

Bighorn Dam Provincial Recreation Area

To conserve the landscape and better manage social and economic activity in Bighorn Country, the government is proposing new, expanded or amended parks, recreation areas and public land use zones.

The Bighorn Dam Provincial Recreation Area (PRA) would be formed within the Kiska/Willson Public Land Use Zone and overlap with the Eastern Slopes Policy's Multiple Use Zone.

Current management intent within the Kiska/Willson Public Land Use Zone permits a wide variety of commercial activities and industrial uses and development.

Located west of Nordegg, the Bighorn Dam and Hydro Power Generating Station were constructed on the North Saskatchewan River between 1969 and 1972. Once the dam was completed, Abraham Lake was created, and is today the largest human-made lake in Alberta. Since the early 2000s recreational use of land directly below the dam has steadily increased. A typical weekend sees over 100 camping units and has reached as high as 500 units on a long weekend. These high levels of use are becoming unsustainable, resulting in damage to the environment and trails in the area.

The proposed provincial recreation area would better support and manage high levels of use in the region, minimize and mitigate damage to the environment and trail network, improve user experiences and address concerns about public access to the neighbouring Big Horn Reserve.



The proposed recreation area would provide new managed facilities offering a range of options, including many of the experiences that current users expect. This area would serve as a hub for visitors wanting to access neighbouring areas for recreation and tourism experiences. It would offer existing local businesses and tourism operators a market of overnight visitors to the area and the site would complement other local tourism services.

Proposed Management Direction

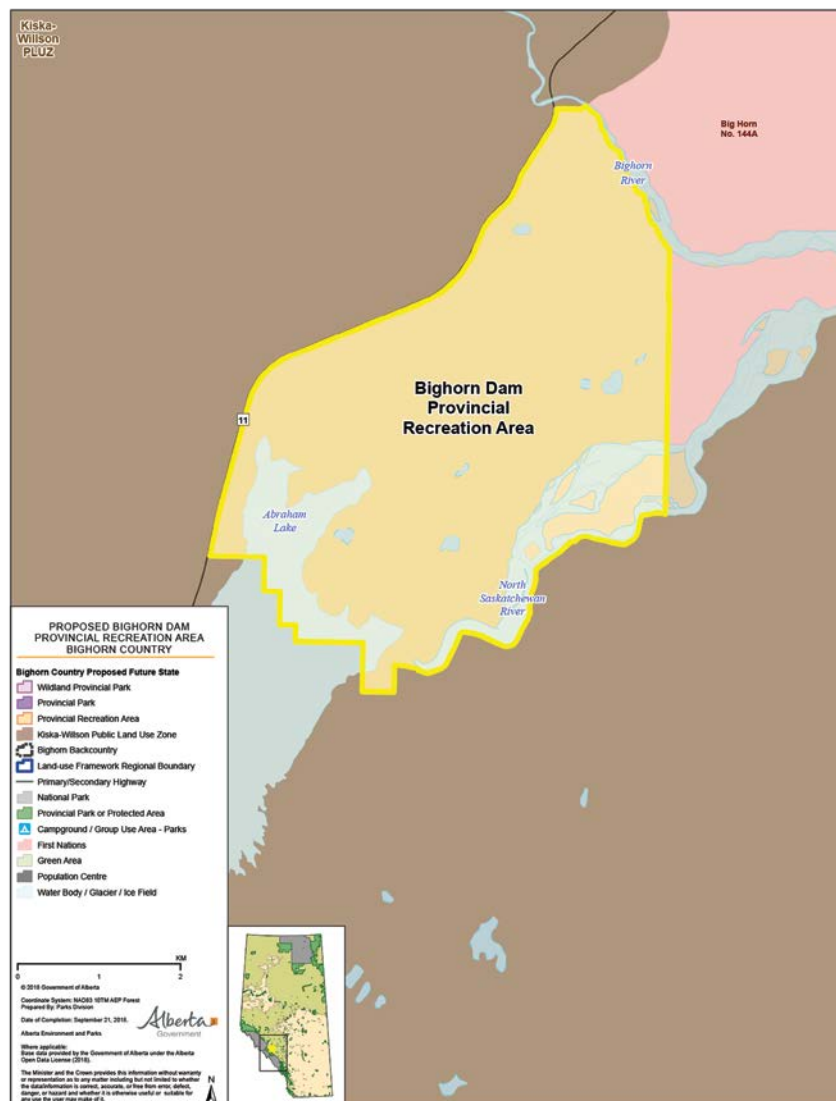
Resource Management

Type of Use	Current State	Proposed Management Direction
Existing Petroleum and Natural Gas	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no existing petroleum and natural gas agreements in this site. 		
New Petroleum and Natural Gas	Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New petroleum and natural gas agreements would be sold with a “no surface access” addendum, in accordance with existing policy. 		
Metallic and Industrial Minerals (MIM) and Coal	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no metallic or industrial minerals or coal agreements in this site. Coal lease applications would be amended. 		
Freehold Minerals	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no freehold minerals in this site. 		
Surface Materials (Sand and Gravel)	Permitted	Permitted for existing commitments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no existing commitments for this use in this site. 		
Commercial Forestry	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no existing commercial forestry tenure in this site. 		
Livestock Grazing	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no existing commitments for this use in this site. 		
Registered Trapping	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing trap lines would be honoured. Trapping would adhere to the <i>Wildlife Act</i>, the <i>Provincial Parks Act</i> and their associated regulations and policies. Motorized access permits and Firearms Discharge Permits (when required to carrying out trapping) may be required. 		

Nature-Based Recreation & Tourism Development

Type of Use	Current State	Proposed Management Direction
Motorized Recreation (OHV)	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OHV use would be permitted on designated trails and staging areas. Timing restrictions may be applied consistent with current practice to manage environment impacts (e.g. wet trail conditions). As part of future parks management planning, trails planning would be undertaken to address specific areas of concern (such as stream crossings, erosion/braiding and undesignated trail use). 		
Undesignated Backcountry Camping	Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This park would not facilitate backcountry camping experiences due to its size and levels of facility development. 		
Auto Access Camping (front country, vehicle accessible)	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The intent of this provincial recreation area is to facilitate front county and vehicle accessible facilities and OHV staging opportunities. Initially, areas where random camping currently occurs would be designated to make it allowable under parks legislation – these would be called rustic camping areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These sites would provide basic amenities and services such as washrooms and garbage collection. A permit would be required to camp in a rustic camping area. Detailed planning, including First Nations consultation and public engagement, would occur to develop a facility development plan to enable investment in additional amenities and services. 		
Equestrian Use	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equestrian use would be permitted on designated trails/staging areas. Timing restrictions may be applied to manage environmental impacts (e.g. wet trail conditions). Tethering must be 100 metres away from water bodies. 		
Cycling / Mountain Biking	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain biking would be permitted on all trails unless otherwise indicated by sign, notice or advisory. 		
Foot Access	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foot access would be permitted throughout and on all trails. 		
Recreational Unmanned Aerial Vehicles / Drones	Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use for research or commercial filming/photography may be considered under the authority of the appropriate permit. 		
Hunting	Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a hunter is carrying a firearm in a provincial park or provincial recreation areas, or hunting in land adjacent to a park where they are staying, the firearm shall be unloaded and disassembled or fully encased. Dressing, hanging and storing big game are not permitted without authorization from a conservation officer. 		
Fishing	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial regulations apply. Alberta Regulations 		

Guiding, Outfitting (non-Hunting) and Instructing	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would be supported through the existing permitting process. • Existing commitments for permits under the Public Land Administration Regulation (PLAR) would be honoured until expiry. Upon expiry permitting would transition to Parks permitting process. 		
Helicopter Tours	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing helicopter tours would continue while additional parks management planning would be undertaken to assess impacts between the desired experience of this park and the frequency of helicopter landings. 		
Tourism Facilities and Visitor Attractions	Permitted	Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning would be undertaken to proactively identify opportunities for smaller scale tourism facility development that provides services that support the desired recreational experience at the site. • Attractions and services appropriate with site management and intent, site context and visitor preferences may also be considered. Additional consultation would be required in these circumstances and planning would be undertaken to proactively identify opportunities. 		



For information and to provide input on these proposals, visit TalkAEP.alberta.ca