

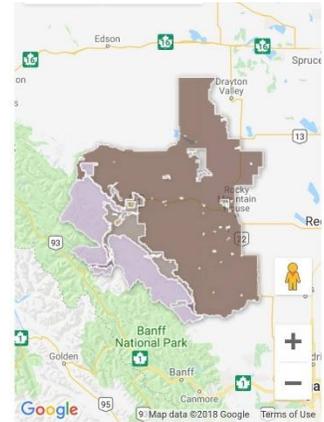


November 27, 2018

LoveYourTrails is very disheartened by the recent Alberta Government's proposal to convert our Bighorn Public Lands into a series of new Provincial Parks and a massive new Public Land Zone extending to Drayton Valley and Rocky Mountain House.

Our concerns are not in relation to the objectives of this proposal. We recognize designations such as Public Land Use Zones provide excellent legislative controls for managing land use, and Provincial Parks impose greater restrictions and limitations as means of protecting land. However, LoveYourTrails has deep concerns with process, and this proposal being presented outside of the NSRP and our formal Regional planning process.

Alberta's formal Land Use Framework was implemented to focus land use planning in Alberta on a regional scale. Under the Land Use Framework, the Bighorn Country area falls within the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan. The North Saskatchewan Regional Plan (NSRP) is currently under development through a defined process which has been previously implemented in other regions of the province. Land Management is an important issue and objective for continued sustainability of our landscape, resources, economy, communities and recreation. Our legislated and regulatory process is to ensure balance of these equally important issues.



Given that the NSRP is yet to be finalized, this proposal actually circumvents the legislated planning process for Alberta's landscape as prescribed by the Land Use Framework (under the Land Stewardship Act and associated Regulations). Very simply, the regional framework for land use planning is not being used. By presenting this proposal ahead of the finalization of the NSRP, the government is taking Regional Land Use management outside of the legislated and regulatory Land Use Framework process.

There appears to be a political sense of urgency being applied to this proposal, forgoing the existing legislated process and the extensive work done on the NSRP. Land use planning is the foundation for Albertans future – and is not to be made in haste.

Thousands of volunteer hours have been put into both the NSRP, and those contributing to the Regional Advisory Council (RAC). All of the hours, recommendations, feedback and public input through this process – has seemingly been ignored and forgone with this new proposal and process of land use planning. In fact, the Bighorn Country proposal is almost exactly opposite of the recommendations and feedback received to date on the NSRP.

LoveYourTrails processed the Alberta Government's RAC Public Survey, and over 54% of all responses were opposed to the creation of these Parks or any changes. Of those specifically stating a Bighorn Park, 85% were opposed. To see this new proposal presented outside of NSRP process, with these public input results – is very concerning.

Even with the current framework and decision-making process, we need substantial changes to ensure that the framework not only recognizes the provincial organizations and associations on the landscape, but includes them as actual partners and decision makers respective of the activities and users they represent.

We expect government to be representative of the majority in its decisions and directions. We also expect it to follow current legislative process and regulatory guidelines in doing so. As such, LoveYourTrails does not support the Bighorn Country Proposal and believes that it should be withdrawn - and recommends the government return to focusing on completing the NSRP, and the extensive input that has been provided within.

Let's forgo the political urgency and politicized land use proposals, and get back to the formal legislated NSRP process.

- LoveYourTrails supports inclusive and responsible enjoyment of the backcountry. -

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