Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve and Provincial Recreation Area

Boundary Amendments and Reclassification to create a new park

Current State

Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve and Kootenay Plains Provincial Recreation Area are located about 150 kilometres west of Rocky Mountain House. These sites conserve prime Montane natural subregion habitat that supports various species of wildlife, rare plants, and is culturally significant to First Nations.

The Ecological Reserve encompasses over 3,400 hectares of the North Saskatchewan river valley south of Abraham Lake. The Provincial Recreation Area is located next to the Ecological Reserve and includes 2 O'clock Creek campground.

Proposed Changes

The proposed amendments would reclassify and consolidate the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve and Kootenay Plains Provincial Recreation Area into a single, new Kootenay Plains Provincial Park.

The amendments would also add bed and shore of the adjacent North Saskatchewan River and associated gravel beds into the proposed new provincial park.

These amendments would result in a net increase of about 100 hectares in area to the provincial parks and protected areas system and shift the existing hectares of land currently administered under *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* to the *Provincial Parks Act*.

Why Are These Changes Proposed?

Some of the current uses in Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve are incompatible with the site's current classification. For example, equestrian use and mountain biking are occurring on designated trails in accordance with the park management plan, though these activities are typically prohibited in ecological reserves. This amendment will also enable and support consistent management and appropriate use on these lands.

Designating these lands as a provincial park enables better management of both recreation and conservation outcomes. It ensures that regulatory tools under the *Provincial Parks Act* that are better suited to manage high visitor use intensity are available to manage pressures in this area.

Future State

The area will continue to support varied recreational activities including hiking, mountain biking, fishing, camping, and equestrian use.

Overnight camping and open fires would continue to be prohibited in lands previously designated as an ecological reserve. Day use, picnicking and overnight camping would be concentrated in the former provincial recreation area lands and would include rustic camping and day use facilities.

Park management planning enables the application of additional management tools such as zoning to provide more protection to areas of special ecological or cultural significance within the park, as needed.

Indigenous Values

This area is valued by several First Nations. There are known grave sites located on the site, and the area is important for traditional uses, including ceremony. Treaty rights and traditional uses will be supported within the new provincial park.

First Nation Consultation is being undertaken to discuss potential impacts and share information related to the proposed boundary amendments and reclassification.

How Can I Find Out More?

You can find out more about the provincial parks and protected areas system in Alberta by visiting https://www.albertaparks.ca/albertaparks-ca/management-and-land-use/parks-system/. If you have specific comments or questions related to this proposed boundary amendment, please email parks.engagement@gov.ab.ca.

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