

ROCK LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK BOUNDARY CONSULTATION WHAT WE HEARD

BACKGROUND

In February 2009, in response to feedback from the general public, stakeholders and Aboriginal groups, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation recommended a change to the Rock Lake Provincial Park boundary that would return 1552 hectares of the provincial park to wildland park status.

Between February 6 and April 9, 2009, the recommended boundary proposal was made available on the www.albertaparks.ca website for public comment. The majority of responses supported the proposed boundary amendments. Some concerns were identified and are addressed in the table below.

Based on public feedback, the Alberta Parks Division has changed the Rock Lake Provincial Park boundary through an Order in Council to:

- Return 1552 hectares of the northeast block of the provincial park to its former wildland park designation, where hunting will be re-established
- Retain a 400-metre buffer north of the access road, and retain the remaining west and southern portions as provincial park.
- The modification results in a 50% reduction in the size of the provincial park, but no net loss in area to Alberta's park system.

The following themes were identified from public feedback:

WHAT WE HEARD	RESPONSE
Lack of consultation and transparency regarding the boundary and classification changes in November 2006.	Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is committed to consulting with the general public, interested stakeholders and Aboriginal groups on all future boundary changes in Alberta's parks.
Support for re-established hunting opportunities in the provincial park lands that are returned to wildland status.	The boundary change returns most lands in the area northeast of the former provincial park to wildland park status, and opens up that land to hunting. Hunting continues to be permitted in the rest of Rock Lake – Solomon Creek Wildland Park (33,154 ha). As such, 96% of the former wildland park continues to be open to hunting as does all of Willmore Wilderness Park (459,671 ha) and a large area of surrounding undesignated Crown lands.

WHAT WE HEARD	RESPONSE
<p>Provincial park designation will allow increased development and commercialization. A wildland park classification is appropriate for supporting traditional use activities and limiting industrial and commercialized development.</p> <p>Retaining provincial park designation along access road will increase development along the corridor of access road.</p>	<p>The Alberta Parks Division has no plans at this time to develop facilities in the provincial park. A provincial park designation does provide a land base for future provincial park developments to meet growing recreational demands such as staging areas and campgrounds should there be a need in the future. However, public consultation would occur on any proposed future park developments.</p> <p>New industrial land uses are not allowed in either provincial parks or wildland parks. However, the Government of Alberta honours industrial land uses that existed before a park was established</p> <p>Provincial parks are distinguished from wildland parks by their greater range of outdoor recreation facilities, the extent of road access, and the interpretive and educational programs and facilities that are available to visitors. Any new commercial recreation facilities proposed for the provincial park require public consultation.</p>
<p>Lack of clarity on how the boundaries will be easily identified on the ground.</p>	<p>The Alberta Parks Division will place boundary signs on main access trails to distinguish the provincial park and wildland park boundaries.</p>
<p>By having provincial park designation extend along the access road, the wildland park is split into two different areas. This could in the future stop all access between the two areas of wildland park.</p> <p>Concern that the Rock Lake Provincial Park boundary could be expanded to take in all of the north section of the wildland park.</p>	<p>The corridor of provincial park designation along the access road was recommended to improve public safety by restricting hunting along the roadway. There is no intent to stop access between the two sections of wildland park. When traversing through the provincial park between the south and north portions of the wildland park, firearms must be encased within the provincial park.</p> <p>The Alberta Parks Division has no plans at this time to expand the Rock Lake Provincial Park boundary to take in the north section of the wildland park. We heard from stakeholders through the public consultation process that they wanted the north section to remain as</p>

WHAT WE HEARD	RESPONSE
	<p>wildland park. Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is committed to consulting with the general public, interested stakeholders and Aboriginal groups on all future boundary changes in Alberta's parks.</p>
<p>There is no management plan for Rock Lake Provincial Park or Rock Lake – Solomon Creek Wildland Park – these should come first before the boundaries are changed.</p>	<p>The Rock Lake Provincial Park boundaries will be finalized prior to a management plan being initiated for the area.</p> <p>Park management plans provide direction for the future management of the park. These plans outline how the natural and cultural heritage of the park will be protected, as well as describing the type and extent of outdoor recreation, facilities and services that are appropriate to ensure that visitors enjoy a quality visit. Public consultation is a critical component of developing park management plans.</p>
<p>The boundary change reduces the park land base and reduces recreational opportunities.</p>	<p>The 1552 ha of provincial park will be re-classified as wildland park. There is no net loss in area to Alberta's park system through this change.</p> <p>Wildland parks preserve and protect natural heritage and provide opportunities for backcountry recreation. Hunting is a permitted activity in wildland parks.</p>
<p>Boundary and classification changes improve safety for hiking and camping in provincial park designated areas.</p>	<p>Retaining a 400-metre buffer north of the access road, and retaining the remaining west and southern portions as provincial park will improve public safety by restricting hunting along roadways, near campgrounds, lodges and trappers cabins.</p>
<p>Protection of Aboriginal traditional and ceremonial sites within parks.</p>	<p>Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation will continue discussions with Aboriginal groups in the area to continue to protect traditional and ceremonial sites in parks.</p>

Thank you to all who provided feedback on the Rock Lake Provincial Park boundary!