

TRAIL PLAN
for
Hubert Lake Wildland Provincial Park,
Northeast Region



PLAN APPROVAL

The undersigned hereby approves of the “Trail Plan for Hubert Lake Wildland Provincial Park”. It is recognized that this approval only relates to the broad scale information provided on designating and possibly upgrading some existing trails, as well as the reclamation of closed trails, and should not be construed as formal approval for construction.

Steve Donelon
Assistant Deputy Minister
Parks Division
Alberta Environment and Parks

Date

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1.0 OVERVIEW

Alberta Parks is responsible for the management and operations of Hubert Lake Wildland Provincial Park (established on May 26, 2000) under the authority of the *Provincial Parks Act*. The Government of Alberta is committed to providing people with opportunities to connect with nature, be active, spend time with friends and family, and have fun. Alberta Parks has the Plan for Parks, 2009-2019 which is a 10-year blueprint for guiding management of Alberta's parks system to ensure sustainability of Alberta's landscapes, enhance recreational opportunities, and improve quality of life for Albertans. The following trail plan supports the goals of this document, as well as planning initiatives with the Land Use Framework on lands in Alberta Parks' Northeast Region. Land restoration also supports parameters laid out in A Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta, 2011. Trail planning for Hubert Lake Wildland Provincial Park is part of an ongoing trail designation and habitat restoration initiative in the Northeast Region which seeks to promote the conservation of biological diversity, assist in the restoration of potential caribou habitat, and to build on a social science program in the region. A well planned and designated trail system for all types and levels of approved uses provides greater user satisfaction as well as lessens environmental impacts and conflicts with other land uses.

2.0 PLAN AREA

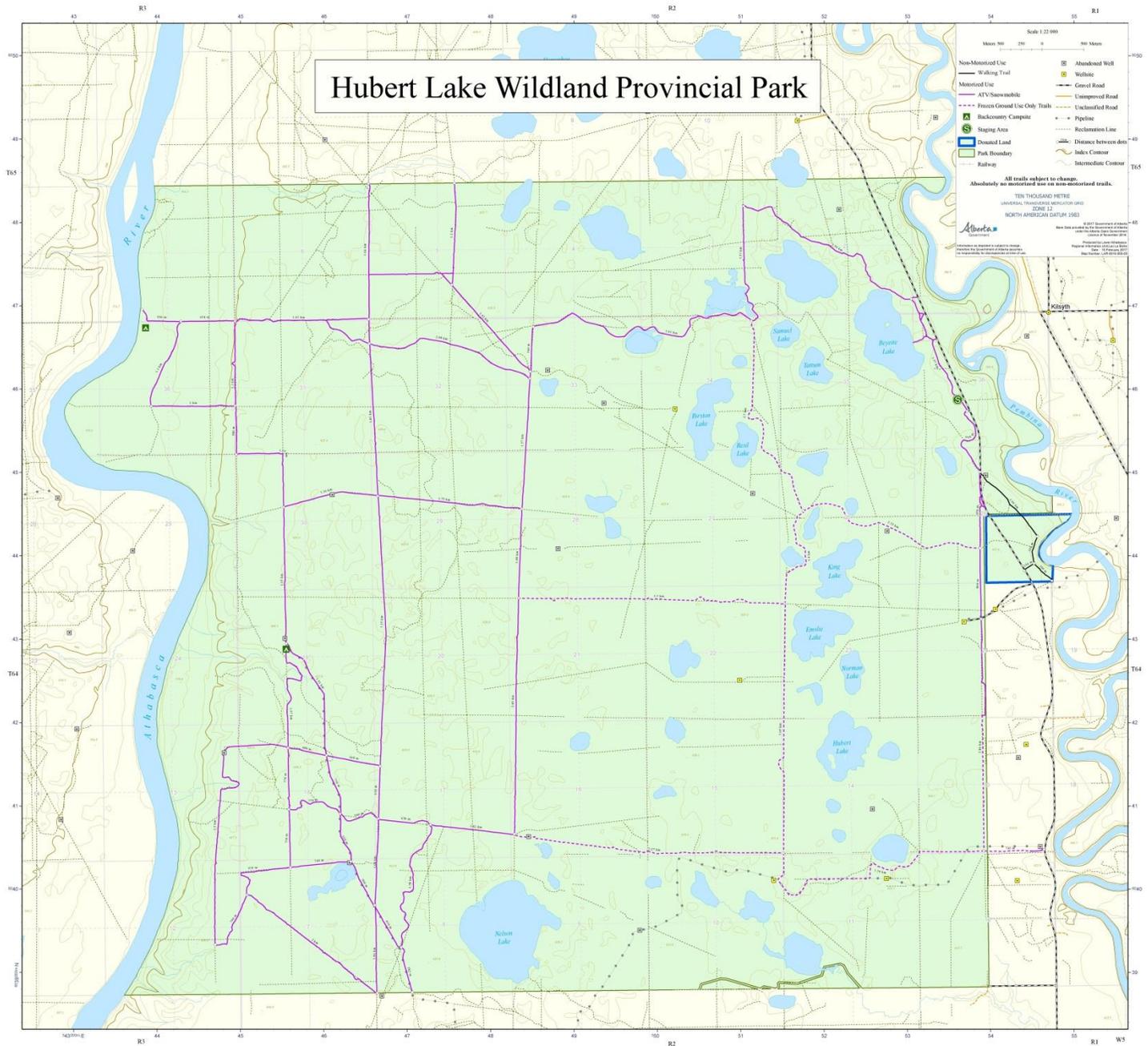


Figure 1. Designated trail map for Hubert Lake Wildland Provincial Park

3.0 DESCRIPTION

3.1 Park Description

Hubert Lake Wildland Provincial Park is located between the Athabasca River and the Pembina River, and has several small lakes located on the east side of the Park (Beyette, Samual, Birston, Reid, King, Emslie, Norman, Hubert, Ward, Crane and Nelson). Most of these lakes are small and shallow. The Park is representative of the central mixedwood boreal forest subregion.

The Park consists of a sand dune complex with Jack Pine as the dominant vegetation. Between the sand dune ridges are depressions containing numerous wetlands which consist of black spruce, tamarack and patterned fens. This mixed complex of sand dunes and wetlands are the result of numerous wind erosion events, and due to the complex patterning and orientation of these features the potential for locating numerous rare plant species is excellent. Hubert Lake WPP is home to wildlife such as moose, wolves, elk, coyotes, fox, black bear, lynx, wolverine, martin, fisher, eagles, deer, and caribou. The sand dune and wetland complex west of the Pembina River is critical wildlife habitat, and is excellent habitat for amphibians. Breaks along the Athabasca River are critical winter range for moose. The park is important nesting habitat for Sandhill Cranes, and contains numerous colonies of great blue heron.

Hubert Lake WPP is part of the southern range for the Slave Lake Caribou Herd (also known as the Mitsue herd), and is also some of the least disturbed range. The Slave Lake herd is currently in decline.

3.2 Land Uses

Activities permitted in Hubert Lake WPP include: hunting, fishing, trapping, Indigenous use, hiking, back-country camping, motorized off-highway vehicle recreation on designated routes. There are over 20 dispositions within the Park, most of them industrial dispositions connected to oil and gas development. Current uses include:

Oil/Gas: There are 9 License of Occupation (LOC), 6 Pipeline Agreements (PLA) and 16 Mineral Surface Leases (MSL) dispositions within the park. Included in these dispositions are three active oil wells, five active gas wells, and (at minimum) three abandoned wells.

Trapping: Three active traplines overlap within the area, though none are entirely enclosed within the Park.

Forestry: Hubert Lake is located within Forest Management Unit (FMU) S7, managed by Alberta-Pacific Forest Products Inc. It is bounded by FMU W11 on the west side (Miller Western) and FMU S01 on the

east.

Other: There are four protective notations (PNT) and eight consultative notations (CNT) that either partially overlap into the park, share the boundary or are in close proximity to the park. The PNT are primarily ungulate wintering grounds, with the CNT as rangeland improvement grounds or buffers. The west side of the Athabasca River is a known wintering ground for the Slave Lake caribou herd. Also, in the past there has been a Letter of Authority (LOA) issued to the Northern Lights Snowmobile Club for use and maintenance of a trail through the WPP for snowmobiling.

Recently a quarter section of Land owned by the Berry Family was donated to Alberta Parks at the request that it be added and included as part of Hubert Lake WPP. This piece of land is adjacent to the existing WPP and as part of the donation it was requested that this piece of land only be used for foot access only. This land will need to be added to the park by official order in council.

3.3 Existing Linear Disturbances

Hubert Lake WPP is a remote park with networks of seismic lines, cutlines, wellpad access roads, traplines and pipelines. These linear disturbances are currently used for motorized recreation – accessible during winter months via snowmobile and summer months via off-highway vehicle. Many of these cross wetlands that are easily damaged by use of motorized access. The typical users are backcountry recreationalists, neighboring landowners, hunters, and trappers.

4.0 TRAIL PLAN

Trail planning, reclamation and conservation work in the park is important to strengthen overall parks and protected areas environmental standards, and protect Alberta's water, land and wildlife habitat. The intent is to develop a designated trail system that will allow park users to continue their recreational activities while directing them away from sensitive areas that are easily damaged by OHV use. It allows activities to be focused to specific locations, therefore reducing overall disturbance and improving habitat connectivity and biodiversity.

The trail plan recommends:

- (1) Formal designation of trails;**
- (2) Closing and reclaiming low-use disturbances such as seismic lines, cutlines, wellpad access roads, and pipelines which are in sensitive areas;**
- (3) Establishing designated backcountry camping sites;**
- (4) Establishing a formal staging area; and**
- (5) Developing and installing signage.**

(1) Formal designation of trails.

Reasons for:

- To meet legislative requirements: As per Section 12(2)(f) of the *Provincial Parks Act* and Section 27 of the *Provincial Parks (General) Regulations* (Appendix A).
- Once trails are formally designated, it allows the ability to enforce proper usage of trails – including where and what type of vehicle, as defined in Section 117 of the *Traffic Safety Act* (Appendix B) and the draft Program Policy Statement for Managing Off-Highway Vehicles and Snowmobiles in Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas.
- It will encourage safer and more responsible recreational use and conservation in parks.
- The recently donated land that is adjacent to the Park will remain free of motorized vehicle use, as requested by the donor.

Process:

- An inventory of all current trails, seismic lines, cutlines, wellpad access roads, traplines and pipelines has been completed.
- Information from stakeholders and user groups (trappers, recreation clubs, neighboring landowners, ENGO's, and municipalities) was collected and considered in the designation of trails for the appropriate recreational usage.
- Trails Plan to be approved by the Assistant Deputy Minister
- The designated trails will be maintained by Alberta Parks.
- Volunteer groups may enter into agreements with Alberta Parks to maintain certain portions of trail as stewards of the park, as has been done historically in the Park.
- Trails will be monitored for use via traffic counters and cameras.
- Some capital development may occur:
 - Tentative improvements with construction of boardwalks over wet areas where needed.
 - Barricades and signage to be installed on donated land to prevent motorized vehicle usage.
 - Appropriate signage will be developed and installed in appropriate locations throughout the WPP.

Desired outcomes:

- There will be 'All-Season Trails' where access is year-round, and 'Frozen-Ground Use Only Trails' where soil conditions do not allow for year round use (i.e. low wetlands areas.).
- Park users will only be permitted to use the designated trails.
- Limited access point around the Park will ease control and enforcement.

- Designated trails will be maintained to Alberta Parks' standards.

(2) Closing and reclaiming low-use and sensitive area seismic lines, cutlines, wellpad access roads, and pipelines.

Reasons for:

- Disturbed vegetation in the Boreal Forest Natural Region is typically slow to recover to a natural state without reclamation efforts.
- It is not expected that restored lands will be disturbed in the future due to resource exploration.
- The Slave Lake Caribou Herd's range falls within the WPP. The northeast corner of the Park is identified as a third priority caribou habitat restoration area.

Process:

- All linear disturbances not designated as trails will be scheduled to be reclaimed.
- Linear disturbances for which there are no industrial reclamation requirements will be reclaimed by Alberta Parks, in possible partnerships with industry and other organizations.

Desired outcomes:

- The closing and reclaiming of unused linear disturbances will mitigate potential biodiversity impacts associated with random off highway vehicle access.
- Restoring previously disturbed linear features will improve wildlife habitat. In addition, outcomes of linear disturbance restoration and reclamation fall within the goals of the Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta, 2011 to stop the decline of woodland caribou populations and recover the species. Hubert Lake WPP falls within the Slave Lake Caribou Range.
- Approximately 70 per cent of all linear disturbances identified in Hubert Lake WPP will be scheduled for restoration and reclamation.

(3) Establishing designated backcountry camping sites.

Reasons for:

- As per Plan for Parks, 2009-2019, Alberta Parks will encourage interest and opportunity in parks, and develop opportunities for recreation.
- Parks under the Wildland Provincial Park classification allows for backcountry camping (random and at formal sites).

Process:

- Two sites will be formally established as backcountry camping sites: one on the south end of the park and the other in the northwest corner next to the Athabasca River.
- The sites are chosen due to their existing popular usage.
- The backcountry campsites will include: a firepit, picnic table, backcountry toilet, and bear hang/locker.

Desired outcomes:

- Popular backcountry camping sites will be formally designated and limited facilities/infrastructure will be added. Formalizing sites will allow for more focused use and limit environmental damage.
- Random backcountry camping is still permitted in the park.

(4) Establishing a formal staging area.

Reasons for:

- The area is an ideal location for a staging area due to popular road access and previously cleared vegetation.
- Providing a staging location allows for focused use of an area reducing environmental damage around the park and focus's access to the designated trails.

Process:

- The site will be at an abandoned gas well site on the eastern border of the Park, south of Beyette Lake off of Range Road 20B (Athabina Road).

- Tentative installation of a loading/unloading ramp for OHV users and information Kiosk.

Desired outcomes:

- A formal staging area will be created to contain and limit impacts on undisturbed vegetation and land.

(5) Developing and installing signage.

Reasons for:

- Signage will be necessary to support the enforcement of proper trail use.
- Park users will require information on changes to the WPP and introduction to the designated trail system.

Process:

- Signage will be installed around park boundary and throughout the park (trailheads, junctions, etc.)
- Signage will be installed at the trail entrances of the donated land to signify 'foot access only' area.
- Large map signage (showing designated trails, backcountry camping sites, and staging area) will be installed at various access points into the Park.

Desired outcomes:

- All signage will be consistent with Alberta Parks' standards.
- Users will be knowledgeable on proper trail usage within the Park.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

PROVINCIAL PARKS ACT (RSA 2000 C p-35)

Regulations

12 (2) The Minister may, in respect of parks and recreation areas, make regulations

[...]

(f) respecting the use of motor vehicles, boats, trailers and equipment;

PROVINCIAL PARKS (GENERAL) REGULATIONS (AR 102/1985)

Operation of off-highway vehicles and cycles

27(1) Notwithstanding anything in section 26 to the contrary, no person shall operate or use an off-highway vehicle or any similar specialized means of conveyance, in a provincial park or recreation area except

(a) on a trail or in an area set aside, designated or identified by signs, notices or trail markers posted as a trail or area for the use of such conveyances and in compliance with any rules indicated by such signs or notices as to the types of vehicle that may or may not be used and as to the use of such vehicles, or

(b) in an area other than a place referred to in clause (a), with the written authorization of the Minister.

Appendix B

TRAFFIC SAFETY ACT (RSA 2000 cT-6)

Definitions

117 In this Part,

(a) “off-highway vehicle” means any motorized mode of transportation built for cross-country travel on land, water, snow, ice or marsh or swamp land or on other natural terrain and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes, when specifically designed for such travel,

(i) 4-wheel drive vehicles,

(ii) low pressure tire vehicles,

(iii) motor cycles and related 2-wheel vehicles,

(iv) amphibious machines,

(v) all-terrain vehicles,

(vi) miniature motor vehicles,

(vii) snow vehicles,

(viii) minibikes, and

(ix) any other means of transportation that is propelled by any power other than muscular power or wind,

but does not include

(x) motor boats, or

(xi) any other vehicle exempted from being an off-highway vehicle by regulation;