

Frequently Asked Questions



Facility Redevelopment at Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation Area

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1. Where is Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation Area?

Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation (PRA) Area is located on Highway 40 near the Town of Grande Cache at the confluence of the Smoky River and Sulphur River.

2. What is the project?

Alberta Parks is undertaking a three-year phased project to redevelop existing infrastructure to meet the needs of equestrian users, day users, recreation vehicle (RV) campers and backpackers.

3. Why is this project needed?

In 2003/04, viewing platforms and hiking trail were installed to give park visitors a better view of the water gap. The new platforms brought an increasing number of day users to the site, creating significant user conflicts and safety concerns for the public visiting Sulphur Gates PRA, and equestrian users accessing the Wilmore Wilderness Park. This project will establish separation between RV campers, day users and equestrian users.

4. What are the project details?

Mount Stern/Lightning Ridge

Parking at the trailhead for Mount Stern/Lightning Ridge will be formally established. The parking area will accommodate parking for day hikers and equestrian users. Infrastructure for the equestrian users will include a manure bin, hitching post and parking sufficient to accommodate horse trailers.

Day Use Area

Equestrian activities, both day use and overnight, will be relocated to the equestrian campground and commercial equestrian area. Similarly, overnight camping at what is now the day use area will no longer be permitted. The day use area will include barrier-free picnicking opportunities and washroom facilities. This will improve recreation experiences for a growing number of day users visiting Sulphur Gates PRA, while eliminating user conflicts.

Campground Loops

Camping will be relocated to the plateau area between the Smoky River and the access road. The upper loop will be designed for equestrian users and will include a mixture of single and double campsites that are equipped with high lines and manure bins. The lower RV loop is for non-equestrian users and will offer amenities consistent with standards of Alberta Parks. The campground will target those wishing to spend some time in Sulphur Gates exploring the water gap and other features in the park. A connector trail will be constructed along the bluff overlooking the Smoky River, bringing hikers to the viewing platform. Hand rails will be constructed along areas of the trail to ensure public safety. A nature-based playground will also be constructed between the equestrian and RV campgrounds for children and families to utilize.

Equestrian Area

The commercial equestrian area is used by several commercial outfitters, as well as the general equestrian public. Currently, there is sufficient parking for larger truck/trailer units, though it is not well organized. The equestrian area will be updated to include clearly delineated parking for larger and oversized units. Refurbishment of corrals will focus on improvements to hay holders, addition of manure bins and high lines. The campsites will also be refurbished.

A new parking area will be established across from the commercial equestrian area where smaller truck/trailer units and cars can be parked overnight for those accessing the Willmore Wilderness Park. This will keep parking congestion in the commercial area clear for additional user groups.

5. How will construction impact visitors to the park?

Beginning August 2017, equestrian users will no longer be permitted to utilize the lower parking/day use area. Temporary overnight camping for equestrian users will be located in a new overnight parking area adjacent to the commercial equestrian area. Once the new equestrian campsites are established in 2018, camping will no longer be permitted in the overnight parking area. Equestrian users accessing the Willmore Wilderness Park will do so via the equestrian trail that begins near the commercial corrals, by-passing the day use area.

Non-equestrian RV camping will remain in the day use area temporarily until the new camping loop is constructed in 2018. Once new campsites are established in 2018, camping will no longer be permitted in what is now the day use area. Information on changes and closures will be posted on the Sulphur Gates webpage.

6. When is construction completed?

Refurbishment of Sulphur Gates PRA will occur over three years. Targeted stakeholder consultation will occur in the winter of 2017/2018 to gather input into phase 2 and 3 of the project. Figure 3 shows the sequencing for the work.

Depending on weather conditions, construction is expected to be complete in late fall 2019.
Once construction is completed, all camp sites will be placed on www.reserve.albertaparks.ca

7. Who should I contact for more information?

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