

Update on Castle parks and adjacent public land

Off-highway vehicle trails

There are approximately 132 km of designated off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails in the Castle wildland and provincial parks.

Signage, clearing and marking of remaining trails will continue throughout the summer of 2019, though all trail closures have stopped until the ministry is able to more fully assess the situation in the area.

Outside of the parks, the Livingstone Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ) has 541 km of OHV-designated trails, and there are 166 km of OHV-designated trails in the Porcupine Hills PLUZ.

When we established the Livingstone and Porcupine Hills PLUZs, our goal was to work with recreation groups to develop sustainable trails and more effectively manage outdoor recreations activities. Since that time, we have created the Livingstone/ Porcupine Hills Recreation Advisory Group (RAC) – a multi-sector panel comprised of recreation enthusiasts, OHV users, industry, environmental non-government organizations and municipalities – for guidance and input on how to improve the existing trails and create additional varied-use trails. Part of working with these groups is also to ensure that, along with facilitating trail improvement, we are minimizing impacts to the environment.

Hunting access

We have also heard from hunting enthusiasts about hunting access in Porcupine Hills. We have recently added an additional trail to the north area of Porcupine Hills to improve hunting access. We continue to look at options on how to incorporate use of OHVs for game retrieval.

Camping

As part of a previous initiative, five comfort cabins have been built at Castle River Bridge. The cabins are all wheelchair accessible and intended for families or individuals that do not have camping trailers or are not experienced/inclined to camp in tents.

Last year, five comfort cabins were opened in the Beaver Mines campground.

Significant improvements to the Syncline camping group area are underway. Improvements include installing power, site and road upgrades, and landscaping. Two new beautiful group use shelters will vastly improve the experience of campers.

We are also improving roads and access from the Castle Provincial Park to the Crowsnest Pass.

Users will also notice the addition of approximately 150 new fire rings to seven rustic backcountry sites in the Castle parks.

Conservation

This past spring, the ministry undertook tree harvesting in Castle Falls to support a fish habitat restoration project at Carbondale. The harvested trees, which were repurposed for the project under the FISHES Program, were previously selected to be removed to accommodate a future campsite. Trees were individually selected with the onsite support of Alberta Parks' staff to ensure that there was no disturbance to wildlife and work was completed on frozen ground to minimize ground disturbance from equipment. All provincial and federal regulatory requirements were met or exceeded, including the use of best management procedures for the actual tree harvest.