

A CPAWS Guide to the “Draft Plan for Parks” Survey



The Government of Alberta has launched a new survey seeking public feedback on its draft Plan for Parks. CPAWS Northern and Southern Alberta welcome this second opportunity for Albertans to share their vision for the future of our provincial park system, building on the initial engagement survey conducted in August 2024.

The encouraging news is that many of the key issues raised by CPAWS and by thousands of Albertans in the first round of feedback have been acknowledged and incorporated into the draft plan. This shows that public feedback, including YOUR voice, really does make a difference, and that taking part in these surveys is a meaningful way to shape the future of our parks.

However, going into this second round of engagement, several important concerns remain, and it's essential that we again speak out to make sure they're addressed in the final plan.

Any changes to the Alberta Parks system must emphasize the conservation of our lands, water, and wildlife. It's essential that we manage our provincial parks with long-term sustainability in mind—ensuring these unique and treasured places can be responsibly enjoyed by Albertans, now and for generations to come.

To help you navigate the Plan for Parks survey, we've put together a summary of “our take” on the questions. While your individual voices and perspectives are essential, our guide is here to help you if you're unsure where to start or which themes to focus on in your responses.

Whenever possible, try to share your thoughts in your own words or draw on your own experiences, especially for the long-answer questions. Unique and personalized responses are often given more weight than identical comments. The survey is open until Saturday, July 26, 2025.

**Read the
draft plan**



Government of Alberta
Draft Plan For Parks



**Take the
survey**

Government of Alberta
Draft Plan For Parks Survey

Q1

Draft Plan for Parks

Your responses to the following questions will be used to inform the final Plan for Parks. Each question refers directly to the draft Plan and is seeking your input on the proposed:

- **Vision**
- **Enduring Goals**
- **Outcomes**
- **Supporting Actions**

1. Does the draft Plan reflect what you value about parks?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to respond

Our Take

Answer as is appropriate to you.

What we like:

- The plan acknowledges the importance of sustainable and equitable access to nature
- The plan includes several conservation-orientated actions, like the expansion of parks.

What we're concerned about:

- The plan does not fully acknowledge the critical role parks play in conserving natural ecosystems.
- Conservation is not clearly prioritized.
- There is no strong commitment to actions that would protect ecosystems.
- Intentions are unclear around increasing commercial development within park boundaries.
- Commitments to consult with Albertans and Indigenous peoples on changes to park management, legislation, or the parks system are weak or missing.

Q2

Vision and Proposed Enduring Goals

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

Proposed Enduring Goals:

- Parks are accessible and welcoming
- Parks conserve and share Alberta's natural and cultural legacy
- Parks provide a diversity of nature based experiences
- Parks are effectively managed for long term sustainability

2. To what extent do the four Enduring Goals support the vision of Alberta's provincial parks system?

☐ Not at all supportive

☐ Not very supportive

☒ Somewhat supportive

☐ Very supportive

☐ Unsure

Our Take

We think the four Enduring Goals are somewhat supportive of the vision of Alberta's provincial parks system. See Q3 for details.

Q3

3. How can the Enduring Goals better support the vision?

Tip!

Try using your own words if you can.

Things to highlight:

- Conservation should be prioritized.
- Pursuing reconciliation via park co-management and Indigenous-led identification of new areas for designation should be an Enduring Goal.

Our Take

- Parks are a key tool in protecting diverse natural landscapes, watersheds and species. For this reason, parks should prioritize conservation, not simply inspire people to discover, value, protect, and enjoy nature. Recommended updated vision statement: "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."
- Conservation must be a top priority. Recommended Enduring Goal: "Current and new parks first and foremost protect nature, advance the recovery of species at risk, and safeguard Alberta's natural heritage."
- An Enduring Goal to pursue reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through co-management of parks and a process for Indigenous-led identification of new areas for designation should be included.
- Alberta's natural and cultural legacy should each be outlined as separate Enduring Goals to reflect the importance of both.

Q4

Enduring Goal Outcomes

Enduring Goal 1: Parks are accessible and welcoming

- Outcome 1.1 Everyone can experience the provincial parks system in Alberta
- Outcome 1.2 Parks bring people and communities together
- Outcome 1.3 Parks have Indigenous history and provide opportunities for sharing culture, language, and stories
- Outcome 1.4 Parks offer unique opportunities and benefits to the visitor economy

Enduring Goal 2: Parks conserve and share Alberta's natural and cultural legacy

- Outcome 2.1 Parks conserve nature in-place to maintain biodiversity and ecological processes
- Outcome 2.2 Parks are resilient and responsive to environmental change
- Outcome 2.3 Parks enable collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations to advance reconciliation and enhance conservation outcomes
- Outcome 2.4 Parks protect sensitive landscapes and cultural features through collaboration

Enduring Goal 3: Parks provide a diversity of nature-based experiences

- Outcome 3.1 Parks connect people to nature
- Outcome 3.2 Parks provide diverse recreational settings where activities can occur as not everyone chooses to recreate the same way
- Outcome 3.3 Park facilities and amenities enable safe and sustainable visitor experiences

Enduring Goal 4: Parks are effectively managed for long-term sustainability

- Outcome 4.1 Management of Alberta's parks meet current and future needs
- Outcome 4.2 Parks visitation is managed with a dual mandate of conservation and recreation
- Outcome 4.3 Management of parks is evidence based and collaborative
- Outcome 4.4 Management of parks is clear and transparent

4. To what extent do the outcomes support achievement of the enduring goals?

☐ Not at all supportive

☐ Not very supportive

☒ Somewhat supportive

☐ Very supportive

☐ Unsure

Our Take

We think the outcomes are somewhat supportive of the Enduring Goals. See Q5 for details.

Q5

5. How can the outcomes better achieve the Enduring Goals?



Our Take

- Expanding the park system should be a key Outcome, to allow for increased sustainable recreation while meeting conservation objectives.
- Any increase in park access or activities should be considered based on how they will impact nature and conservation goals.
- Outcomes should acknowledge that not all areas can support all types of recreation. Activity locations should be strategically planned based on ecological capacity.

Tip!

Try using your own words if you can. Things to highlight:

- Expansion of the park system should be included as an Outcome.
- Impacts on the landscape should be a key factor in planning the location and scale of park activities.

Q6

Supporting Actions for Enduring Goal 1: Parks are accessible and welcoming

Outcome 1.1 Everyone can experience the provincial parks system in Alberta

- Ensure availability of information on nature-based recreation, programs, and services in parks for diverse audiences.
- Establish new parks and expand existing parks to address high-use locations and areas where there are less parks relative to population size, informed through land-use planning and engagement.
- Prioritize the development of rustic and/or un-serviced campsites that provide lower-cost camping to maintain balance in service level offerings.
- Regularly review fee structures across all programs to ensure fees are sustainable and do not prevent Albertans from accessing or enjoying parks.

Outcome 1.2 Parks bring people and communities together

- Empower a sense of place in parks by enhancing the range of opportunities that benefit nearby visitors and communities (e.g., community gatherings).
- Leverage non-profit partnerships and volunteerism to enhance community connection and park initiatives.
- Offer affordable education, interpretation, and program opportunities to build appreciation of Alberta's parks and connect with a greater variety of audiences.
- Create opportunities for local vendors, authors, tour operators, and artists in parks, to share the benefits of programs, services and products featured in parks.

Outcome 1.3 Parks have Indigenous history and provide opportunities for sharing culture, language, and stories

- Prioritize early collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations when developing park management and policy initiatives.
- Develop, in collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations, written materials and in-person experiences or programs to improve how Indigenous culture and history is shared within parks.
- Address barriers to access for Indigenous activities, including guidance for where and how First Nations' Treaty rights and traditional land use activities can occur.
- Support Indigenous communities and organizations in exploring economic and/or Indigenous tourism opportunities in parks that authentically share their history and culture.

Outcome 1.4 Parks offer unique opportunities and benefits to the visitor economy

- Proactively identify tourism investment opportunities in suitable parks and areas through planning and engagement, with a focus in provincial recreation areas, facility zones, and tourism nodes.
- Enable growth of compatible tourism products and guided experiences with operators and entrepreneurs.
- Develop a clear decision-making framework for tourism proposals and renewals, ensuring that approvals are timely, consistent, and transparent.
- Expand overnight accommodation options within high-use provincial parks and recreation areas in a way that is compatible with the natural landscape and supports connection to nature.
- Enhance transparency of partnership opportunities available and operating in parks.

6. To what extent could these actions help support achieving Enduring Goal 1 and its outcomes? (see Plan for Parks, pages 12 - 14)

☐ Not at all supportive

☐ Not very supportive

☒ Somewhat supportive

☐ Very supportive

☐ Unsure

Our Take

We think these actions are somewhat supportive of achieving Enduring Goal 1 and its outcomes. See Q7 for details.

Q7

7. How can the supporting actions better achieve the goal and outcomes?

Tip!

Try using your own words if you can.
Things to highlight:

- Outcomes and Actions should reflect Albertans' overwhelming support for quiet recreation and opposition to large-scale commercial and privatized development.
- Activities should be planned and assessed based on their compatibility with the landscape and other land uses.
- Partnerships should be transparent and serve the public interest, and should not replace government responsibility or authority to pursue conservation.

Our Take

- Proposed activities should support the long-term health of ecosystems and wildlife.
- Outcomes and actions (especially under Goals 1 and 3) should reflect public feedback from phase one engagement, in which the majority of respondents indicated:
 - Strong support for quiet recreation (4,200 respondents)
 - Opposition to large-scale commercial development (4,200 respondents) and privatized development (3,449 respondents),
 - Opposition to increased opportunities for motorized recreation (4,018 respondents)
- Under Outcome 1.4, activities should be planned primarily around ecological capacity and compatibility with other land uses.
- Visitor services should be developed in nearby communities, not within protected areas, to support conservation and local economies.
- Partnerships should:
 - Serve the public interest and improve ecological integrity of the parks system.
 - Not replace government responsibility or decision-making authority and direction.
 - Be governed by clear, transparent agreements.
 - Avoid compromising safety or degrading the environment.

Q8

Supporting Actions for Enduring Goal 2: Parks conserve and share Alberta's natural and cultural legacy

Outcome 2.1 Parks conserve nature in-place to maintain biodiversity and ecological processes

- Share knowledge and collaborate with land managers to inform conservation of ecosystems.
- Conduct assessments and monitor changes over time to natural and cultural features in parks and within the larger, integrated Crown land base.
- Collaborate on projects within parks that improve landscape conservation outcomes, ecological function, and watershed management (e.g., projects to improve riparian health, wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity).
- Target park expansions and establishments to prioritize threatened and under-represented ecosystems (e.g., grasslands, foothills natural regions, freshwater ecosystems) and headwaters protection.

Outcome 2.2 Parks are resilient and responsive to environmental change

- Integrate emergency planning and collaboration with communities, seeking localized action to manage risks or advance recovery from wildfire, drought, invasive species, and other pressures.
- Manage stressors to ecological health (invasive species, cumulative impacts, severe weather) through appropriate means (e.g. prescribed fire and mechanical clearing), while prioritizing public safety, lives, and livelihoods.
- Collaborate to advance research and local/Indigenous knowledge gathering regarding how parks evolve with and adapt to environmental change and external forces over time.

Outcome 2.3 Parks enable collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations to advance reconciliation and enhance conservation outcomes

- Endeavor to identify, protect, and conserve areas of importance to Indigenous communities and organizations within parks through collaboration.
- Advance projects that braid Indigenous knowledge into park management and conservation practices).
- Support cooperative management agreements in parks, as identified through collaborative planning with Indigenous communities and organizations.

Outcome 2.4 Parks protect sensitive landscapes and cultural features through collaboration

- Advance research and program priorities that integrate natural science, social science, and local/Indigenous knowledge to protect sensitive landscapes and cultural features.
- Prioritize relationships and program approaches to protect and interpret cultural features in parks, including paleontology, archeology, traditional use, and historical landscapes, features, and artifacts.
- Endeavour to maintain compliance with World Heritage Site and other designation standards and ensure appropriate supporting infrastructure and visitor experiences that maintain sensitive landscapes.

8. To what extent could these actions help support achieving Enduring Goal 2 and its outcomes? (see Plan for Parks, pages 15 - 17)

☐ Not at all supportive

☐ Not very supportive

☒ Somewhat supportive

☐ Very supportive

☐ Unsure

Our Take

We think these actions are somewhat supportive of achieving Enduring Goal 2 and its outcomes. See Q9 for details.

Q9

9. How can the supporting actions better achieve the goal and outcomes?

Our Take

- Expanding the parks and protected areas network should be a top priority. It's an excellent way to conserve nature, advance reconciliation, improve nature education, and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation for all Albertans.
- We support focusing park expansion on underrepresented ecosystems and headwaters protection.
- We recommend also prioritizing species at risk habitat and other ecologically important areas (e.g. ESAs, KBAs etc.) in park expansion.
- The plan should encourage and enable Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, including:
 - Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)
 - Co-management of parks, not just collaborative or cooperative models

Tip!

Try using your own words if you can.

Things to highlight:

- Expanding parks and protected areas should be a top priority
- Park expansion should focus on species at risk habitat, in addition to underrepresented ecosystems and headwaters protection.
- The plan should encourage and enable Indigenous-led conservation Initiatives.

Q10

Supporting Actions for Enduring Goal 3: Parks provide a diversity of nature-based experiences

Outcome 3.1 Parks connect people to nature

- Respond to evolving visitor preferences in connecting to nature and offer choices in park activities and amenities across the parks system.
- Provide opportunities for quiet and mindful nature interactions (e.g., piloting quiet campground loops or trails or other quiet recreation experiences).
- Promote and integrate nature connectedness and other opportunities that support physical, mental, and social benefits (e.g., creation of nature play spaces, naturalized campsites).
- Enable strong nature-based recreation assets in all regions that help disperse use from busy areas and showcase Alberta's natural diversity.
- Provide opportunities for amenities and services so that more visitors have opportunities to connect with nature.

Outcome 3.2 Parks provide diverse recreational settings where activities can occur as not everyone chooses to recreate the same way.

- Evaluate and enable expansion of evolving nature-based recreation activities where appropriate and compatible (e.g., electric powered devices, canyoneering, etc.).
- Expand access to water and water-based recreation opportunities on resilient waterbodies, including paddling put-ins and rustic camping along popular paddling routes.
- Enhance trail networks and connections between trails and facility areas and connections to trail networks outside park boundaries.
- Refurbish and develop new day-use sites and campsites, prioritizing areas of high population growth, areas where there are fewer campsites relative to population size, key tourism destinations, and high-use recreation areas.

Outcome 3.3 Park facilities and amenities enable safe and sustainable visitor experiences

- Plan, develop, and modernize infrastructure, amenities, and facilities to meet changing trends in tourism, park visitation, and improve safety (e.g., replace aging water and waste-water treatment infrastructure).
- Refurbish existing facilities and footprints and consider new developments, incorporating best practices that help to achieve conservation outcomes and conducting environmental and historic resource assessments.
- Ensure new and updated park infrastructure is accessible, cost-effective, reflective of its natural region and local place, and designed to be resilient to environmental hazards and a changing climate.
- Enable connectivity for access to information and services, public safety and business continuity, while maintaining parks as places to "unplug" (e.g., Wi-Fi capability at a campground or visitor centre).

10. To what extent could these actions help support achieving Enduring Goal 3 and its outcomes? (see Plan for Parks, pages 18 - 19)

☐ Not at all supportive

☐ Not very supportive

☒ Somewhat supportive

☐ Very supportive

☐ Unsure

Our Take

We think these actions are somewhat supportive of achieving Enduring Goal 3 and its outcomes. See Q11 for details.

Q11

11. How can the supporting actions better achieve the goal and outcomes?

Our Take

- Nature-based experiences in parks should be both accessible and sustainable.
- The plan should clearly outline how proposed activities will be evaluated for their compatibility with long-term ecosystem health and wildlife interactions.
- Further clarity is needed on how these evaluations will be conducted.

Q12

Supporting Actions for Enduring Goal 4: Parks are effectively managed for long-term sustainability

Outcome 4.1 Management of Alberta's parks meet current and future needs

- Develop or renew relevant, and appropriate levels of management direction for all parks, prioritizing planning for high-complexity or high-use parks.
- Integrate provincial park system needs with landscape level planning initiatives where applicable, such as Land-use Framework regional and subregional planning.
- Modernize the Provincial Parks Act and its regulations to maintain protections, support effective management, and reduce red tape; with a priority focus on updating the Provincial Parks (General) Regulation (e.g., updating definitions to reflect current and future activities and technology).
- Ensure that parks are classified appropriately to reflect their management intent and existing uses.

Outcome 4.2 Parks visitation is managed with a dual mandate of conservation and recreation

- Develop a visitor use management framework and supporting policy to identify pressures related to visitor use and human dimensions across the provincial parks system.
- Integrate the Alberta Parks and Protected Areas Management Effectiveness program, tools, and process to ensure park management is effective at maintaining values over the long term.
- Support visitor compliance with regulations to protect park values and enhance experiences through visitor interactions/education and online and in-park information.
- Ensure a consistent enforcement presence in parks.

Outcome 4.3 Management of parks is evidence based and collaborative

- Implement parks evidence-based strategies that utilize natural science, social science, and best practices to inform management planning.
- Collaborate across governments to evaluate, and mitigate where possible, cumulative impacts within parks and across the broader Crown land interface.
- Build capacity to support collaborative research, data collection, analysis, monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.
- Leverage expertise when setting, monitoring, and reporting on conservation and recreation outcomes.

Q12 cont'd

Outcome 4.4 Management of parks is clear and transparent

- Ensure Albertans and Indigenous communities understand decisions about parks uses and policies that change management intent, permitted uses, and/or expand development footprints.
- Provide opportunities to access parks management direction (e.g. downloadable park zoning maps, management plans, etc.).
- Collaborate with local communities on programs, facilities, and services.

12. To what extent could these actions help support achieving Enduring Goal 4 and its outcomes? (see Plan for Parks, pages 20 - 22)

☐ Not at all supportive

☐ Not very supportive

☒ Somewhat supportive

☐ Very supportive

☐ Unsure



Our Take

We think these actions are somewhat supportive of achieving Enduring Goal 4 and its outcomes. See Q13 for details.

Q13

13. How can the supporting actions better achieve the goal and outcomes?

Tip!

Try using your own words if you can.
Things to highlight:

- Any changes to the Parks Act should prioritize ecological integrity.
- Environmental protections should not be slashed to accommodate harmful commercial development
- Funding streams, like user fees, should be clearly tracked and publicly reported
- Additional efforts should be made to ensure Albertans are engaged and consulted in regard to park management.

Our Take

- Any changes to the Parks Act should prioritize maintaining or restoring ecological integrity above all else.
- Modernization should not entail weakening environmental protections in favour of harmful commercial development.
- The goal of sustainable park management should be actively worked toward by assessing, avoiding, and mitigating cumulative ecological impacts.
- Improvements could be made to the public engagement process:
 - Posting documents on public platforms
 - Clearer communication tools to enhance public understanding
 - More opportunities for meaningful input into park management
 - Funding streams (e.g. from user fees) should be clearly tracked and publicly reported.
- Actions under Outcome 4.4 should be improved to ensure:
 - Meaningful public consultation is evident in the plan and park management
 - Albertans should be supported to understand decisions about park uses and policies, and be consulted in regard to them.

Q14–16

Our Take

Personal information.

Answer as appropriate to you.

Q17

17. Is there anything else you would like to share about the draft Plan for Parks?

Our Take

Answer as appropriate to you.

Broader land use planning needs to be considered in the development and implementation of Alberta's Plan for Parks. This includes consideration of how the plan interacts with broader public land management and parks under the Wilderness Area, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas, and Heritage Rangelands Act. This consideration should be reflected with clarity in the plan.

Q18–19

Our Take

Personal experience.

Answer as appropriate to you.

**Thanks
for defending
Alberta parks!**



Submit