



## **Draft Management Plan for Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park:**

### **What We Heard**

Alberta Parks developed a draft Management Plan for Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park (LHCPP) with advice and recommendations from key stakeholders and Indigenous communities. The draft plan sets out objectives and strategies for management of the park over a 10-year period.

LHCPP was designated on April 19, 2005, in honour of the late Lieutenant Governor the Honourable Lois Hole. The park encompasses the former Big Lake Natural Area, which was established in 1999, and is located along the western edge of the cities of St. Albert and Edmonton and is bordered by Parkland County to the South-west, and Sturgeon County to the North-west. LHCPP protects one of the largest wetlands in the Central Parkland Natural Subregion of Alberta. It is internationally recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area for its abundant and diverse bird populations. The park's location within a busy urban landscape provides provincially significant opportunities for nature-based education and experiences that connect people to nature while supporting community engagement in environmental stewardship. The park also offers limited opportunities for low-impact, nature-based recreation and introduces Albertans to the larger system of Alberta Parks experiences and values.

The draft management plan outlines the specific issues, opportunities and challenges relevant to managing a unique and significant Provincial Park within a highly developed urban context. The LHCPP Management Plan will become the key reference document used to guide operations, development, decision-making, and management of the park, now and in the future. It was developed in consultation with Albertans, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities, and is intended to help achieve conservation of natural and cultural resources, while providing lasting social and economic benefits for Albertans.

The key outcomes of the plan include:

- Identification of the appropriate uses and activities in LHCPP
- Identification of a zoning framework that outlines how areas within LHCPP will be managed in the future
- Identification of the types of facilities and infrastructure that will support nature-based education, engagement, and recreation in the park
- Description of the monitoring, stewardship and management approaches that will protect the significant ecological values at LHCPP and maintain its status as a globally recognized Important Bird and Biodiversity Area

## Decision

After a 60-day public consultation period, Alberta Parks has proceeded to finalize the management plan with some minor changes as follows:

- Wording changes to improve clarity of meaning
- Updated maps to ensure adjacent land uses reflect up-to-date policy
- Added numbering on maps to improve clarity

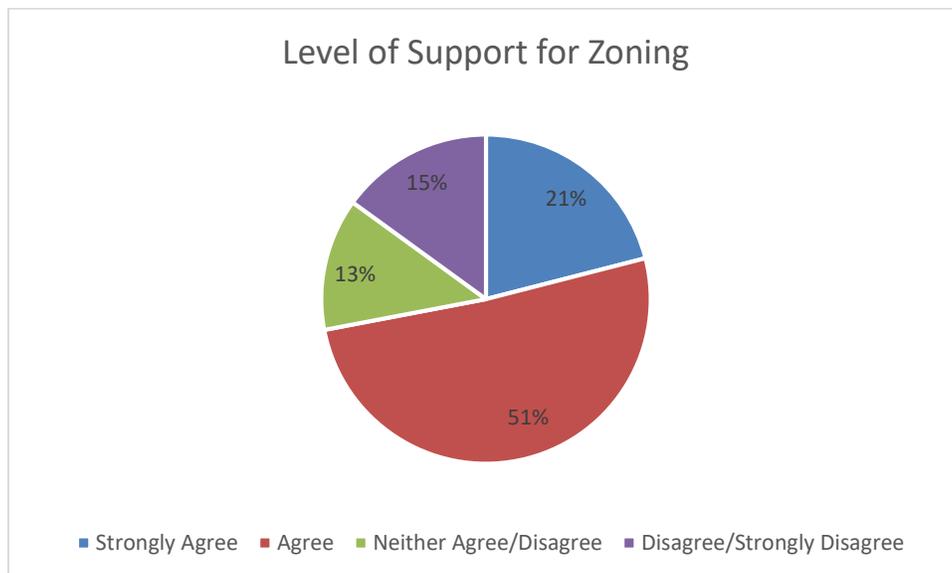
## Summary of What We Heard

Public consultation regarding the Draft Management Plan was conducted for a 60-day period. Consultation was conducted by the following methods:

1. Posting the Draft Management Plan on [www.albertaparks.ca/consult](http://www.albertaparks.ca/consult) , accompanied by an online survey
2. Emailing Park News subscribers
3. Emailing project packages to relevant stakeholders as defined in the Public Participation Plan
4. Meeting with the relevant stakeholders to gather feedback on the Draft management plan

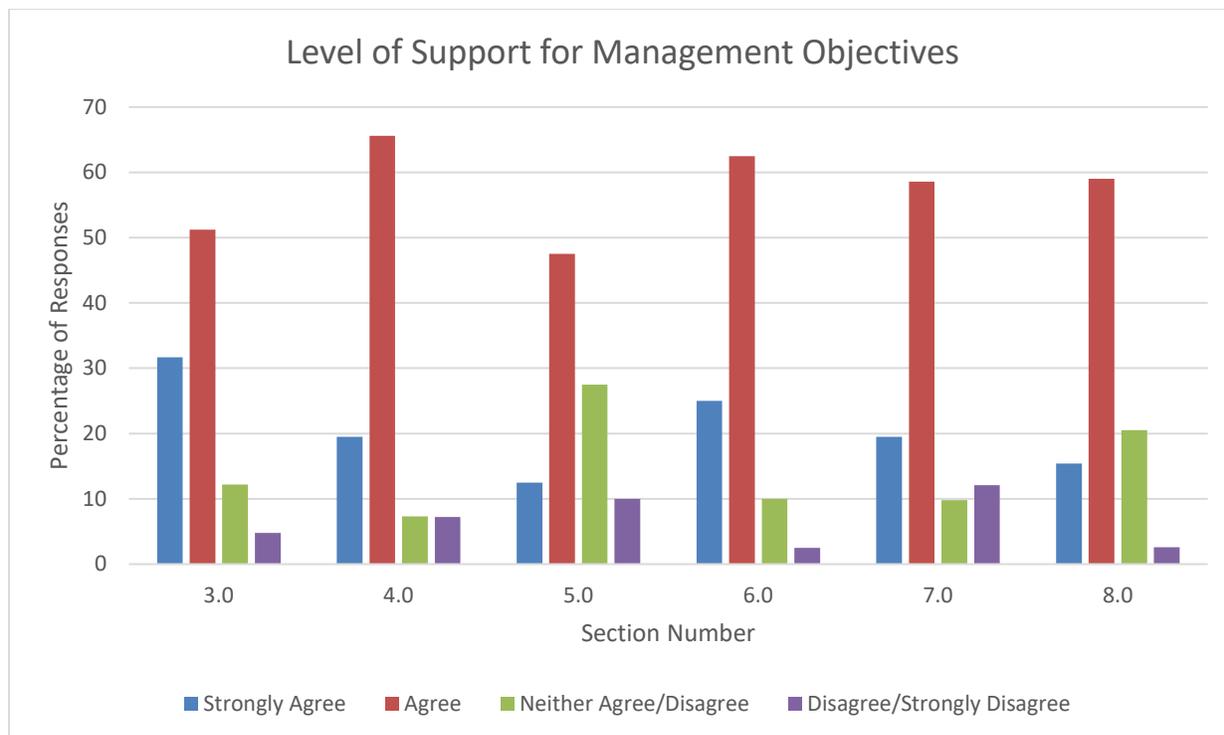
In total, Alberta Parks received 47 online survey responses, 7 email responses from the public regarding the management plan, and 4 letters from stakeholders. In general, respondents were supportive of the content of the Draft Management Plan.

When asked about the proposed zoning boundaries put forward in the Draft management plan, approximately **72% of respondents** either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed zoning (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Proportion of responses to survey question "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the zoning boundaries?"

When asked about the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the proposed objectives in each section of the management plan (sections 3.0 to 8.0, **between 60% and 85% of respondents** either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed objectives (See Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Combined responses to the question "To what extent do you agree or disagree that the objectives identified in Section \_\_\_ are appropriate?" for sections 3.0 to 8.0.

**Management Plan Sections as follows:** 3.0 Conservation and Protection, 4.0 Community Engagement, 5.0 Indigenous Peoples, 6.0 Visitor Experience, 7.0 Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living, 8.0 Research, Monitoring and Adaptive Management.

General comments on the Draft management plan were related to seven overall themes. Table 1 summarizes each of the themes and provides responses and relevant sections of the management plan.

**Table 1:** Alberta Parks responses to themes resulting from public consultation.

Topic	What We Heard	Alberta Parks Response
<b>Management of land adjacent to LHCPP</b>	Lands adjacent to the park boundary should either be incorporated into the park, or protected in some way to ensure the long-term conservation of the Big Lake ecosystem. Several respondents expressed particular concern about City of St. Albert	The focus and scope of Alberta Parks management plans is generally limited to lands within the existing park boundary. However, recognizing that the long-term sustainability of the ecological values within the park is closely tied to management of lands outside the park, several objectives were incorporated into the plan in support of

	<p>Annex 11, a parcel of land to the East of the proposed East Facility Zone, stating that the land needs to be protected from industrial development.</p>	<p>collaboration, relationship- and capacity building with adjacent landowners and land managers. Alberta Parks is committed to delivering on these objectives as they represent critical approaches to addressing some of the most prevalent threats and management challenges to the Big Lake ecosystem and LHCPP.</p> <p>Furthermore, as per section 1.7.4 of the management plan, Alberta Parks will pursue the acquisition of suitable lands for inclusion into the park as opportunities become available, with a focus on lands within the 1:100 year floodplain.</p>
<p><b>Non-Motorized Water Based Recreation</b></p>	<p>Some respondents expressed concern about the impacts of all forms of recreation on wildlife and the Big Lake ecosystem, including disturbance that canoeing, kayaking and other forms of water-based recreation have on nesting birds in particular. On the other hand, many respondents also strongly opposed the concept of restricting non-motorized watercraft from Big Lake as a potential management option. Several respondents felt that such restrictions would eliminate opportunities for nature appreciation, at the detriment of long-term conservation of the ecological values in the park.</p>	<p>In order to support and facilitate the outdoor recreation, nature-appreciation and education opportunities that have long been available at LHCPP, ongoing monitoring combined with collaborative education is needed. In order to protect the unique ecological values at the park and maintain the status of Big Lake as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, there are many objectives related to monitoring current and potential threats and stressors, and developing targeted education programs to park visitors.</p> <p>Alberta Parks will continue to support and facilitate recreation within the park until such a time that monitoring indicates significant negative impacts to wildlife or habitat due to recreation activities. There may be a need to implement more stringent management strategies in the future, such as those outlined in section 3.0 of the management plan.</p>
<p><b>Zoning</b></p>	<p>There was overall support for the proposed zoning including the location, shape and size of the facility and special protection zones. Many respondents were concerned that the special protection zoning, which transects Big Lake, would be too difficult to enforce.</p>	<p>The primary purpose of the special protection zoning in the LHCPP management plan is to communicate the significance of areas that are particularly sensitive and important for fish and wildlife. For example, the larger (northern) Special Protection Zone protects the known nesting, breeding, staging and feeding areas of a diversity of birds that depend on Big Lake for survival.</p> <p>To conserve the sensitive and important values found within the Special Protection Zones, the primary approach will be to</p>

	<p>educate park visitors on ways to minimize impact by avoiding to the extent possible, recreation within Special Protection Zones.</p>
<p><b>Facility Zone Development</b></p>	<p>There was overall support for the proposed types of developments within the facility zones. Feedback emphasized the importance of focusing on low-impact developments, and on concentrating development to relatively small footprints within facility zones.</p> <p>Out of the potential options for development within the East Facility Zone, a majority of respondents were opposed to the development of a campground within LHCPP. 77% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the methodology used to evaluate the various options for development in the East Facility Zone, and 68% either agreed or strongly agreed that a day-use area is the most suitable option.</p> <p>The primary management goals for LHCPP are focused on protecting sensitive ecological values and accommodating environmental learning, community engagement in stewardship, and nature-based recreation. As such, development in the facility zones will be confined to small footprints, will utilize innovative and sustainable design, materials and technology where possible, and will involve restoration of disturbed land in order to create and enhance habitat.</p>
<p><b>Motorized Vehicles and Watercraft</b></p>	<p>Of the responses received, there was unanimous support for a ban on motorized watercraft. There were also many comments about the importance of enhancing enforcement of prohibitions on off-highway vehicle (OHV) &amp; snowmobile use in the park.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with community partners including stewardship groups and municipalities, Alberta Parks will continue to enforce prohibitions on snowmobile and OHV use in the park. Education programs and materials will also be developed to raise awareness of relevant regulations and impacts of motorized recreation on the sensitive ecosystem within LHCPP.</p> <p>Alberta Parks will also pursue establishing a motorized boat restriction at Big Lake through Federal Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations.</p>
<p><b>Trails</b></p>	<p>There was a wide diversity of responses with respect to the types of trails desired and the types of uses that people felt should be supported or not-supported at LHCPP. For example, respondents were divided with respect to mountain biking, as well as surfacing of trails. There was</p> <p>Alberta Parks will proceed with the development of formal designated trails within the park, with clear and accessible information for trail users about the types of activities supported by various trail types.</p> <p>Future trail development and planning work will be informed by environmental monitoring of environmental impacts, as well as social</p>

	<p>widespread support for the development of interpretive signage for nature trails, as well as the need to work collaboratively with municipalities and developers to ensure that trails are regionally integrated.</p>	<p>science research about current recreational uses and needs.</p>
<p><b>Enforcement</b></p>	<p>Many respondents expressed a need for greater enforcement overall of legislation including the <i>Migratory Birds Convention Act</i> and the <i>Provincial Parks Act</i>, in order to protect sensitive habitat and wildlife within the park. Concerns regarding activities such as off-roading, dogs off-leash, and garbage dumping were raised and many respondents called for greater presence of enforcement officers at LHCPP.</p>	<p>Regulatory compliance and voluntary stewardship by visitors of the park's sensitive environment will be supported by the development of a Community Stewardship Program as per objective 4.4 of the management plan. Alberta Parks will continue to work with the community and surrounding municipalities on enforcement and to encourage the all members of the community to report problem behaviour.</p> <p>If Alberta Parks is able to secure the necessary funding to develop the Environmental Learning Centre (ELC), there may be a greater staff presence at the park, since the ELC will include office space for a number of parks staff.</p>