

Concerns from BHA Bighorn letter to Minister Philips	Response from Shannon Phillips
<p>“Within the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park, we are concerned with the focus on increasing tourism and the potential for the development of huts, trails, and other tourist attractions to detract from the pristine and remote wilderness setting of the Bighorn, diminishing opportunity for those who value the region as a true backcountry destination.”</p>	<p>“As Alberta grows, there are increasing pressures on our parks and public lands for both recreational abuse and economic development. The goal of the Bighorn Country Proposal is to ensure safe and positive outdoor recreation and tourism experiences, protect critical headwaters and the environment, and continue to support the opportunities this areas provides to Albertans.”</p> <p>“Enhanced management of recreational use in the Bighorn area would provide improved tourism and recreational experiences, address user conflicts, benefit the environment, as well as support various industry and municipal partners.”</p> <p>“Parks and recreation management planning would include site-specific environmental assessments and stakeholder consultations to understand the impact of any future parks or public land infrastructure. In addition, future proponent-led tourism development would be required to meeting environmental requirements under the provincial Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Environmental Assessments Regulation, and conditions for parks and public land approvals.”</p>
<p>“We strongly believe that Wildland Provincial Parks are the ideal conservation designation in Alberta, protecting ecological integrity and backcountry recreation opportunities. Therefore, we would have preferred that the Wildland Provincial Park designation encompassed all of the PLUZs that currently comprise the Bighorn Backcountry, and we have the following recommendations to ensure the lands outside of the Wildland Provincial Park are managed to conserve and improve fish and wildlife habitat and backcountry recreation opportunities.”</p>	<p>“In response to your preference for a wildland provincial park that encompasses the entire bighorn backcountry PLUZs, our department will be considering all stakeholder feedback prior to making any decisions on the proposed designations, their boundaries, and management intent. In the proposed Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park, tourism would be restricted to opportunities for backcountry and wilderness recreations in a relatively undisturbed state. Low- to moderate-intensity development would be supported close to the highway corridor in the proposed David Thompson Provincial Park. Frontcountry development including a range of four-season</p>

	<p>accommodations, visitor services, food services, and commercial recreation activities would be directed to the town of Nordegg, or the proposed provincial recreation areas. Parks and recreation management planning with stakeholders and Albertans would take place to determine the management intent for each designation based on many values, including the conservation of high-quality wildlife habitat.”</p>
<p>“The designation of three Provincial Parks in Bighorn Country will impact hunters even if hunting opportunities are retained, as hunting will be restricted to areas away from expanded facility/tourism zones.”</p>	<p>“The management and administration of hunting and angling would not change in the proposed Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park and PLUZs; however, our department may apply timing restrictions or restrict firearm discharge in provincial parks and provincial recreations areas where firearm use may conflict with other uses.”</p> <p>No direct comments on incorporation of provincial parks into wildland provincial park.</p>
<p>“Plans for David Thompson Provincial Park are of particular concern, as this area could see a significant tourism increase that would diminish the backcountry nature of the area and negatively impact high-quality winter range for ungulates.”</p>	<p>No direct comment of plans to limit tourism in area during winter months.</p>
<p>“With the introduction of the Wildland Park, due to existing restrictions on the use of dogs within Wildlands (refer to our letter from Jan. 31, 2018, see attached), this will result in a loss of hunting opportunities for upland game bird and cougar hunters who currently have no restrictions within the Bighorn country. We urge the department to take this into account and consider allowing off-leash dogs in Wildland Parks while employed in a lawful hunt, as this has a large impact on the hunting community, as demonstrated within the Castle Wildland.”</p>	<p>“I want to thank you for your comments regarding regulating dogs on leashes in wildland provincial parks, and the unintended effects on cougar hunting. Department staff are aware of this issues and are creating an interim solution through the existing permitting system; they are also working towards developing a more permanent solution by amending the regulation”</p>
<p>“The West Country PLUZ designation for the public lands east of the Kiska-Willson PLUZ is an important management decision that ABHA supports. The West Country has long been subject to unsustainable land use practices from forestry, industry, and</p>	<p>Within the proposed West Country PLUZ, recreation management plans would be completed in a phased manner across the planning units. These plans would give guidance to recreational use of public land with emphasis on enforcement, trail</p>

<p>recreation. These combined pressures have degraded habitat for native fish populations, diminished habitat quality for elk and mule deer, and reduced the opportunity for backcountry recreation in a landscape heavily fragmented with roads, seismic lines, pipelines, and other development features. For both the West Country and Kiska-Willson PLUZ, we would like to see land use and recreation management plans developed that include science-based limits on motorized roads and trails, management of random camping, protection of threatened native fish species, comprehensive habitat fragmentation analysis of all human activity, and creation of additional areas of non-motorized use.”</p>	<p>connectivity, and environmental sustainability. A PLUZ, however, does not have the authority to limit land use other than recreation. Other uses on public land including forestry, and the oil and gas industry, will continue to be managed under existing legislation. Our department staff will continue to work with stakeholders to address concerns and ensure effective management of those uses.”</p>
<p>“The Bighorn Backcountry is currently managed for an array of recreation users and the Bighorn Country Proposal retains these opportunities. The area has long been underfunded for both habitat restoration and enforcement. Because recreational use of Bighorn Country is expected to increase, we believe that funding needs to be clearly designated in the proposal for both of these issues to ensure that habitat and quality of experience is improved and not degraded by the proposed changes.”</p>	<p>No direct comment on funding plan or intention.</p>