

A CPAWS Guide to the “Plan for Parks” Survey



The Government of Alberta released a survey soliciting public feedback on the creation of a new “Plan for Parks.” CPAWS Northern and Southern Alberta welcome the opportunity for folks to provide feedback on our provincial park system.

Changes made to the Alberta Parks system should emphasize the conservation of our lands, water, and wildlife – and ensure that we are stewarding a sustainable future for our provincial parks, so that generations of Albertans can responsibly enjoy these beautiful, unique, and valuable places.

If you are unsure on what to emphasize in your survey responses for the “Plan for Parks,” or what to pay special attention to in the survey, we prepared this summary with our take on the survey’s questions as a starting point for you.

**Your personal responses and contributions to the survey are highly encouraged!
The survey is open until Sunday, August 18 2024.**



**Government of Alberta
Engagement Guide**



**Government of Alberta
Plan for Parks Survey**

1. Over the past 12 months, how often have you visited provincial parks, provincial recreation areas or wildland provincial parks?

- Haven't visited in the past 12 months
- A few times
- Once a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

2. Which of the following do you most value about Alberta's parks? Select all that apply:

- Creating memories with family and friends
- Health benefits of nature-based recreation (e.g., physical or mental health)
- Protection of biodiversity and representative landscapes
- Importance of parks for learning and research
- Access to nature-based recreation (e.g., camping, skiing)
- Protection of ecosystem functions (e.g., water storage and filtration, flood control, pollination)
- Access for ceremony and spiritual connection in nature
- Importance of parks for hunting, fishing and trapping
- Family-friendly programming (e.g., interpretive programs, visitor centre)
- Connection to the past (e.g., local history, ancient artifacts, cultural resources)
- Extraordinary visitor-attracting sites (e.g., scenic drives and views)

Our take

Answer in a way that is appropriate to you.

Our take

These are all great values we receive from Alberta's parks, with the stipulation that "Extraordinary visitor-attracting sites should be done responsibly.

Select as many or as little apply to you.

3. In a few sentences, what else do you value about Alberta's parks?

Please add your comment here...

255 character limit

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Our take

I value parks for their protection of diverse, intact, and functioning ecosystems. I love nature, and it makes me happy to know that there are areas where its protection is a priority.

I value parks for the ability to sustainably access nature and experience natural areas away from crowds and development

Vision

The Vision for Alberta's parks was originally launched in 2009. A Vision statement is used to clarify what an organization is aiming to achieve. The proposed Vision statement now includes the addition of "cultural benefits" provided by parks for current and future generations. This small change creates a commitment to ensuring parks are an important part of Alberta's culture.

Updated Vision Statement

Alberta's parks inspire people to discover, value, protect and enjoy the natural world and the cultural benefits it provides for current and future generations.

4. Thinking about the updated vision statement for Alberta's parks, I am:

- Not in support
- Neutral
- In support
- Unsure

Our take

Not in support.

Here's why ➡ (next page)

5. What would you add or change about the updated vision statement? Why?

Please add your comment here...

255 character limit

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6. What will Alberta's parks look like 100 years from now, if this vision is achieved?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

The vision statement lacks prioritization for the conservation of nature. I suggest updating the vision statement to: “Alberta’s parks protect and conserve healthy, diverse, and ecologically resilient landscapes, and inspire people to discover, value, protect and enjoy the natural world and the cultural benefits it provides for current and future generations.”

Our take

Alberta’s parks and protected areas system will have greatly expanded across the province, playing a crucial role in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises. The parks system will achieve long-term conservation of nature, as evidenced by increasing biodiversity trends and recovery of species at risk.

All natural regions (boreal, shield, foothills, grassland, parkland, and Rocky Mountains) will be well represented within the system. Indigenous-led management of parks and protected areas will be prevalent and will actively advance reconciliation. The parks system will also provide equitable opportunities for people to connect and learn about nature through low-impact recreation and tourism.

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles were first introduced in the 2009 Plan for Parks to help address challenges and navigate decisions involving diverse and sometimes competing needs in Alberta's parks. The following Guiding Principles are proposed for the new Plan:

Accountability

Albertans are informed and engaged on park issues. Decision making and reporting on progress is transparent, accurate and readily available.

Equitable Access

Parks are inviting, safe, inclusive and accessible – regardless of who you are or where you live.

Reconciliation

Parks are welcoming and vital spaces for modern and traditional Indigenous cultural activities.

Sustainability

Current and future generations can visit, be inspired by, and support continued conservation and access to parks.

7. To what degree do you support the proposed Guiding Principles for Alberta's parks?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Accountability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Equitable Access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reconciliation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sustainability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our take

These are solid guiding principles, we would mark all of these as “in support.”

8. Do you have any suggestions for any of the Guiding Principles? Only select those that apply:

- Accountability
- Equitable Access
- Reconciliation
- Sustainability

Our take

We do not currently have suggestions, but if you do make sure to mark them.

9. Do you have any suggestions for other possible Guiding Principles?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

The conservation of nature should be the primary guiding principle. Parks have a crucial role to play in addressing the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. Alberta Parks should add a guiding principle that reflects the need to halt and reverse biodiversity loss such as Conservation: Current and new parks should first and foremost protect nature and advance the recovery of species at risk and safeguard Alberta’s natural heritage.

Accountability

Albertans are informed and engaged on park issues. Decision making and reporting on progress is transparent, accurate and readily available.

10. Which of the following ways to enhance accountability and transparency around planning for Alberta's provincial parks are important to you?

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important	Unsure
Increase opportunities for Albertans to provide input into decision-making for provincial parks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish clear deliverables and milestones in the new Plan for Parks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consistently report Plan for Parks progress and achievements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our take

These are all important and we would mark them all as “very important.”

11. What other ways could accountability and transparency around planning for Alberta's provincial parks be enhanced?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

Improvements could be made to methods and timelines for public engagement e.g. more documentation posted on publicly available platforms, improved communication tools that enhance public understanding, more opportunities for meaningful input into parks Management. Funding streams (e.g. from user fees) should be clearly tracked and made public in a timely manner.

12. To what degree do you support creating more equitable access in Alberta's parks in the following ways?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Enhanced internet and cellular connectivity to access information and services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More accommodation types for visitors without camping equipment (e.g., comfort camping)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More accommodation types for visitors with disabilities (e.g. accessible, inclusive lodging)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More park access options without a personal vehicle (e.g., shuttle service)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our take

We suggest that you mark these as you see fit with these considerations:

We would mark “more park access options without a personal vehicle” as in support. This could be an important solution to parks that are seeing large influxes of visitation.

Accessibility and equitable opportunities for people to connect to nature are important. These must also be carefully considered with its impact to nature and conservation purposes of the park, which you can include in the next survey question.

13. To what degree do you support increasing campsite availability in Alberta's parks in the following areas?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Nearby to where I live (within 100 - 150 km)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Near popular recreation areas (e.g., fishing destinations, beaches, hiking areas)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In backcountry settings (e.g., areas accessed by hiking, biking or horseback)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. What other ways could equitable access to parks be enhanced?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

We marked all of these as “neutral.” Choose what is most significant for you.

Our take

I support equitable access to the parks system. Increased access to any park should be carefully considered with respect to its impact on nature and the conservation purposes of the park. Not all places need to be accessed. Expanding the park system would allow for increased campsite availability, while achieving nature conservation objectives.

Reconciliation

Alberta's parks play an important role in supporting Indigenous peoples as they practice traditional land uses, including the exercise of First Nation Treaty rights and Métis harvesting practices.

Alberta's Parks is committed to working with Indigenous communities and organizations to advance reconciliation in parks.

15. Which of the following three (3) options are most important for Indigenous reconciliation in Alberta's parks?

- Early input from Indigenous communities and organizations is used in park decision-making (e.g., conservation policy development)
- Indigenous cultural information shared in parks is provided by local Indigenous communities.
- Expanded Indigenous park employment opportunities.
- Contemporary Indigenous land use policies for parks are developed collaboratively (e.g., traditional harvesting, hunting, ceremony, etc.,)
- Limit public access to Indigenous ceremonial and sacred sites upon request, where possible.
- Indigenous communities design and present their own cultural heritage programming in parks.
- Introduce policy for Indigenous-led park conservation, tourism and collaborative management.

16. What does Indigenous reconciliation in parks look like to you?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

These are all good options, select the three that resonate the most for you.

We would select “Introduce Indigenous-led conservation, tourism and collaborative management” as one of the three options.

Our take

There is no reason to limit the options for Indigenous reconciliation in this question to three options. All actions are important.

I support creation of policy to encourage and enable Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, and co-management (not just collaborative management) of parks.

Sustainability

Sustainable recreation and camping opportunities ensure parks can be enjoyed by current and future generations. Maintaining affordability for a financially stable parks system is critical. Costs to deliver services, programs and park facilities and conservation actions (e.g., invasive species management) continue to increase.

Currently, partnerships play an important role in delivering park programs and services. There may be other opportunities to explore ways to ensure access to parks is maintained for generations to come.

17. Which of the following campsite development options would you support in Alberta's parks?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Build less costly basic campsites (no power / water) for more affordable camping options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build more costly serviced campsites (with power / water) for higher fee and amenity-rich camping options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invest in more costly, high service, barrier-free amenities (e.g. lodging) for more inclusive overnight stays.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Would you be willing to pay additional user fees where visitor and recreation demands are greatest in Alberta's parks? *Note: Exemptions to fees may be considered for identified categories of individuals or activities.*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

This would be in addition to existing user fees for some provincial parks (e.g., Canmore Nordic Centre trails pass)

19. What information would you need to decide whether you would consider paying additional user fees?

Please add your comment here...

255 character limit

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Our take

We are in support of these options, but there are caveats with each. Answer with what resonates for you.

Our take

Unsure. More information is needed to answer appropriately.

Our take

The basis for determining user fees is needed to garner support. Camping must still remain an affordable activity for all. Fees generated through campgrounds should be reinvested in the parks system and used to maintain infrastructure and improve conservation of nature and not replace existing core funding.

19. Are you familiar with the role "Friends of" partner groups play in enhancing Alberta's provincial parks?

- Not at all familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Very familiar

20. Do you support expanding the role of partner-provided services, programs and conservation efforts in Alberta's parks? (e.g., "Friends of" groups, facility operators)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

22. What information would you need to decide whether you would support expanding partnerships?

Please add your comment here...

255 character limit

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Our take

Answer these two questions in a way that best reflects your knowledge and support. Question 20 will vary based from your answer for question 19.

Our take

I support partnerships that are made in the public interest and that support and improve the ecological integrity of our parks system, but they do not absolve the Government of Alberta from its responsibilities, nor delegate power for decision making and direction. Clear and transparent operating agreements must be in place. No partner activities should jeopardize safety, nor degrade the natural environment.

23. How else could the financial sustainability of recreation experiences be maintained?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

Robust government funding for the conservation of nature and for low-impact recreation opportunities should be spending priorities. Parks provide invaluable ecosystem services that benefit all Albertans (clean water and air, flood and drought mitigation, climate resilience, fish and wildlife habitats) and mitigate the need for more costly investments in infrastructure. The Alberta Parks Steward system was an excellent program for engaging Albertans in park stewardship and opportunities to revitalize the program could be considered.

24. Which of the following options to enhance tourism and local visitor experiences would you support in Alberta's parks?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Expand Indigenous cultural, conservation and economic development opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaboratively improve research and information sharing to enhance tourism and visitor experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expand small-scale commercial development in high-demand visitation areas (e.g., local guiding, dining or recreation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow more large-scale commercial developments in high-demand visitation areas.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our take

Here is how we answered this question. There are a few concerns with these options, which there is a chance to elaborate on in the next survey question.

25. What other ways could tourism and local visitor experiences be enhanced?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

Alberta's parks should not be exploited for private profit. I do not support commercial developments in parks. Visitor services could be developed in nearby communities to avoid development within protected areas and support local economies.

27. Which of the following options to improve the diversity of recreation opportunities available in Alberta's parks would you support?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Support private recreational development in parks.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve and expand trail connections to day-use facilities (e.g., playgrounds, picnic areas)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Enhance water-based recreation (e.g., access / hand-launch sites for kayaks, canoes, etc.,)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Create opportunities for recreation with electric-powered equipment (e.g., hoverboards, e-scooters)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expand equipment and accommodation rentals (e.g., comfort camping, bike rentals)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Expand trail networks within provincial parks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Provide opportunities for quiet and mindful nature interactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create more opportunities for motorized recreation.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expand permitted hunting opportunities in more provincial park areas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

28. What other ways could recreational diversity be enhanced?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

This is how we marked our responses but we strongly encourage you to answer in a way that reflects your values and experiences.

There is opportunity for added context in the next survey question.

Our take

Enjoying healthy, intact natural spaces is the primary reason for visiting parks and protected areas. Therefore, all recreational activities should be considered for their compatibility with the long-term health of ecosystems and wildlife. Activities that emphasize quiet, low-impact recreation should be prioritized. Activities that have a negative impact on efforts to conserve and protect nature should be avoided.

Nature-based Experiences

Parks conserve nature and connect people with nature. Providing access to a variety of nature-based experiences for current and future generations, conserving nature and building an appreciation for natural values in parks is a key priority.

29. Which of the following options to enhance nature conservation and education in Alberta's parks would you support?

	Not in support	Neutral	In support	Unsure
Create more parks to increase conservation and nature access.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaborate to improve how information about conservation activities in parks is shared.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expand interpretive and educational programs to inform and inspire visitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Add volunteer opportunities to promote hands-on nature and conservation education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. What other ways could nature education and conservation be promoted?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

We marked all of these options as “in support.”

Our take

The expansion of the parks and protected areas network should be the top priority for the Plan for Parks. Expanding the parks network is an excellent way to conserve nature, advance reconciliation, improve nature education, and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation for all Albertans.

Improving Legislation

Alberta's [Provincial Parks Act](#) is one of the oldest pieces of parks legislation in Canada, first established in 1930 and most recently amended in 2000. Legislation and its associated regulations impact how parks are developed, managed and the rules visitors must follow.

With increasing pressures and a growing population of park visitors, there is a need to explore how this legislation can meet new challenges. This will ensure Alberta's parks are effectively managed for current and future generations.

Legislation and its regulations provide guidance around specific activities and restrictions in provincial parks including recreational activities like boating, camping, day use, horseback riding, fishing and hunting. They establish rules around waste management, fire prevention, quiet hours, pets, motor vehicle use, fireworks, cannabis and liquor consumption.

See a full description of provincial park legislation and regulations at [AlbertaParks.ca](#).

31. The legislation and its regulations that set the intent and rules for activities in Alberta's provincial parks and recreation areas:

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Unsure
Are appropriate and reasonable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support the enjoyment of all users.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conserve parks for current and future generations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure preservation of natural heritage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage respect for parks' cultural significance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. I have experienced barriers to enjoying certain recreational activities in Alberta's provincial parks because of:

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Unsure
Visitors being unaware of the regulations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regulations deterring or limiting visitor enjoyment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lack of regulations deterring undesirable and/or damaging visitor behaviours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict with other visitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insufficient education about and enforcement of current regulations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33. Have you experienced barriers to enjoying recreational activities in Alberta's provincial parks? Please elaborate:

Please add your comment here...

Our take

We marked these as neutral, but mark these based on your own opinion.

Our take

These questions are unique to your experience in Alberta's parks. Answer with as much or as little detail as you want to share.

34. Do you have anything else to share about provincial park legislation or regulations?

Please add your comment here...

Our take

If any changes are made to the Parks Act they should ensure that maintaining or restoring ecological integrity is the first and primary priority for park management.