will contain RV-serviced campsites, unserviced campsites, and walk-in tent sites. Second, this project enhances visitor safety by removing campsites that are in a high-risk area for negative encounters between campers and bears and creating wildlife corridors to direct animals around human-use areas. Visitor safety will also be increased through better food storage at Mt. Sarrail. In addition, visitor experience will be enhanced by upgrading the Mt. Sarrail Campground and building a shelter to protect campers from poor weather. The installation of bike lockers at Mt. Sarrail will also ensure facilities for campers who are bike touring through the region.

**9. When will construction start?**

The Boulton Creek Campground expansion construction will start in September/October 2017 and continue in the spring of 2018. Alberta Parks anticipates construction will be completed by June 30, 2018. Closure and removal of the Lower Lake campsites is proposed to begin in Spring 2018. Installation of bear-proof food lockers at Mt. Sarrail will begin in the Summer of 2018. Habitat restoration in the wildlife corridor east of Boulton Creek campground would commence in 2018 and be ongoing. The Pocaterra day use area will be officially designated as an overflow campground for the 2018 camping season.

**10. Who can I contact for further information on this Proposal?**

If you would like further information on the Lower Kananaskis Lake Redevelopment Proposal, please email the Kananaskis Region Planning Department at [Kananaskis.Projects@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Kananaskis.Projects@gov.ab.ca).

