



Proposal to Redevelop Lower Kananaskis Lake Campgrounds in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is being proposed?

Alberta Parks is proposing to increase camping capacity, enhance visitor experience, reduce the risk of negative encounters between people and bears, and increase grizzly bear habitat security in the Lower Kananaskis Lake area in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. This area is very popular as a summer camping destination, but it also contains critical grizzly bear habitat. This requires extensive management of bears and people to ensure camper safety. Alberta Parks is proposing to add 34 RV-accessible sites with power and washroom/shower building to a new campground loop in Boulton Creek Campground. This project also proposes to remove 13 lakeside campsites from the Lower Lake Campground; these sites are continually at high risk of negative encounters between people and bears due to their proximity to high-quality bear habitat. Alberta Parks proposes to keep the Mt. Sarrail walk-in tenting campground open and to provide upgrades to increase camper safety and comfort. Lastly, Alberta Parks is proposing to designate an overflow campground in a currently under used parking lot in Boulton Creek Campground. This overflow will serve as emergency camping only when all other campsites in the area are occupied.

2. What are the details of the Proposal?

As part of the Proposal, Alberta Parks plans to:

- Construct a new campground loop in Boulton Creek that contains 34 RV-accessible campsites and a new washroom/shower building. This construction will require expanding the current Facility Zone to encompass the new campground loop and underground infrastructure (e.g., water, power).
- Closing and removing 12 lakeside campsites from the Lower Lake Campground. These campsites were selected based on current grizzly bear monitoring data. These sites represent those with the highest risk of negative encounters between campers and bears due to their proximity to high-quality grizzly bear habitat. Removing these campsites will increase camper safety, increase grizzly bear habitat security, and improve overall wildlife habitat. Once these sites have been removed, Alberta Parks will relocate a section of road at the end of Loop B and construct two new campsites on the interior of the new section of road.
- Retain and upgrade the Mt. Sarrail Campground. Alberta Parks proposes to pilot a new communal kitchen in one of the campground loops. In this loop, Alberta Parks will remove individual firepits from campsites and construct a new communal kitchen/food preparation area. This kitchen will contain picnic tables, bear-proof food storage lockers,

grey water disposal, and a communal fire pit. One large, central open-sided shelter with picnic tables and possibly a wood-burning stove will also be constructed. These changes will improve camper safety by ensuring people cook away from their tents and have appropriate ways to store food and other attractants. Alberta Parks also proposes to install additional bear-proof food storage lockers for all tent sites. To increase bike touring opportunities, Alberta Parks will provide bike storage lockers in the main parking lot. This will require changes to the Peter Lougheed and Spray Valley Provincial Park Management Plan to keep Mt. Sarrail Campground open and to surround it with a Facility Zone.

- To designate an overflow campground in a currently under-used day use parking lot at the entrance to the Boulton Creek Campground. Overflow will be available once all other campsites in the area are occupied. A two-night maximum stay will be implemented.
- Create two new Preservation Zones. One to the east of Boulton Creek Campground, which will also be the focus of habitat restoration activities, and another to the east of Mt. Sarrail Campground. Over the medium to long term, these new Preservation Zones will serve as wildlife corridors to direct bears to move around campgrounds rather than through them.

3. Where is the project area located?

The Lower Kananaskis Lake area is located in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. A beautiful and popular recreation destination, there are several campgrounds that surround Lower Kananaskis Lake. Lower and Upper Kananaskis Lakes are the heart of recreation opportunity in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. The lakes are located along the Kananaskis Lakes trail/highway AB-742, about 80km south of the TransCanada Highway (see Map 1 for the regional project location). Boulton Creek Campground is located on the east side of the Kananaskis Lakes Trail, whereas the Lower Lake Campground and Lower Lake Day Use Area are located on the west side closer to the lakeshore. Mt. Sarrail is located between upper and lower Kananaskis Lakes near the south shores of Lower Kananaskis Lake.

4. Why is Alberta Parks choosing to close some of the most popular campsites in the Lower Lake Campground?

These campsites are located in very close proximity to the critical high quality bear habitat that lines the lakeshore. Current grizzly bear GPS collar data shows that bears use this area extensively through the summer month for eating and traveling along the lakeshore. In addition, these sites are frequently the focus of Parks Staff attention for aversive conditioning, which is essentially hazing or guiding bears away from human use areas and working to keep them away. Parks Staff also invest considerable capacity working with campers to reduce the amount of unnatural attractants, such as unattended coolers or dirty campsites, that may attract bears to campsites. As a result, Alberta Parks staff devote considerable time and energy in this small area of the park.

Removing these campsites will ensure bears have access to important natural feeding opportunities without being chased away by people. This will also help keep campers safe by ensuring some natural separation between bears and people. Campers may still use the Lower

Lake shore as a day use area, but are encouraged to prioritize bear habitat use and movement when possible.

5. How will expanding Facility Zones around Boulton and Mt. Sarrail campgrounds impact habitat availability for wildlife?

The Facility Zone expansions are being kept to an absolute minimum. It is important, however, that Alberta Parks amend Facility Zones to ensure access to underground infrastructure for maintenance and to surround the new campground loop. In addition, the creation and formal designation of two new wildlife corridors as Preservation Zones will increase the amount of secured wildlife habitat over the long term.

6. What is a communal kitchen and why is one being built at Mt. Sarrail Campground?

Recent bear monitoring data show that bears do not use habitat in the Mt. Sarrail Campground, but they do still move around the campground. Currently, each campsite at Mt. Sarrail has a picnic table and firepit. Campers frequently leave coolers unattended after eating or going to sleep, which increases the risk of a negative encounter between campers and bears. Alberta Parks is proposing to make Mt. Sarrail more similar to back country campgrounds where sleeping areas and food preparation areas are separated, which increases camper safety. To accomplish this, Alberta Parks is proposing to pilot the installation of a communal kitchen in association with one of the tenting loops at Mt. Sarrail. This area will have between three to five picnic tables, a communal firepit, bear-proof food storage lockers, and grey water disposal. Campers staying in this tenting loop will be encouraged to do all of their food preparation and eating in this communal kitchen, similar to the back country. This will increase camper safety by separating eating and sleeping areas as well as upgrade the Mt. Sarrail Campground.

It is critical that Mt. Sarrail retain its walk-in tenting and quiet campground characteristics. To ensure this, we will designate the communal kitchen as day use areas meaning it will only be open from 7a.m. to 11p.m. As this is a new approach for a front country campground, Alberta Parks will implement a monitoring plan to measure camper response and feedback pertaining to the communal kitchen.

7. Will the new campsites be available on the Reserve Alberta Parks (RAP) website?

Boulton Campground is already on RAP and the new campground loop will be added to this system. Lower Lake and Mt. Sarrail will remain first come-first serve.

8. How does this Proposal enhance recreation opportunities?

This Proposal enhances recreation opportunities in the Lower Kananaskis Lake area in several ways. First, providing for additional RV-accessible serviced campsites at Boulton Creek directly addresses a growing demand for this form of camping opportunity. It also helps diversify the Boulton Creek Campground offer, which will contain RV-serviced campsites, unserviced campsites, and walk-in tent sites. Second, this Proposal enhances visitor safety by removing campsites that are in a high-risk area for negative encounters between campers and bears and creating wildlife corridors to direct animals around human-use areas. Visitor safety will also be increased through better food storage and communal kitchens at Mt. Sarrail. In addition, visitor experience will be enhanced by upgrading the Mt. Sarrail Campground and building a shelter to protect campers from poor weather. By constructing Mt. Sarrail's tenting and eating areas

similar to back country campgrounds, Alberta Parks can provide campers with an opportunity to practice backcountry camping and test gear before being committed to a true backcountry setting. In this way, Mt. Sarrail can serve as easy entry to a backcountry camping experience. The installation of bike lockers at Mt. Sarrail will also ensure facilities for campers who are bike touring through the region.

9. When will construction start?

The Boulton Creek Campground expansion construction is proposed to start in February 2017, which will ensure no migratory birds are impacted and the campground is ready for the 2017 camping season. Closure and removal of the Lower Lake campsites is proposed to begin in Spring 2017. Construction of communal kitchens at Mt. Sarrail would begin in the Summer of 2017. Habitat restoration in the wildlife corridor east of Boulton Creek campground would commence in 2017 and be ongoing throughout the year.

10. How do I comment on this proposal?

Send in your comments, suggestions, and concerns online (link below) or by emailing or mailing your feedback to the addresses below. Feedback will be collected until February 7, 2017.

By Email: ParkNews@gov.ab.ca

By Mail:

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11. What happens after the public comment period?

Alberta Parks will make a decision regarding the proposal after the 60-day public comment period is over. Alberta Parks will consider public feedback before making a final decision.

A summary of public comments and the proposed actions and responses will be posted on www.albertaparks.ca/consult once a decision has been reached.

12. Who can I contact for further information on this Proposal?

If you would like further information on the Lower Kananaskis Lake Redevelopment Proposal, please call Sarah Elmeligi, Facility Planner for Alberta Environment and Parks at 403-609-6064 or sarah.elmeligi@gov.ab.ca.

