

Grande Prairie Region Parks Management Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

1) *What is a management plan?*

A management plan is a road map to give direction for the future management of a park. Park management plans are prepared by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation to ensure that the protection and use of parks in Alberta occurs in a manner that is consistent with parks legislation, regulations and policies.

Management plans include:

- Describing parks and how they meet the needs of surrounding communities,
- Setting objectives on how natural and cultural heritage will be preserved,
- Identifying government goals for parks and how they will be achieved, and;
- Detailing the type and extent of recreation and tourism opportunities that each park will support.

Management plans vary considerably both in length and sophistication, depending upon the size of a particular park; its classification; the complexity and significance of natural and cultural heritage values; outdoor recreation facilities, services and opportunities; existing uses; and land use issues. Management plans outline how our natural and cultural heritage will be preserved in each park. They describe the type and extent of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities, facilities and services that will be permitted, and may identify future facility development to support recreation opportunities. They also describe the heritage appreciation and environmental education programs, services and facilities that will be provided so that visitors can explore and learn about a site's natural and cultural heritage values.

2) *What does it mean to say a management plan “gives direction to the future management of the park”?*

This means that both the common and diverse interests of everyone involved are identified and integrated as appropriate and feasible into the day-to-day use of the park as well as long term management. The plan will include written guidelines for staff as well as the public on how various issues and activities will be managed within the park so that the public can enjoy the park and the park will remain enjoyable for the public. For example, the plan may outline how staff will manage the public as well as wildlife to minimize conflicts, it may identify where there is a need for a new trail, or it may set conditions on an activity so that it can occur in an appropriate manner within the park.

3) *Why is a management plan being done for parks in the Grande Prairie area?*

The Grande Prairie region has one of the highest growth rates in the province. This population growth is resulting in increased demand for recreational experiences and park use. In response, the Alberta Parks Division is initiating a timely review and assessment of recreational opportunities and supporting facilities in 10 parks within an hour's drive of the City of Grande Prairie through the *Grande Prairie Region Parks Management Plan*.

The following parks are included in the plan: (see map at end)

- Saskatoon Island Provincial Park
- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area
- Demmitt Provincial Recreation Area
- Kleskun Hill Natural Area
- Musreau Lake Provincial Recreation Area
- Big Mountain Provincial Recreation Area

- O'Brien Provincial Park
- Young's Point Provincial Park
- Williamson Provincial Park
- Simonette River Provincial Recreation Area

4) *Where are the parks located?*

They are located within an hour's drive east, south and west of the City of Grande Prairie. The parks can be accessed from Highway 43 or from Highway 40. A map is included at the end of this FAQs sheet.

5) *What's special about these parks?*

Individually these parks do not have the capacity to offer a whole array of nature-based recreation opportunities, or interpretation and environmental education programs. However, together they can offer an outstanding package to the people of the region and the province. Together, these parks represent a diverse landscape including boreal forest, lower foothills and native prairie. Together, they offer a variety of both land and water-based outdoor recreation opportunities.

Some of the highlights are:

- Kleskun Hill Natural Area is the most northern badland landscape in Alberta and one of few sites that protects native prairie.
- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is the highest point in the Grande Prairie area, a boreal forest surrounded by prairie.
- Saskatoon Lake Provincial Park protects trumpeter swan habitat and is known for its abundance of saskatoon stands.
- Young's Point and Williamson Provincial Parks are on the shores of Sturgeon Lake, one of the best native fisheries in the area.
- Musreau Lake Provincial Recreation Area has a lake with the best recreational water quality in the area and is nestled in a very diverse foothills forest.

6) *What are the main recreational activities in these parks?*

Recreational activities vary depending on what is allowed by legislation and what the landscape of the park will accommodate. Below is a brief summary of main activities in each park.

- Saskatoon Island Provincial Park – camping, day use, walking, boating, interpretation programs
- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area – day use
- Demmitt Provincial Recreation Area - camping
- Kleskun Hill Natural Area – day use, camping
- Musreau Lake Provincial Recreation Area – camping, boating, beach activities
- Big Mountain Provincial Recreation Area – camping
- O'Brien Provincial Park – day use
- Young's Point Provincial Park – camping, boating, fishing
- Williamson Provincial Park – camping, boating, fishing
- Simonette River Provincial Recreation Area – camping, day use, beach activities

7) *Are there proposals to change some of the classifications and/or boundaries of these parks?*

Yes. Changes may be considered where the classification does not reflect the natural values or fit with current and intended recreational uses and facilities. Boundary amendments may be recommended to consolidate parks that are geographically linked or have common management, or to include lands that have been proposed, acquired or reserved for park purposes. These classification and boundary changes help support the overall objectives of the Grande Prairie Region Parks Plan. Opportunities for public comment will be provided on any proposed changes prior to their approval.

8) *What proposed changes are there to recreational activities?*

Some parks are over-capacity with no room to expand facilities, while some are under-used. The intent is to direct recreational use to the most appropriate park, one that has the capacity to offer this recreational opportunity in a sustainable way over the long term.

For instance, camping is very popular at Saskatoon Island but there is no room to expand the campgrounds without compromising the landscape. Young's Point, however, has a large land-base that could accommodate more campgrounds. So camping facilities could be expanded there and visitors redirected to that site.

In general the same recreational opportunities will still be available in the Grande Prairie region, but they may be offered in a park better able to accommodate the use.

9) *What traditional use by the Aboriginal communities is currently allowed in the parks in the Grande Prairie Region and will that change?*

Traditional use, such as berry-picking and gathering of medicinal plants, is allowed in all parks in the Grande Prairie region. Hunting is allowed in the Natural Areas, but not the Provincial Parks and Provincial Recreation Areas. Any proposed changes in management direction, park classification or boundaries, that may impact traditional use, will involve dialogue and consultation with the Aboriginal communities.

10) *How will this plan ensure the ongoing protection of cultural and historic sites at these parks?*

Several of these parks contain significant archaeological and historic sites. For instance, Saskatoon Mountain has an Aboriginal camping site that is 9000 years old. Any locations of new facility development or expansion of current facilities will require consultation with Alberta Culture and Community Spirit to determine need for a Historic Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA). This HRIA will assess if the location contains archaeological resources and recommend avoidance or mitigation of the site.

11) *Who are you consulting with on the plan?*

We encourage feedback from all Albertans interested in the future of parks around Grande Prairie. As we initiate the management planning process, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation seeks to engage visitors and stakeholders, at both the local and provincial level, to provide their opinions and ideas on future management of the park. We will be consulting with the general public through open house sessions and through the Parks Division website.

12) *How can I provide my input?*

You are invited to visit <http://tpr.alberta.ca/parks/consult/GrandePrairie/>. This site contains the preliminary planning strategies for the parks in the Grande Prairie region and provides ways to comment online, by email, or by mail.

You can also attend one of five open houses planned within the Grande Prairie region.

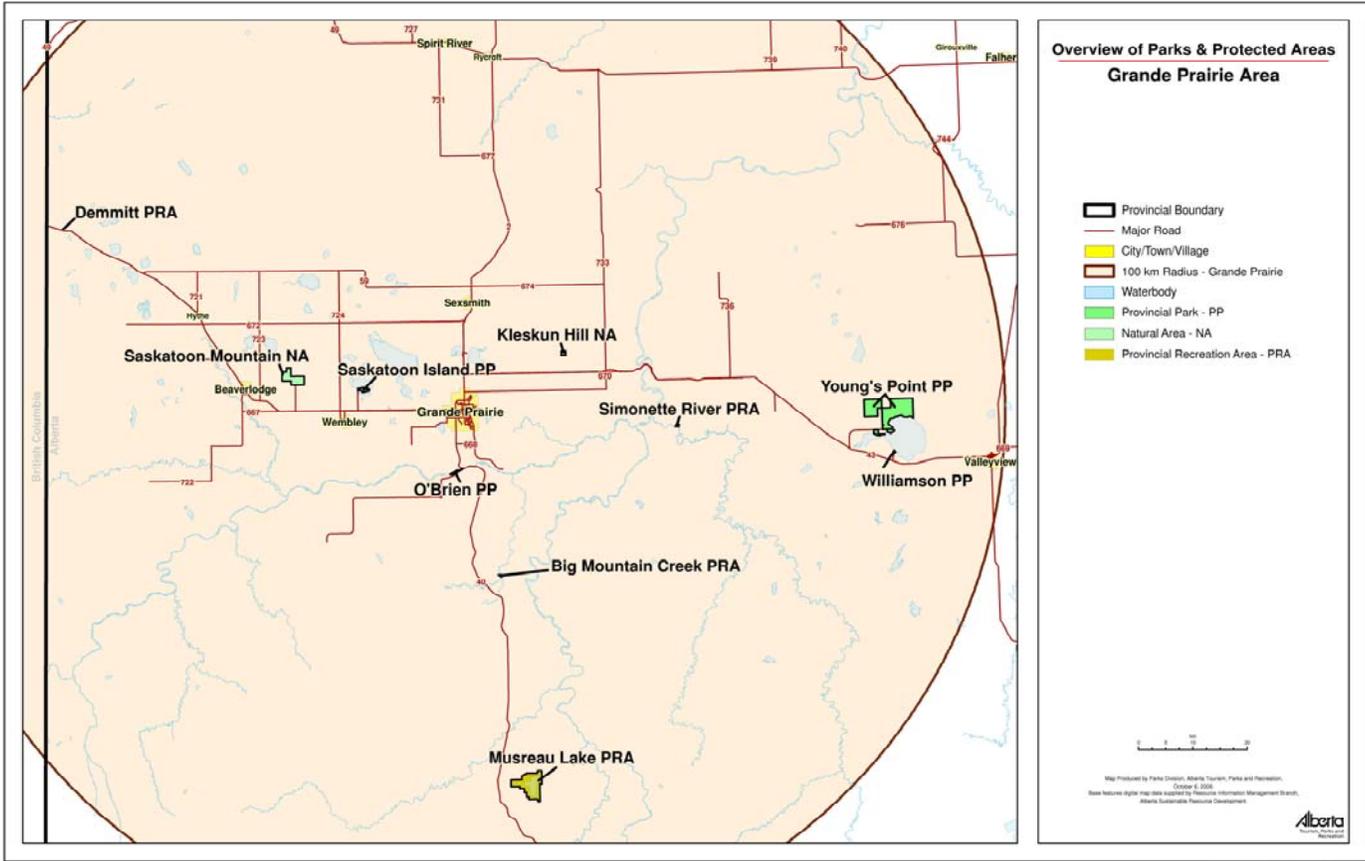
- Date:** March 26, 2009
Time 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; presentation at 7:30
Location Anglican Church Hall
310 10 St
Beaverlodge
- Date** March 30, 2009
Time 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; presentation at 7:30
Location Lake Saskatoon Agricultural Society Hall
On Hwy 724, 6 km north of Highway 43
- Date** March 31, 2009
Time 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; presentation at 7:30
Location Sturgeon Heights Community Hall
Young's Point Road off Hwy 43
about 30 km west of Valleyview
- Date** April 1, 2009
Time 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; presentation at 7:30.
Location Muskoseepi Park Pavilion
102 St and 102 Ave
Grande Prairie
- Date** April 2, 2009
Time 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; presentation at 7:30
Location Grovedale Hall
Turn at Grovedale General Store, drive past school, turn
next left into arena and hall grounds.

13) How will my input make a difference in the creation of the plan?

Your input is important. You may have a unique perspective on the land base that can help guide what direction the management plan should take. Park management plans benefit from local knowledge derived from local residents who often know the area better than most. However there may be park users from further away who also have valuable knowledge or insight to provide. Collecting this knowledge from a wide variety of people helps Alberta Parks Division staff identify important features that might require special protection, such as unique habitat types or cultural features. Similarly, we need to understand the full variety of activities people do, and expect to keep doing, within the parks so that these can be balanced or integrated with other management priorities. This is your chance to make a difference.

14) What happens after the feedback from the open houses and website is collected?

Input received by May 10 will help determine the future management direction of these parks. All comments will be considered in the preparation of the draft management plan. The draft plan will likely be ready for public review later this year. After the public review, the plan will be finalized and go through the approval process for implementation starting in 2010. The final approved management plan will be available on the Alberta Parks Division website at <http://tpr.alberta.ca/parks/consult/GrandePrairie/>. You can request a paper copy by calling 780-538-5305.



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