



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

What We Heard

In December 2016, Alberta Parks proposed to make several changes to campgrounds in the Lower Kananaskis Lake area of Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. Changes proposed were designed to reduce the chance of encounters between people and bears and to increase overall camping capacity. The plan included the addition of a new camping loop to Boulton Campground, closing several sites at Lower Kananaskis Lake campground, improving bear-proof food storage at Mt. Sarrail campground, designating an official overflow camping area and designating two Preservation Zones as wildlife corridors.

Decision

After a 60-day public consultation period, Alberta Parks has proceeded to move forward with the project as proposed with a few minor changes. The following changes will be implemented over the next two years:

- The construction of a new serviced campground loop with 34 RV-accessible sites at Boulton Creek. Six of these sites will meet accessibility standards and fit a medium-sized tipi to accommodate Albertans with limited mobility and First Nations gatherings.
- Close 12 campsites at Lower Lake campground where the probabilities of human-bear encounters are highest.
- Install additional bear-proof food storage, bike racks and a central camp shelter at Mt. Sarrail Campground.
- Create an official overflow campground at the Pocaterra parking area.
- Designate two Preservation Zones around these campgrounds to support safe wildlife movement.

Summary of What We Heard

Public consultation regarding the Boulton Campground and Lower Lake redevelopment was conducted for a 60 day period. Consultation was conducted by the following methods:

1. Posting the project on www.albertaparks.ca/consult
2. Emailing Park News subscribers
3. Emailing project packages to relevant stakeholders as defined in the Public Participation Plan
4. Meeting with the Campground Operator to gather feedback from the proposal

This consultation process was also mentioned in media coverage pertaining to the Three Sisters Campground redevelopment project proposal.

In total, Alberta Parks received 25 email responses from the public regarding this proposal and one email from a stakeholder (the RV Dealers of Alberta). In general, people were supportive of the proposal and its various components. Of the comments received, 16 were supportive of the project as proposed and 5 were opposed (Figure 2). The project areas that received the most direct comments were the Boulton Campground expansion (23 direct comments, 15 in support) and the Lower Lake campsite decommissioning (14 direct comments, 9 in support). There were the fewest direct comments pertaining to the changes to the Mt. Sarrail Campground (8 overall comments; 7 in support).

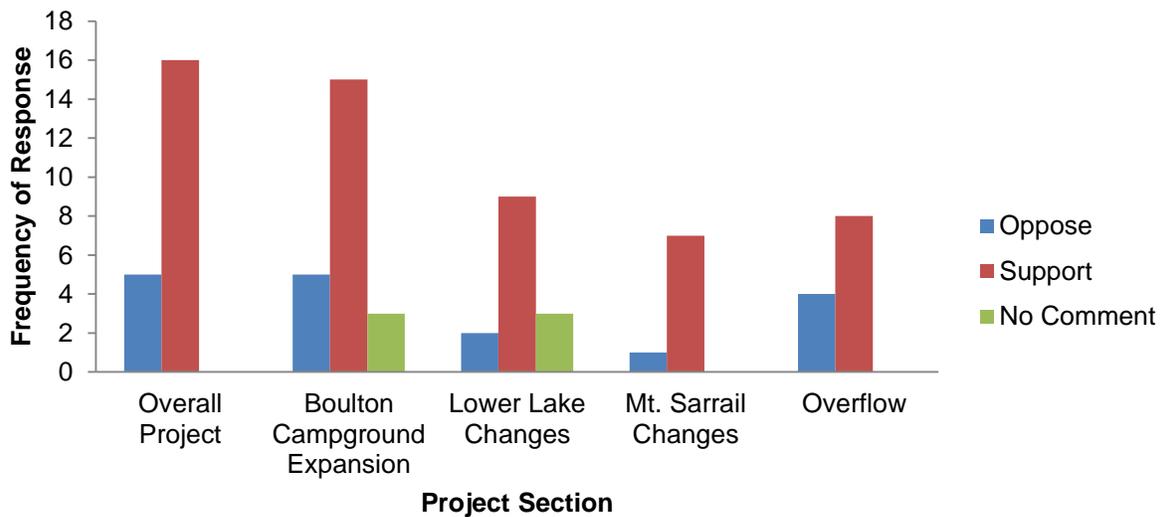


Figure 1: Frequency of Public Support/Opposition to the proposed project overall and its individual components.

General comments were separated into six different themes. The proportion of responses are shown in Figure 2, Alberta Parks responses to these themes are shown in Table 1. Comments included the following topics:

- Area is already too busy
- Not enough camping
- Wildlife should be a priority
- Actions are perceived as ineffective
- There are already too many reservable sites

- Development will result in increased traffic

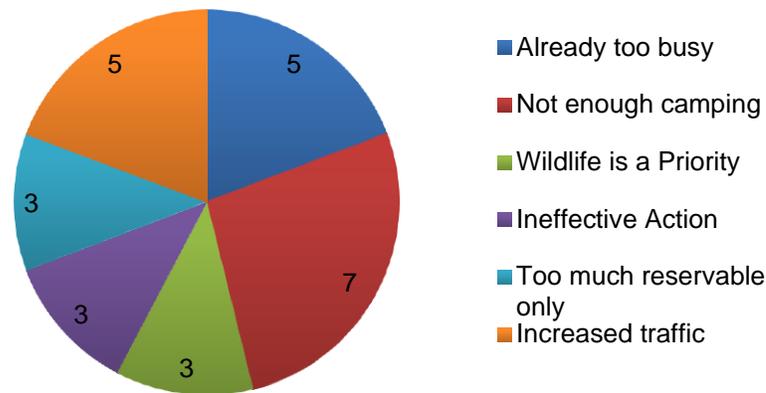


Figure 2: Proportion of comments for each theme. Numbers in each slice of the pie chart show the number of times a theme was raised in public responses.

Table 1: Alberta Parks responses to themes resulting from public consultation

Topic	What We Heard	Alberta Parks Response
Already too busy	Comments related to a sense that Kananaskis was already too full of campers and too crowded. Respondents also stated that additional campsites were not required or desirable in Kananaskis.	Visitation to Kananaskis Country protected areas has increased dramatically over the past few years. Alberta Parks continually strives to provide a positive user experience while ensuring the overall health of ecosystems. There is a demand for additional camping in Kananaskis Country, particularly in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. To balance this increase in demand, Alberta Parks has also included the designation of Preservation Zones in this plan. These Preservation Zones will improve habitat for wildlife. By constructing additional camping capacity within an existing campground, Alberta Parks can maximize use of existing infrastructure and services.
Not enough camping	Several respondents were supportive of the project because they believed there is a lack of camping capacity in Kananaskis. Many of these respondents also commented that an increase in powered/serviced sites was desirable to address the growing demand for RV camping opportunities.	With the growing popularity of RV-based travel, providing additional opportunities for RV-style camping is important to Alberta Parks. The Boulton Creek Campground provides an ideal location for expansion of this type as it is close to existing services (e.g., power, water and a store) in a popular location.
Wildlife is a priority	These respondents commended Alberta Parks for taking action to specifically prioritize grizzly bear habitat needs in planning. Respondents also commented that wildlife and habitat	Alberta Parks is committed to prioritizing the needs of wildlife in planning efforts, particularly in areas of ecological sensitivity. In this plan, decommissioning campsites at Lower Lake Campground and improving

	<p>needs should always be in the priority in Provincial Park management and planning.</p>	<p>food storage at Mt Sarrail was based on bear habitat use data. The designation of Preservation Zones will also help improve bear habitat and prevent further development from degrading the habitat in the future.</p>
<p>Ineffective action</p>	<p>These respondents stated concern that the proposed actions would not effectively reduce human-wildlife conflict. In particular, respondents did not understand why removing lakeshore campsites would reduce conflict when people would still be accessing the lakeshore for day use.</p> <p>Other respondents commented that increasing human use in the area through the Boulton Campground expansion would increase human-wildlife conflict risk. Respondents commented that removal of berry bushes and attractant management is a better way to reduce conflict. One person did not think the communal kitchens at Mt. Sarrail would reduce human-bear conflict because people would be cooking in the area.</p>	<p>The decisions in the plan to remove campsites at Lower Lake Campground and to designate Preservation Zones were based on data. Bear GPS collar data clearly demonstrates the importance of the lakeshore in habitat provision and movement. Aversive conditioning data shows a high frequency of response by Alberta Parks staff to human-bear encounters or bears using habitat too close to human-use areas, which compromises public and bear safety. Removing these campsites will reduce the chance of encounters between campers and bears. While people will still be accessing the lakeshore, they will only be permitted to do so on designated boardwalk trails. Providing predictable human-use patterns helps bears navigate an area without having to encounter people; this is an essential principle in managing bears in areas of high human use.</p> <p>While removing berry bushes is an effective means of reducing human-bear encounters, it is most effective in habitat patches. The shore of Lower Kananaskis Lake is slightly different as it is both a habitat patch and a movement corridor. Whether or not berries are in this area, bears will always be passing through the area.</p> <p>The communal kitchens have been removed from Mt. Sarrail. The current plan has centralized bear-proof food storage surrounded by fixed picnic tables. This will still centralize food preparation. From a human-bear encounter perspective, encouraging people to cook away from their sleeping area reduces risk of a bear accessing food next to tents. Campers will always be cooking in a campground, but this design will make it easier for campers to cook away from their tents and store their food safely.</p>
<p>Too much “reservable” only</p>	<p>Several respondents stated concern that the RV sites within Kananaskis are all reservable and that no first-come, first-serve options exist. One respondent suggested that Alberta</p>	<p>Alberta Parks currently has a combination of reservable and non-reservable campgrounds. In this plan, both Mt. Sarrail and Lower Lake Campgrounds are first-come, firstserved. From an operational and</p>

	<p>Parks take a more mixed approach and that some RV loops in campgrounds be left as first-come first-serve.</p>	<p>management perspective, it is more efficient for the new campground loop at Boulton to use the same reservation system as the rest of the campground.</p>
<p>Increased traffic</p>	<p>These comments related to concerns that additional campground loops will lead to increased traffic in the area and on Highway 40. Respondents felt that traffic was already an issue.</p>	<p>The number of visitors to Kananaskis Country is increasing and is projected to continue to do so. It is important for Alberta Parks to provide infrastructure to accommodate some of this increasing demand and to consider how the increased use may impact ecological resources. Alberta Transportation will be upgrading Highway 40 from 2018-2021, which will to improve the visitor experience.. The provision of additional campsites at Boulton Creek and the official designation of overflow at Pocaterra should help to alleviate some of the traffic on Highway 40 when people have not reserved campsites.</p>