
Alberta's Public Land Trail Guide

Summer 2024



Alberta 



Willmore Wilderness Park



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A message from the minister

Welcome to Alberta's Public Land Trail Guide! Alberta is a beautiful province that encourages a wide variety of outdoor pursuits. Use this guide to discover the beauty and value of Alberta's public land trails and to help you find the perfect place for all your outdoor adventures.

As an Albertan, some of my favourite memories are time spent with family and friends in the great outdoors. Our province's vast public lands are a key piece of our heritage. They support the health, well-being, and livelihoods of Albertans and have become a recreation destination for residents and visitors alike.

Alberta is investing in public land to enhance the designated trail system and expand access to recreation opportunities across the province. Over the next three years, we plan to spend \$23 million on capital investments in trails and infrastructure on public land to support high-quality, low-cost recreation opportunities for Albertans and visitors to the province.

Recent work has been undertaken in popular recreation areas on public land to enhance public safety, improve recreation infrastructure, and promote environmental health. The goal is to meet the needs of both current and future recreational users while preserving the natural environment for generations to come.

We are also investing \$2.9 million into human-wildlife coexistence initiatives on public land. This investment aims to minimize human-wildlife conflicts, promote safe outdoor recreation, and offer education programs for all Albertans and visitors.

Creating opportunities for recreation is a collaborative effort between our staff, partner organizations, and Albertans. Many of our partners, including those who have become trail managers, dedicate time and energy to stewarding Alberta's public land trails. There are plenty of success stories, and some of our valued partners share their work and experiences throughout this guide.

As the Minister of Forestry and Parks, I understand the importance of outdoor recreation in promoting healthy lifestyles, supporting our economy, and preserving the environment for future generations.

We are immensely proud of the progress made so far to protect our world-class recreation amenities, build opportunities for tourism, and create precious memories for public land users.

I hope this guide will help you make the most of your time on Alberta's public land trails. So, get out there and explore!

Sincerely,

Todd Loewen
Minister of Forestry and Parks



Todd Loewen
Minister of Forestry and Parks

Visit these must-see locations for 2024:

1. Experience the enhanced Atlas and McGillivray Staging Areas and explore their expansive trail networks in the Livingstone Public Land Use Zone.
2. Hike the beautiful Prairie Mountain Trail in the Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone.
3. Enjoy a day at the upgraded Jumpingpound Public Land Recreation Area Day Use Area in Kananaskis.
4. Explore the Rail Trail from Nordegg to Saunders PRA.
5. Witness the transformation of the Tershishner OHV Trails in the Bighorn Backcountry.
6. Start your adventure in the Bighorn Backcountry at one of the improved staging areas at Coliseum Mountain, Allstones, Hoodoo Creek, Coral Creek, Pinto Lake, Kinglet Lake and Owen Creek, now complete with information kiosks, outhouses, garbage bins and wayfinding signage.
7. Spend a night under the stars in one of the rustic camping areas in the Bighorn Backcountry. Campers at Abraham Slabs, Bighorn Dam, Preacher's Point and Wildhorse will enjoy improved access roads, increased parking information kiosks, outhouses, garbage bins and more signage.



Indigenous rights holders on public land

Alberta recognizes many Indigenous peoples rely on natural landscapes and biodiversity for traditional land use activities and to exercise their constitutionally protected rights. Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have had deep relationships with the land. These relationships continue to this day. Indigenous peoples depend on healthy landscapes for their ways of living and steward the land to maintain and enhance ecosystem health.

Learn more about:

- Indigenous rights on public land: [Guide to Applying the Public Lands Administration Regulation](#) in the context of Aboriginal Peoples' rights.
- Indigenous hunting, fishing and harvesting rights in Alberta at [Alberta.ca/HuntingandFishing](https://alberta.ca/HuntingandFishing)



Willmore Wilderness Park

About this guide



In this guide, you will find essential information and tips to help you make the most of Alberta's public land trails. The guide includes information about our extensive public land trail networks and some feature trails we know you'll love. With detailed descriptions and helpful maps, you'll know what to expect. You'll also find regulations, safety information, responsible recreation and trail etiquette best practices, and more. No matter where you go, you are sure to have an unforgettable experience as you explore all that Alberta has to offer.

Use this guide alongside provincial trail maps that include rules and regulations and wayfinding information to help you explore Alberta's public land trails. Get started at: [Alberta.ca/public-land-recreation-maps](https://alberta.ca/public-land-recreation-maps)

Other recreation opportunities in Alberta

Crown land makes up 60 per cent of Alberta's landscape and includes provincial parks, public land and designated protected areas. Our Crown land supports multiple land uses and provides plenty of opportunity for recreation. Whether you're an avid camper, off-highway vehicle (OHV) rider, hiker, cyclist, equestrian user, hunter or angler, Crown land offers recreation opportunities to meet every need, from curated experiences in provincial parks to rustic adventures on public land.

Visit public land

Alberta's public land is managed to support a variety of uses. When exploring public land, it is important to do research ahead of your trip. Trailheads and staging areas may offer helpful signage or you can take advantage of roadside pull-outs with informational signage or an information kiosk.

Explore Alberta's Interactive Recreation Map to find Crown land sites across the province and recreation pass boundaries: [Alberta.ca/RecreationMap](https://alberta.ca/RecreationMap)

Alberta's 18 Public Land Use Zones offer unique public land recreation opportunities. Learn more at: [Alberta.ca/PLUZ](https://alberta.ca/PLUZ)

Agricultural public land is held under disposition and are often allocated for crop cultivation or livestock grazing. These working landscapes may be accessed for recreation with prior contact with the leaseholder based on conditions for access under the Recreational Access Regulation. Always contact a leaseholder prior to visiting agricultural public land and follow all access conditions. Learn more at: [Alberta.ca/AgriculturalPublicLand](https://alberta.ca/AgriculturalPublicLand)

Visit Alberta Parks

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks manages 474 provincial parks, recreation areas and protected areas throughout the province. These sites protect Alberta's natural and cultural landscapes, and offer unique recreation, tourism and education experiences. In Alberta's provincial parks and recreation areas, visitors can access facilities like trail networks, campgrounds, interpretive programming and education services. Learn more at: [Albertaparks.ca](https://albertaparks.ca)



Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

Where to go

Public land trail maps

Understanding where you are and where you are going is key when exploring public land trails. The maps in this section show locations of designated public land trails and trail networks across the province.

Designated public land trails and trail networks are found on vacant public land and within Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ). Many designated trails continue into Alberta Parks sites and are shown on these maps as hashed lines. Alberta Parks sites are designated parks and protected areas:

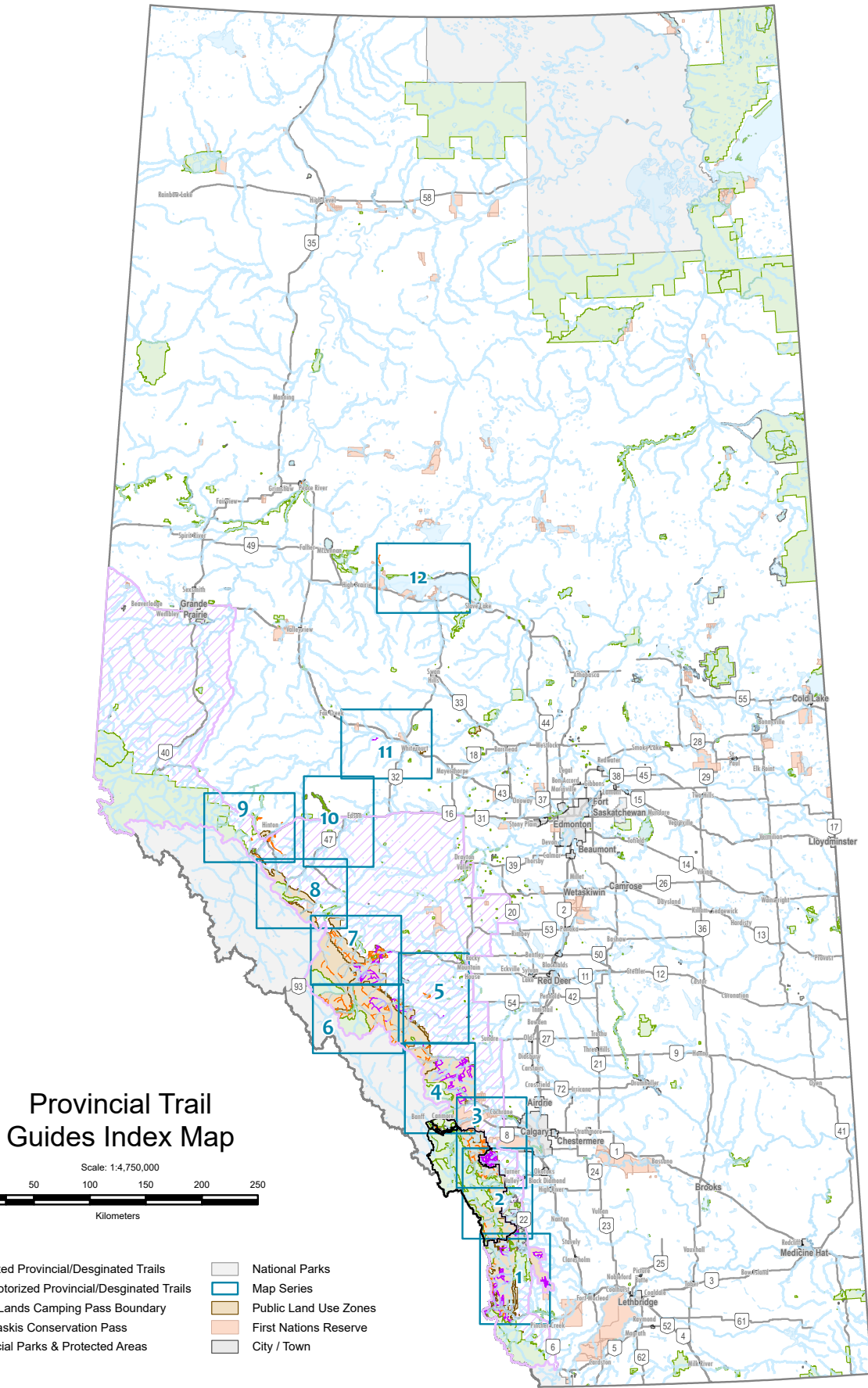
- ER: Ecological reserve
- HR: Heritage Rangeland
- NA: Natural Area
- PP: Provincial Park
- PRA: Provincial Recreation Area
- WA: Wilderness Area
- WP: Willmore Wilderness Park
- WPP: Wildland Provincial Park

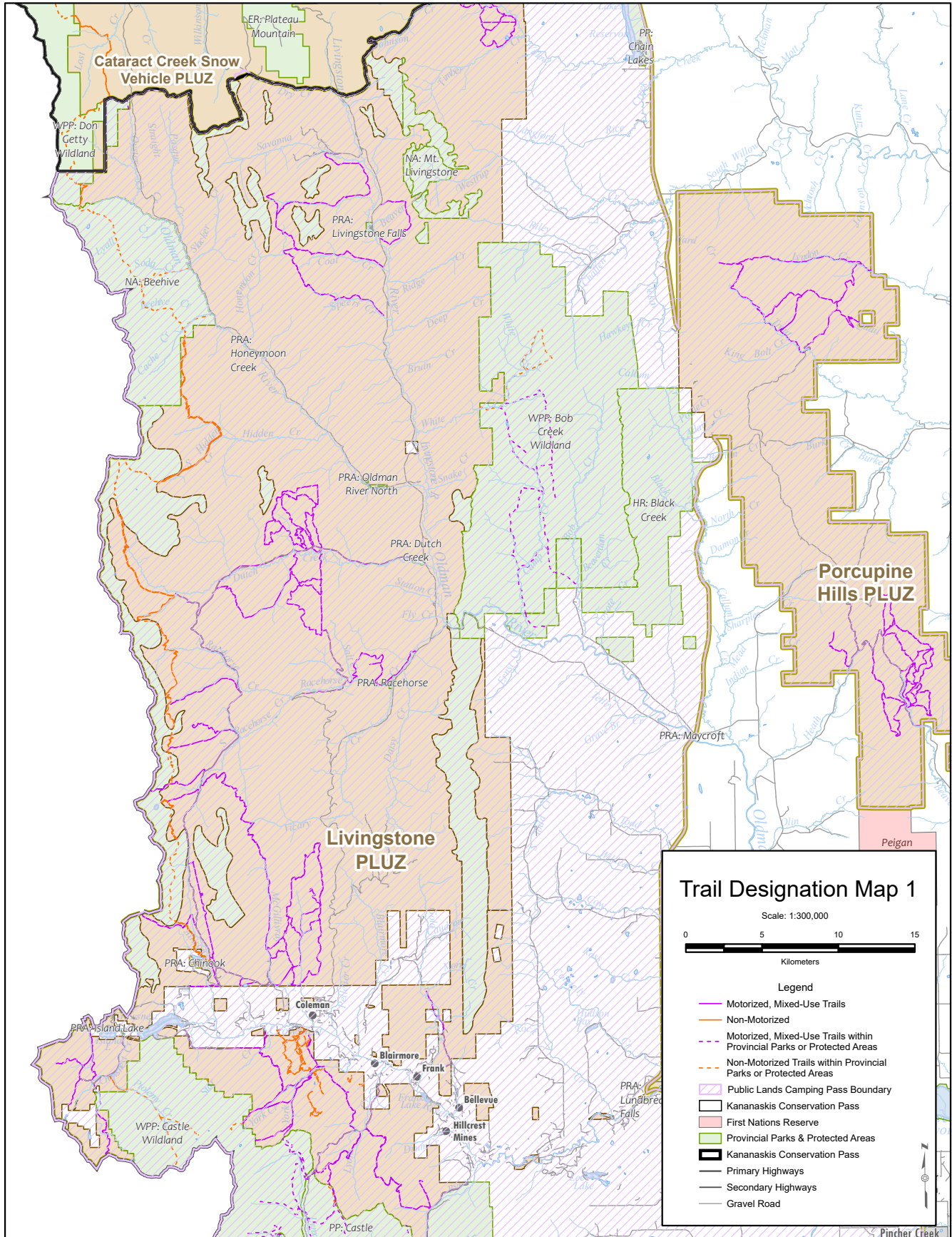
These maps do not provide regulatory information. Find detailed maps with information about permitted activities, restrictions, regulations, access and wayfinding for designated trails and trail networks online at: [Alberta.ca/public-land-recreation-maps](https://alberta.ca/public-land-recreation-maps)

Having a combination of paper and digital maps is helpful for all public land users. Download maps for offline use or print maps of the area you are visiting and carry them with you while exploring the trails! If you are using georeferenced provincial maps, make sure you download the maps for offline use. That way, you can be sure you have the map even if you are traveling outside of cell service. Many areas of public land do not have cell service.

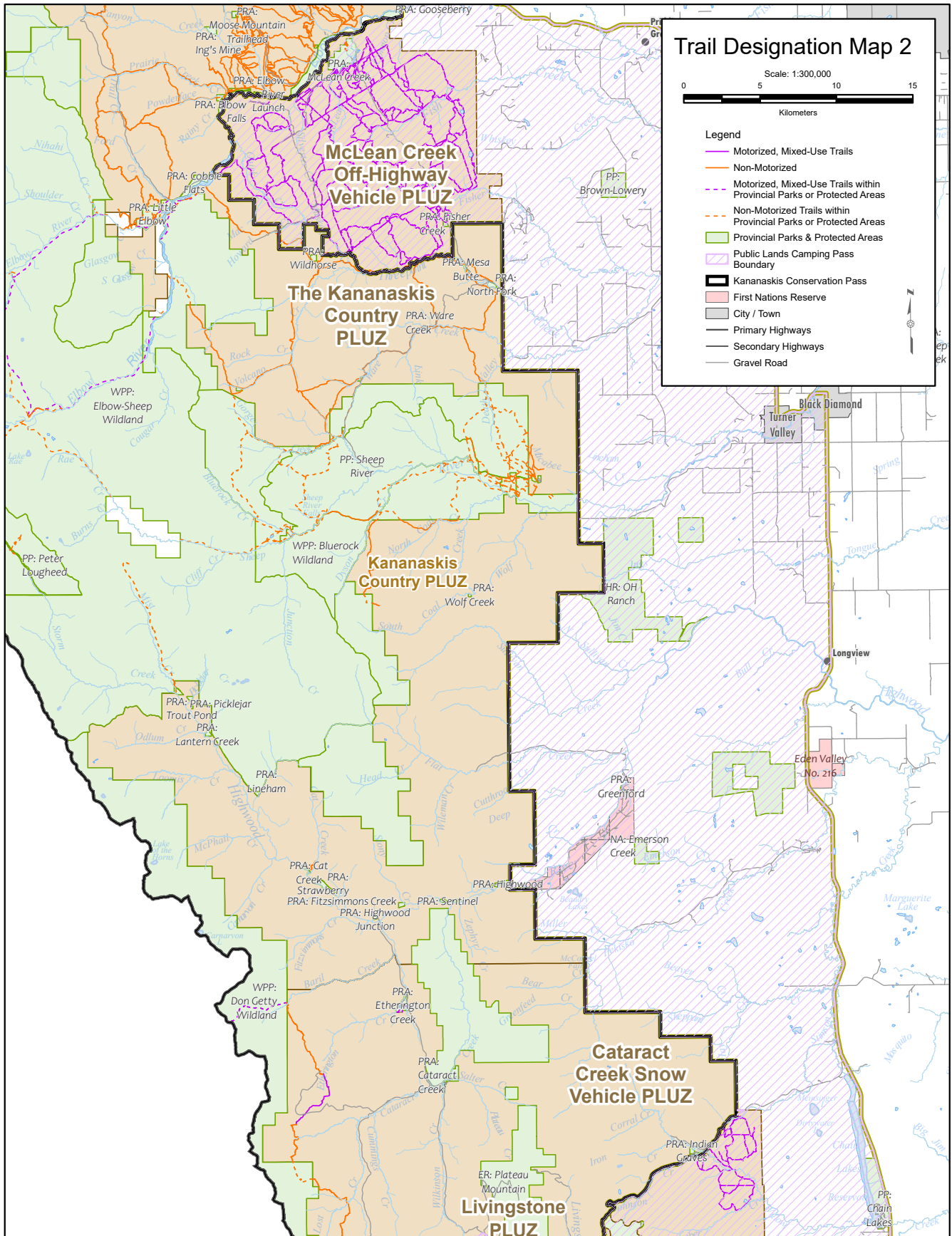


Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone

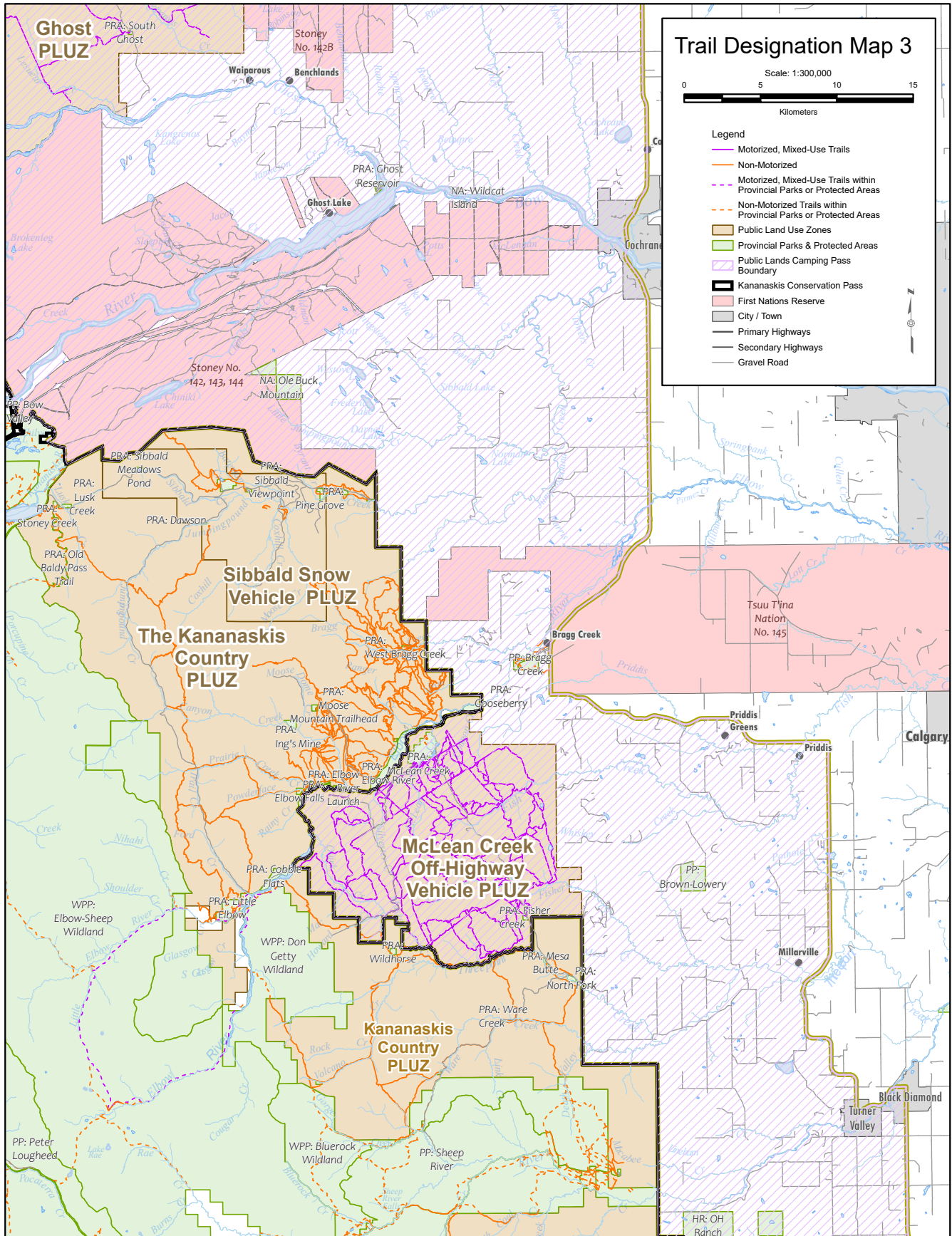




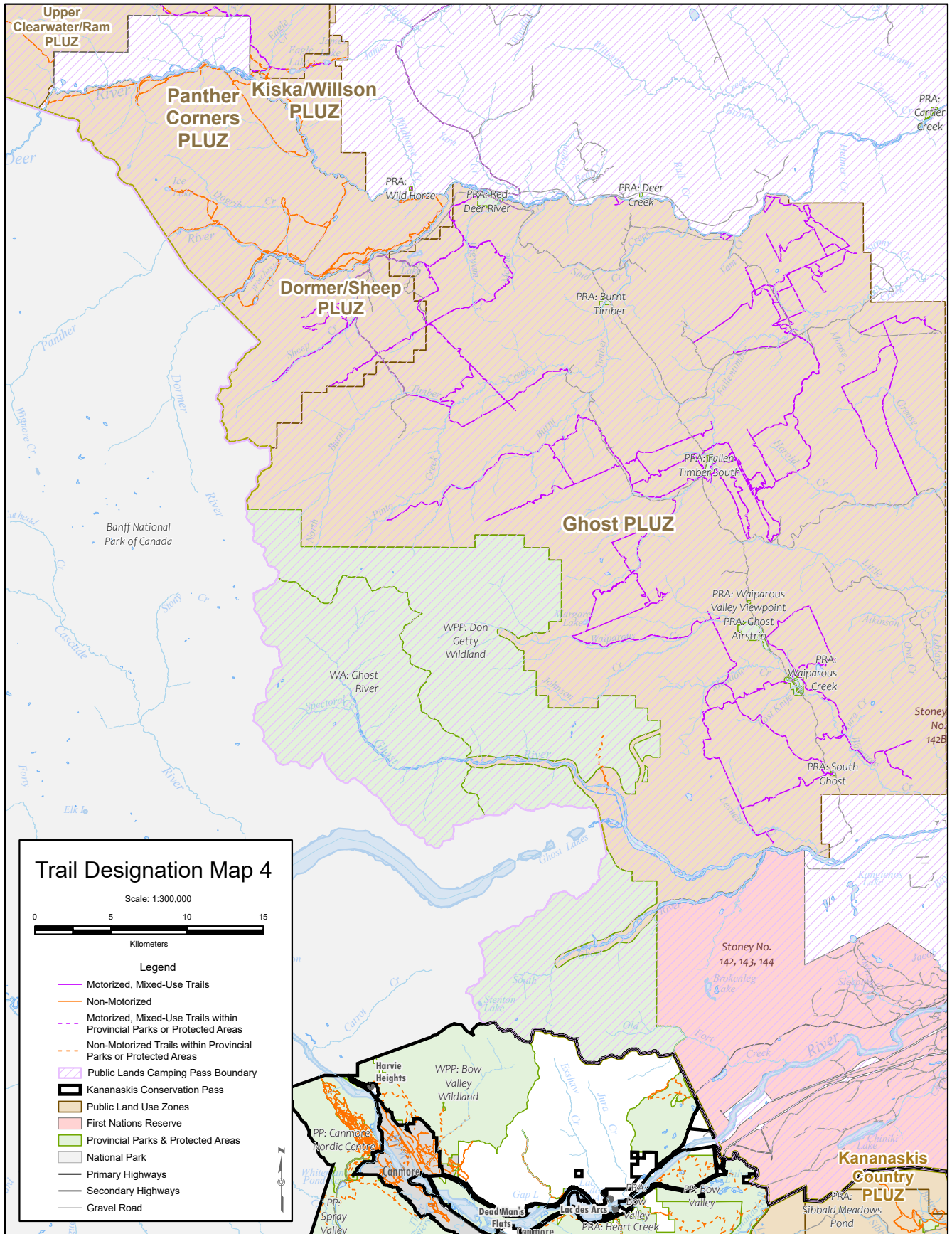
Vehicles parked at provincial park and public land sites within Kananaskis Country and the Bow Valley require a Kananaskis Conservation Pass. You may need a pass to access trails shown on this map. Learn more at: [Alberta.ca/YourPass](https://alberta.ca/YourPass)



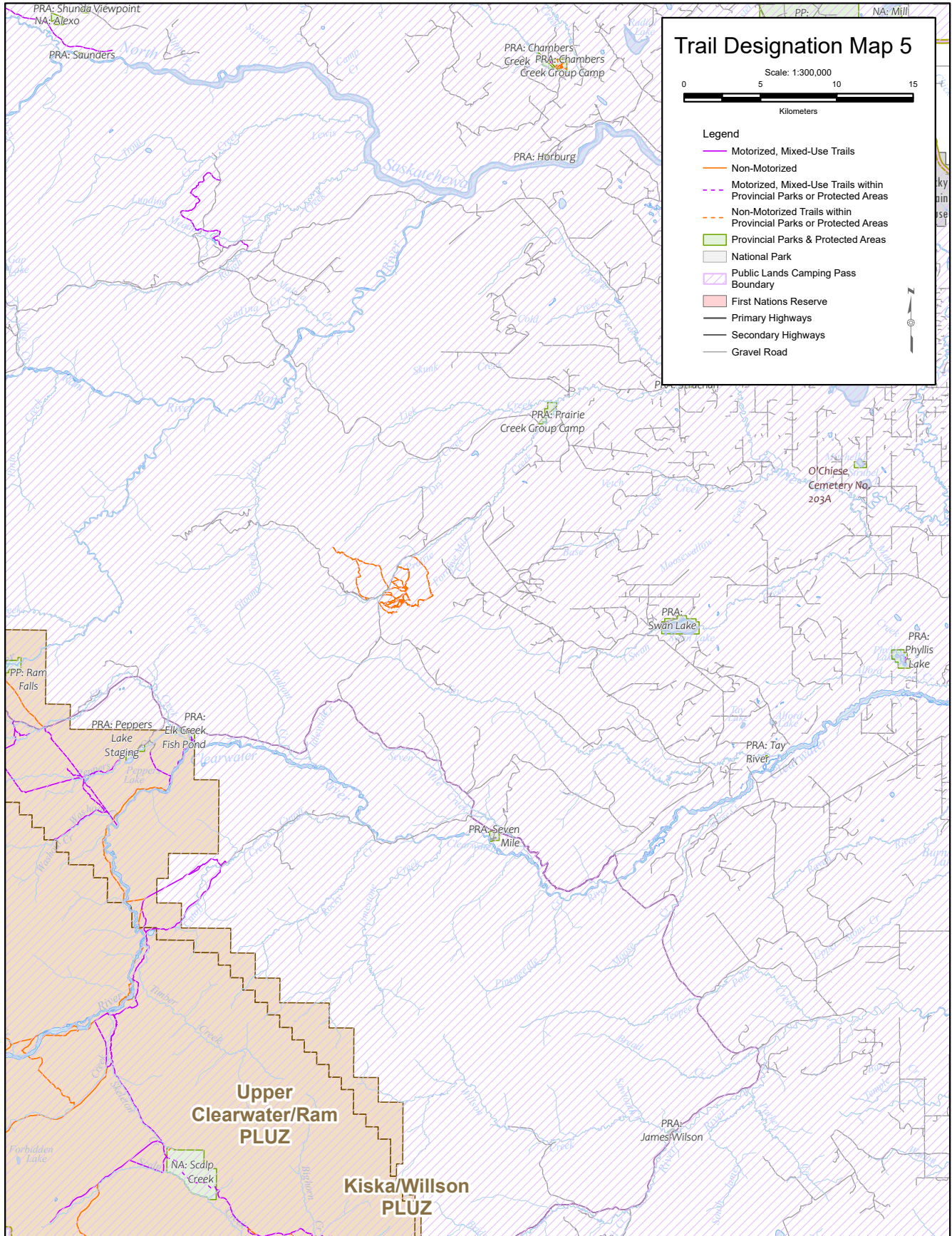
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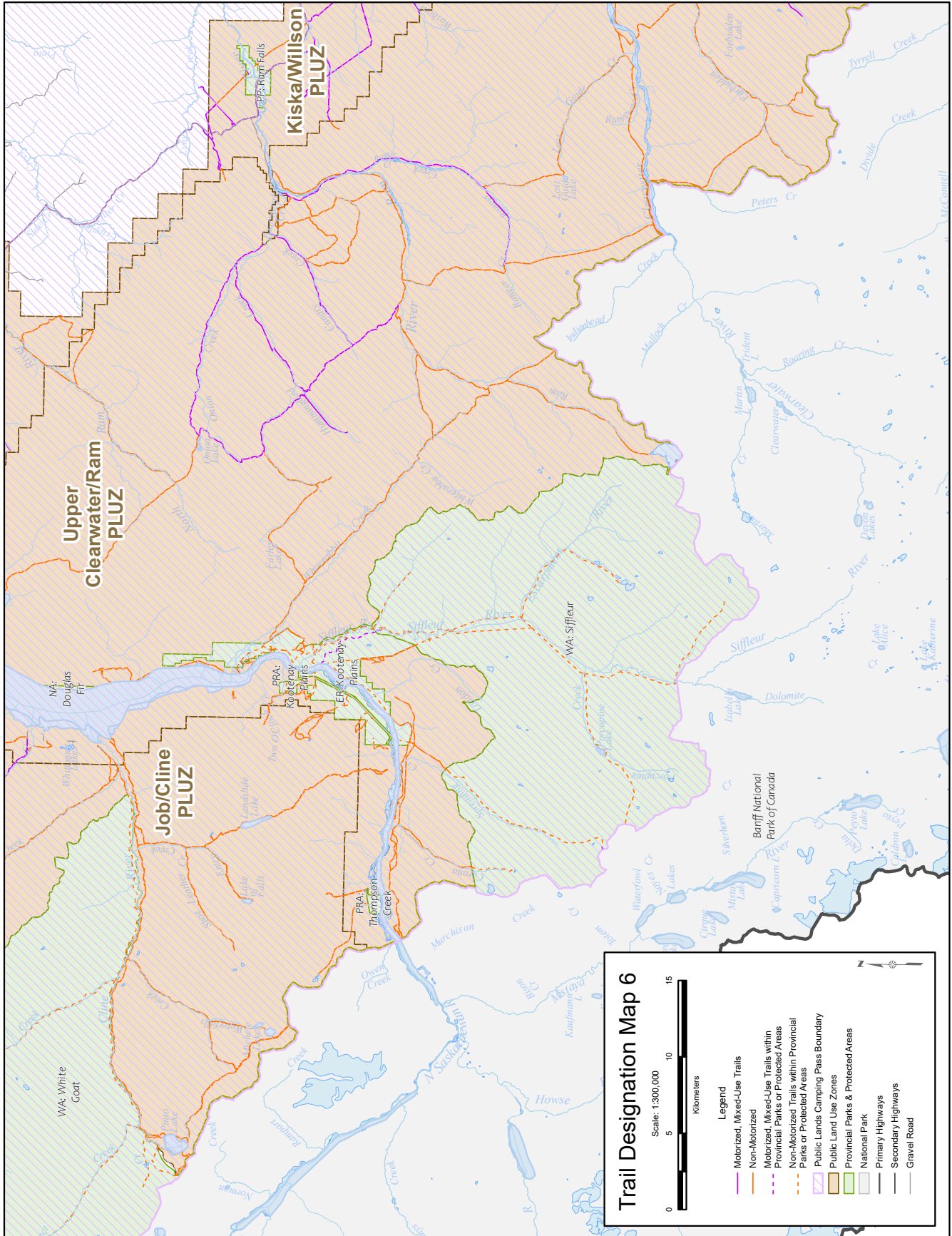


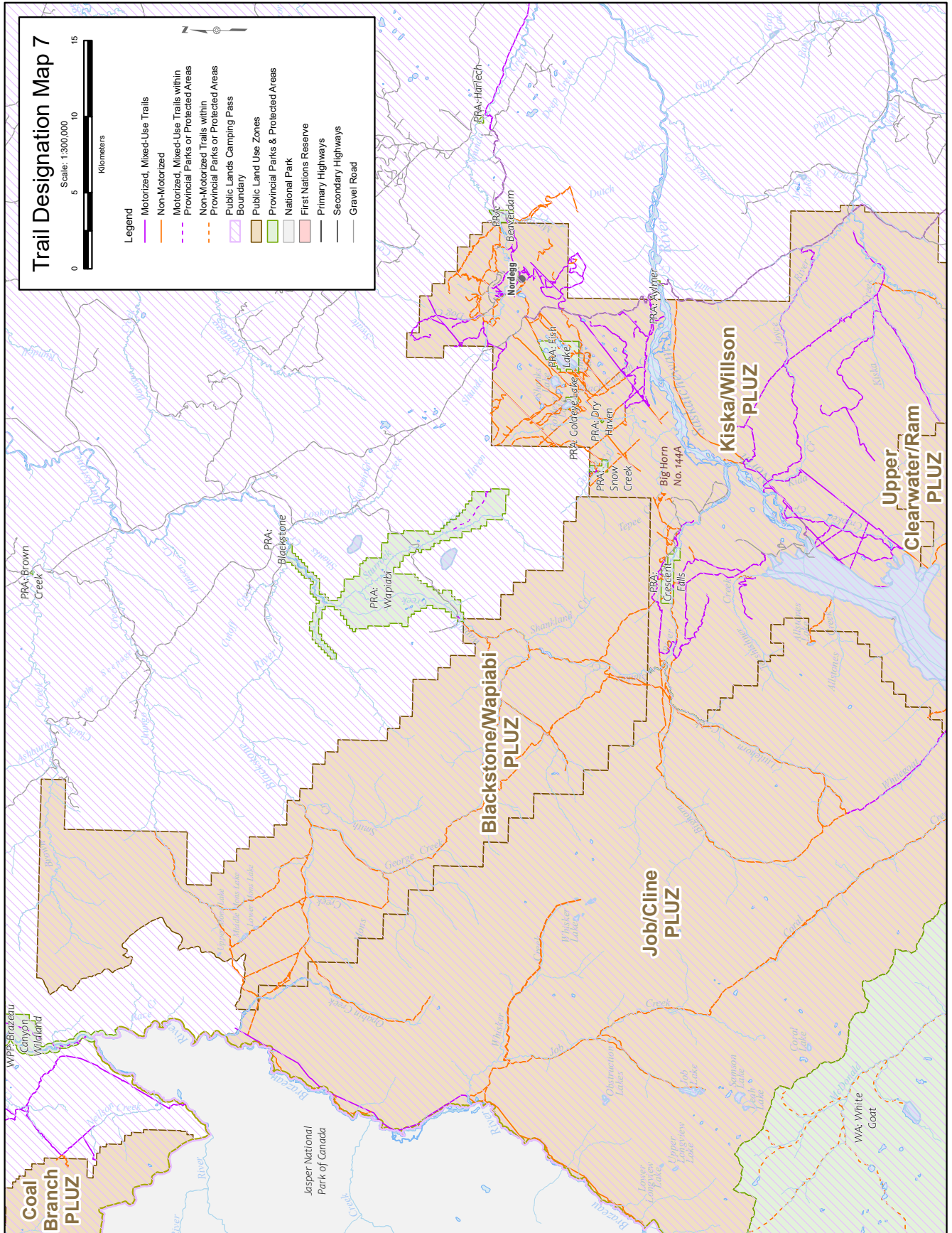
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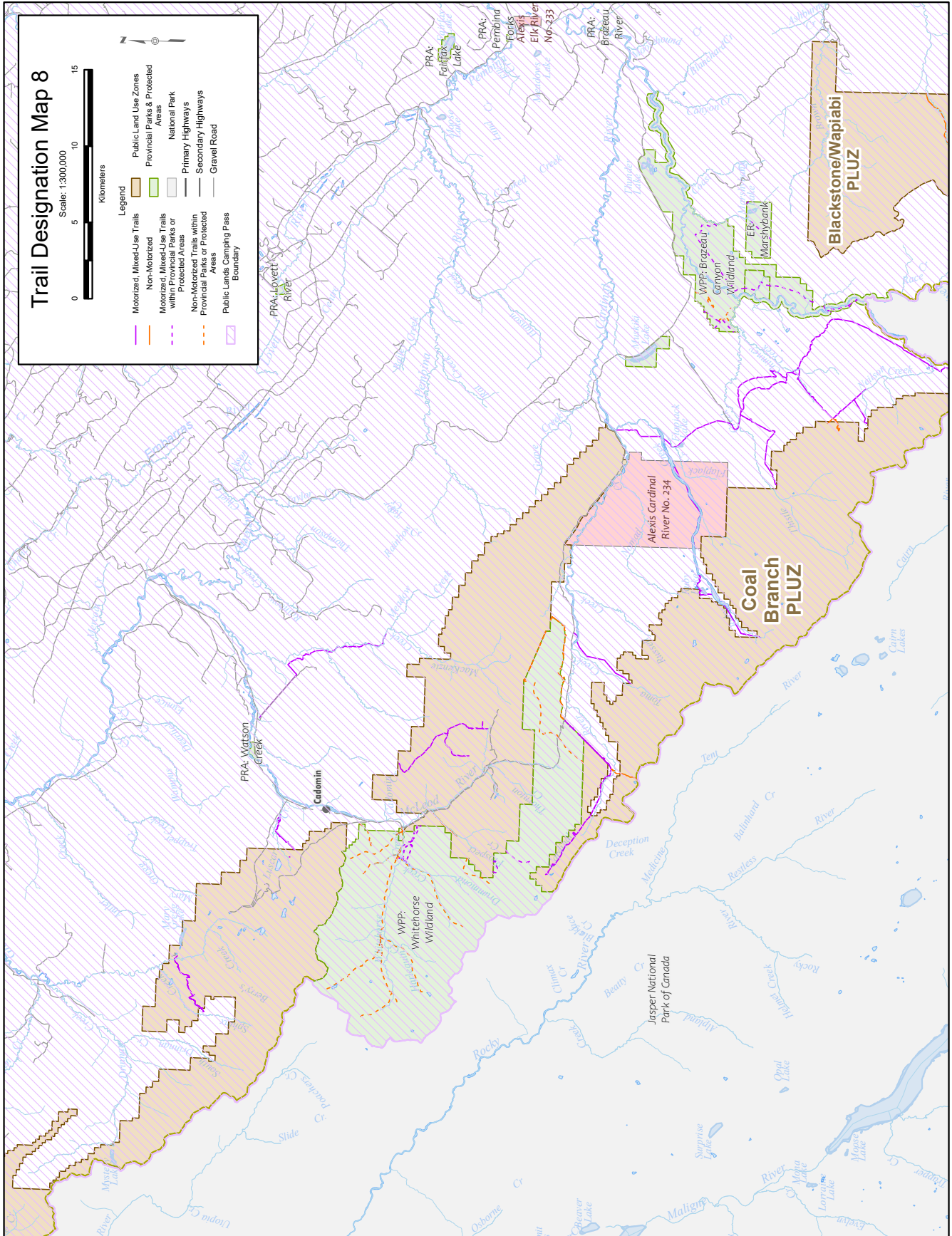


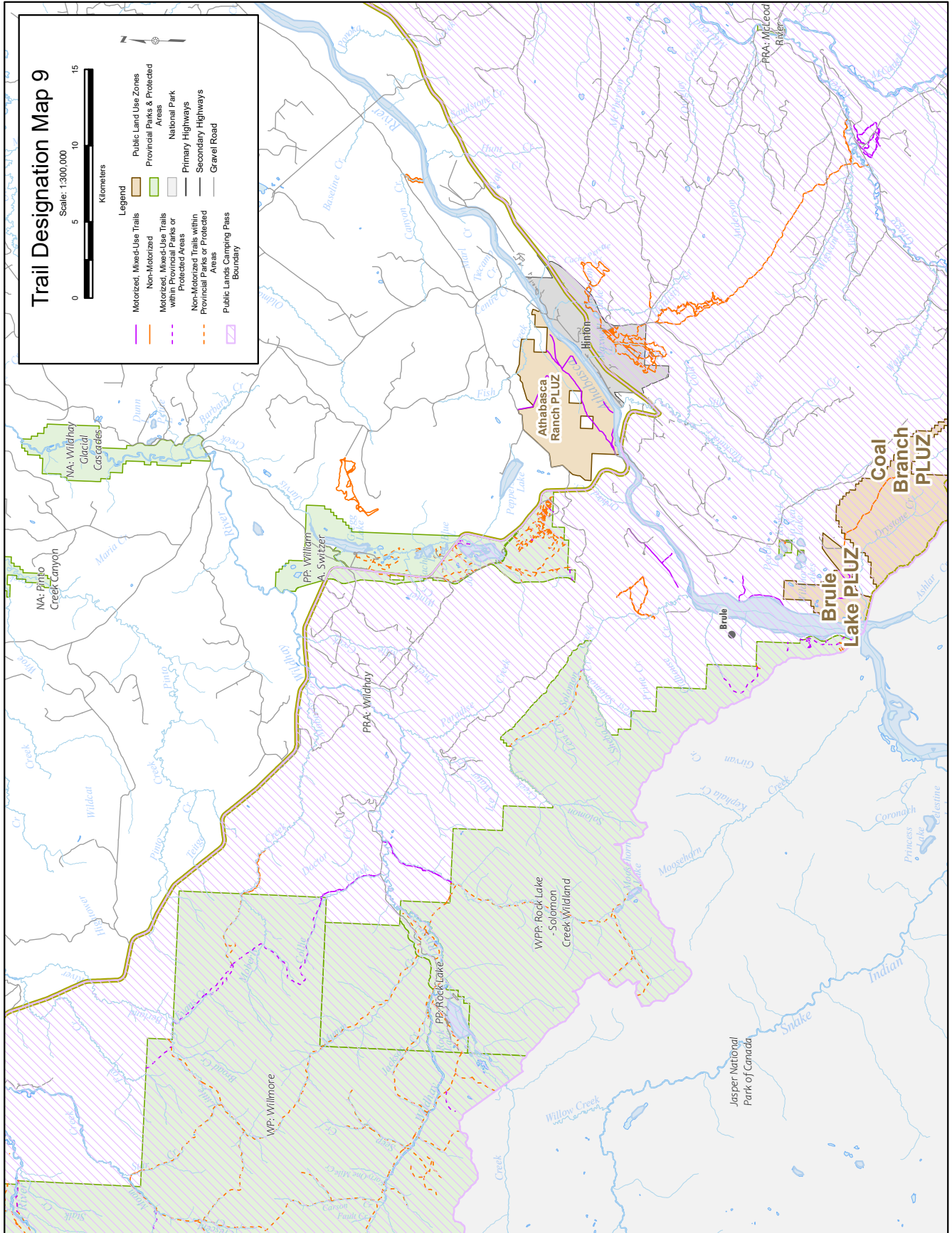
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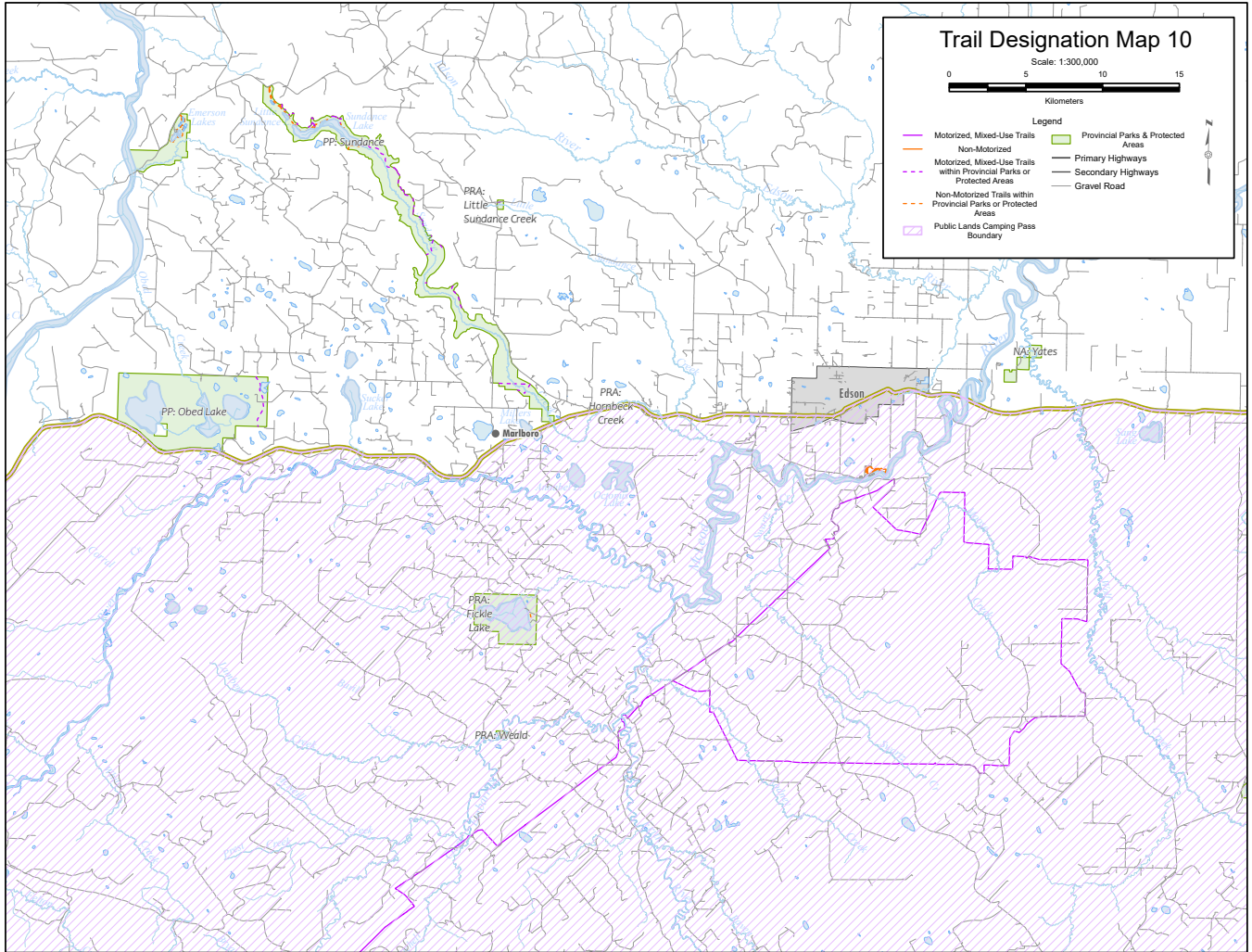


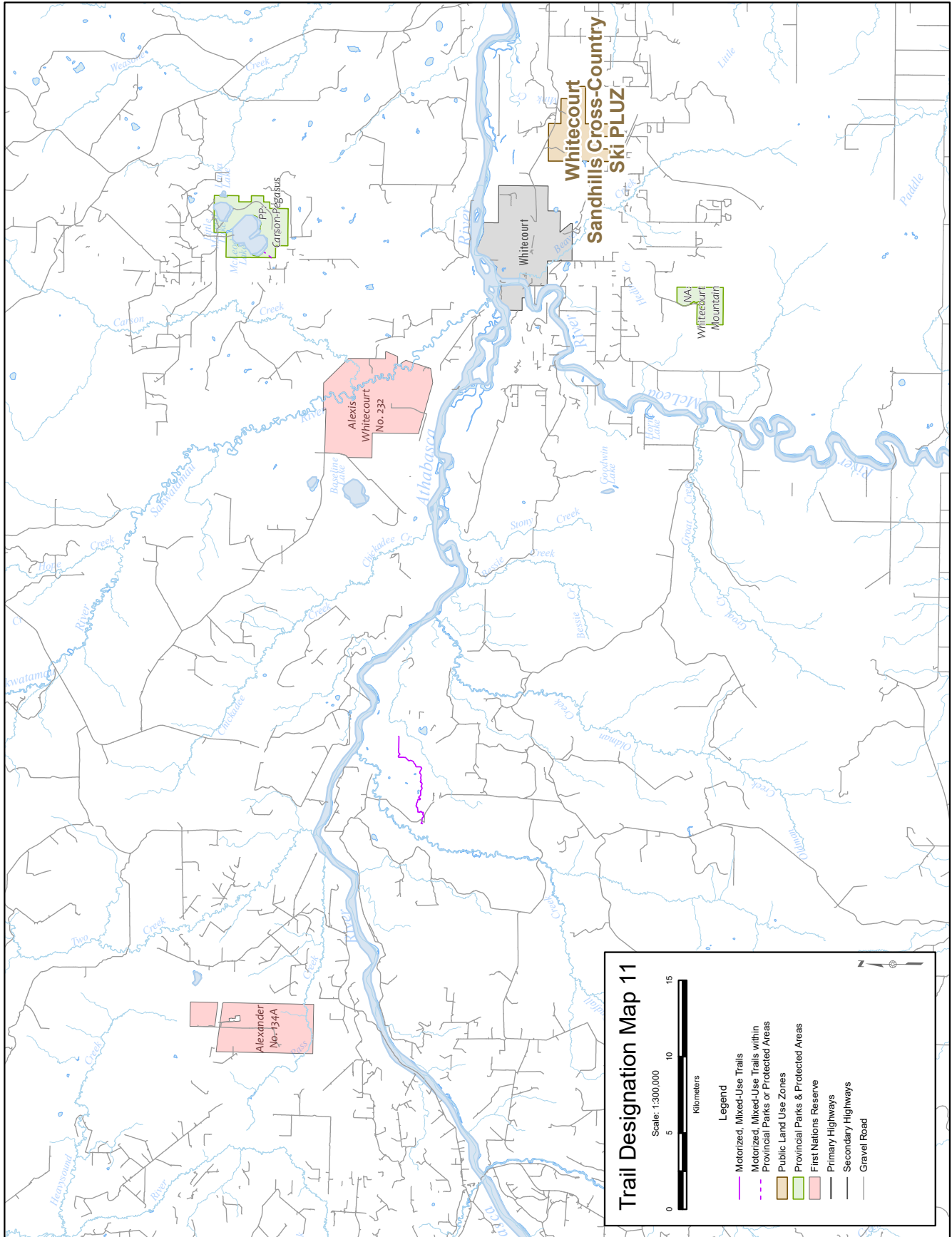


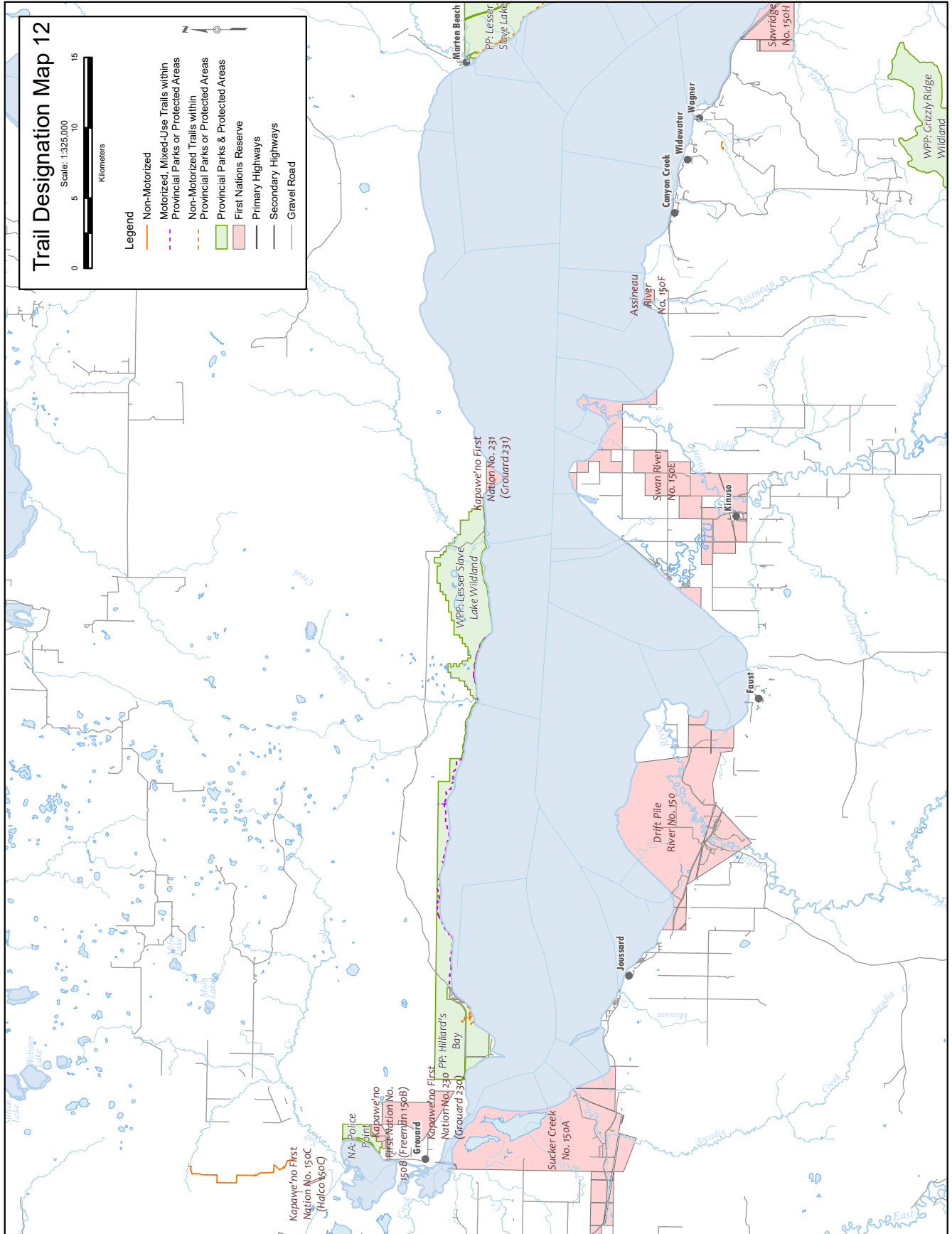












Signature trails

Alberta is home to some of the most beautiful and diverse trails in Canada. Whether you're looking for a day trip or a multi-day adventure, Alberta has it all. Alberta's public lands boast trails with scenic viewpoints and points of interest – it is hard to choose which to check out first. The trails featured in this section are a handful of the best that Alberta's public land has to offer. They will provide you with unique experiences and memories that will last a lifetime. Check out some of Alberta's signature trails for yourself this summer.



Prairie Mountain Trail

Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone • West of Calgary



Prairie Mountain Trail is a local favourite in the Kananaskis region, thanks to its proximity to Calgary and the 360-degree views from the top! The 4.4 km trail (8.8 km round trip) makes the summit easily accessible for year-round outdoor adventurers, like hikers and trail runners. Motorized recreation is not permitted.

The trail was an informal, but heavily used, trail for many years. As more and more people have started to explore the Elbow Valley, it became clear that the trail wasn't built to withstand such high levels of use.

Over the past year, the trail has been completely refurbished. The project included widening and rerouting certain sections of trail, building new drainage systems to improve durability, and adding wayfinding signage for safer and more enjoyable experiences. The new and improved trail is now a designated public land trail. You can still take in the same breathtaking views, either from the upgraded viewpoints or while on the trail.

Looking for other hiking trails to explore? Check out:

- **Folding Mountain Trail**
Coal Brule Lake Public Land Use Zone
15.1 km round trip
- **Coliseum Trail**
Bighorn Backcountry
12.9 km round trip
- **Whaleback Ridge**
Livingstone Public Land Use Zone
10.9 km loop
- **Porcupine Hills Ridge Trail**
Porcupine Hills Public Land Use Zone
3.8 km round trip
- **Hailstone Butte**
Cataract Creek Snow Vehicle Public Land Use Zone,
3.2 km round trip



Be bear smart when hiking

- Carry bear spray within reach and know how to use it
- Travel in groups, don't let anyone fall behind or run ahead
- Make noise – a loud shout (“Hey-o” or “Hey Bear” every few minutes is more effective than bear bells)
- Keep your dog on a leash and under control or consider leaving them at home

Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail

Bighorn Backcountry • West of Rocky Mountain House



The Rocky to Nordegg Rail Trail is under construction! The Government of Alberta and Clearwater County are working in partnership to establish a 100km trail along the abandoned historical rail line between Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg. The trail commemorates the historical significance of the rail line used in the early 1900s by the coal mining industry.

The Rail Trail is being developed segment by segment. Thirty-three kilometres of the trail have been completed between Nordegg and Saunders Creek. Work is ongoing west of Saunders Creek. Once complete, the Rail Trail will be a year-round multi-use trail system that connects into regional trails, as well as trail networks within the Bighorn Backcountry.

Nordegg is a hamlet nestled in the eastern slopes of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, west of Red Deer. The community was founded in 1914, by German pioneer Martin Nordegg, and was one of the first planned communities in Alberta due to surrounding coal deposits and mining opportunities. The Canadian Northern Western Railway Brazeau Branch Rail Line connected Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg and transported people, livestock, goods, and coal. Nordegg flourished, becoming the most productive mine in Alberta in 1923. As a result, other small communities were founded along the rail line, including Saunders Creek and Alexo. In 1940, Nordegg was home to 2,500 residents.

In the 1950s, the switch from coal powered steam engines to diesel powered engines triggered declining demand for coal and resulted in the closure and abandonment of coal mines and small towns. In the 1980s, the David Thompson Highway (Hwy 11) was built and subsequently the railway was closed in 1985. In the 1990s, portions of the rail line were dismantled while others were sold privately. Since the abandonment of the railway, the rail bed has been used by recreationists to explore the area. Formal planning for the Rail Trail began in 2008, with an assessment of the historic rail bed. In some areas, the trail will be routed off the original rail line to travel around private land and to avoid natural features of the landscape.



WHERE TO GO

Plan a trip along the Rail Trail to experience the natural beauty and rich heritage of the area for yourself! The trail is open year-round and provides opportunities to hike, snowshoe, ride off-highway vehicles, snow vehicles, bicycles, horses and more. There are multiple staging areas for users to access the Rail Trail. Motorized users must access the trail from staging areas outside of PRAs such as Saunders (informal), Harlech, or Nordegg Industrial.

Users looking to extend their stay in the area can find accommodations within the hamlet of Nordegg, or make use of one of several campgrounds in the area.

A portion of the Rail Trail falls within the Public Lands Camping Pass area. Learn more [about the Public Lands Camping Pass](#) on page 47-48.

Looking for other multi-use trails to explore?
Check out:

- **Wolf Lake Trail**
On public land near Lac La Biche
- **Hummingbird Area Trails**
Bighorn Backcountry
- **York Creek Trail Network**
Livingstone Public Land Use Zone





Great Divide Trail

Public land, provincial parks and national parks along Alberta's Rocky Mountains



The Great Divide Trail (GDT) is a 1,095 kilometre trail running along the continental divide watershed from Waterton Lakes National Park to Kakwa Provincial Park. The trail showcases some of the best public landscapes and provincial and national park sites that Alberta's Rocky Mountains have to offer. Each year several hundred hikers attempt to traverse the entire trail. Many more hike a small section, or volunteer with the Great Divide Trail Association.

Birthplace of the Great Divide Trail

The first official stretch of the GDT was established between Etherington and Baril Creeks north of Crowsnest Pass. By the end of 1979, the GDT was complete from Fording River Pass in the north to the summit of the Highwood/Oldman divide in the south. This section is a challenging but rewarding hike, best completed in 4-6 days.

At North Fork Pass, join the original GDT at a junction with Dutch Creek Road. This road serves as the first of many access points to Highway 40 on the Alberta side. Hikers cross Tornado Saddle, which features panoramic views and steep scree. Dropping back down, the trail closely parallels the divide with additional access points at Hidden Creek, Cache Creek, Soda Creek, Oldman River, Lost Creek, Cataract Creek, Etherington Creek, and Baril Creek. The trail showcases spectacular rock walls, particularly in and around the Beehive Natural Area. Rustic camping areas are located near many of the creek junctions. With campsites located roughly every 10 km, hikers can take time to enjoy stunning views.

At Baril Creek the trail heads to the west and climbs up to Fording River Pass, crossing the Great Divide for the first time since La Coulotte Peak over 130 km to the south. Hikers who choose to set up an easier shuttle by staying on Highway 40 can exit at Baril Creek. However, for those able to continue to Elk River Road, crossing the alpine at Fording River Pass is a stunning finale.

Trip planning:

- Trailhead directions: South – Alberta Highway 40 (via Dutch Creek) North – Elk River Road
- Permits (required): Public Lands Camping Pass for all campers 18 years and older on sections B, E and G
- Distance: 100 km
- Difficulty: Challenging
- Elevation: Highest point at Tornado Saddle (2476m). Total gain/Loss: +7822m/ -7908m



Fording River Pass in Livingstone Public Land Use Zone

WHERE TO GO

- The FarOut GDT Trail Guide App for iPhone and Android phones (a portion of every App sale supports the Great Divide Trail Association's trail maintenance and improvements)

For more information, visit:

[Great Divide Trail Association Website](#)

Looking for other multi-day hiking trails to explore?
Check out:

- **Mountain Trail & Connectors**
Willmore Wilderness Park
- **Pinto Lake Trail and Landslide Lake Trail**
Bighorn Backcountry

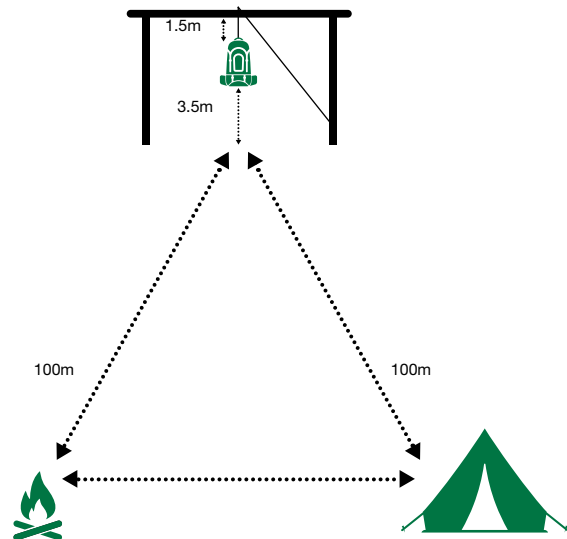


Beehive Natural Area



Be bear smart when backpacking

- Choose your campsite wisely. Set up camp away from the places bears use as travel corridors or food sources, like rivers, lakeshores, shrubs or berry patches.
- Pick campsites that have good lines of sight. This will allow you and the bear to see each other before a close encounter happens.
- Carry bear spray within reach at all times when in camp, including at night. Be cautious when moving around camp and make enough noise to alert visiting wildlife of your presence.
- Don't bring food, toiletries, garbage or the clothes you wore when cooking or fishing into your tent. Store them in bear-resistant containers, a bear-proof locker, a bear hang or at least 100 metres away from where you are sleeping.
- Cooking and cleaning should also be done at least 100 metres away from your tent.





United Riders of Crowsnest Trail Network

Public land, municipally owned land and private land in Crowsnest Pass, West of Lethbridge

United Riders of Crowsnest (UROC) is the local mountain biking club working to develop and maintain mountain biking trails in the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass. UROC operates 54km of bike trails that offer unique and thrilling experiences for mountain biking enthusiasts. Nestled in Alberta's stunning Crowsnest Pass, riders can expect a variety of trails that cater to different preferences and skill levels. From smooth and flowy trails for beginners to technical and challenging routes for more advanced riders, UROC has something for everyone.

One of UROC's standout bike trail networks has the perfect mix of trails for riders seeking challenge and adventure. These trails can be accessed from York Creek Staging Area, south of Coleman. Riders can expect a mix of flowy singletrack, technical descents, and scenic viewpoints along the way. Most of the trails in this area are rated more difficult to most difficult. UROC trails have signage with a direction of travel to allow riders to focus on the technical and fun aspects of the ride, rather than staying on the lookout for oncoming bike traffic. Riders who are looking for developed trails to practice and hone their skills are encouraged to check out Pass Powder Keg area, which offers beginner to intermediate trails.



Livingstone Public Land Use Zone

WHERE TO GO

The United Riders of Crowsnest serve as a model for sustainable trail stewardship in the mountain biking community. What sets UROC apart is their dedication to trail stewardship and user etiquette that supports the local ecosystem. Volunteers work tirelessly to maintain and improve the trails, ensuring a positive experience for riders while preserving the natural beauty of the area. UROC's efforts have built a strong local mountain biking community and Crowsnest Pass is becoming increasingly popular as a destination for single day and multi-day trips.

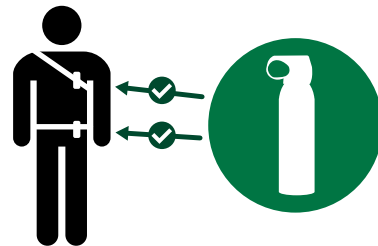
They continue to work with the Alberta government to create new recreation experiences and enhance the area as a renowned tourist destination.

Check out the UROC trails for yourself this year. Throughout the riding season, they offer group rides and share current trail maps and trail reports online at: uroc.ca



Be bear smart when biking:

- Carry bear spray within reach – we recommend using a belt or chest holster
- The speed and lack of noise from a bicycle increases the potential for a bear encounter. Make as much noise as you can and be extra cautious when coming up to blind corners or through areas with berry patches where bears might be feeding.



Looking for other multi-day hiking trails to explore?
Check out:

- **Bighorn Trail**
Coal Branch Public Land Use Zone
- **Moose Mountain Trail Network**
Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone
- **Bragg Creek Trail Network**
Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone



Alberta Equestrian Federation (AEF)

Equestrian trails on public land

The Alberta Equestrian Federation (AEF) is a non-governmental provincial organization with a rich history of work dedicated to Alberta equines and the equestrian community. Since 1978, they have been promoting and supporting the equine industry, including equestrian sport and recreational activities.

A majority of AEF's nearly 18,000 members participate in recreational activities with their horses. This includes everything from quality time spent grooming their animals, to pleasure wagon and carriage driving, to trail riding on multi-use trails, and extended backcountry horse packing trips.

A significant portion of their efforts go into advocating for equestrian recreational opportunities. The federation helps preserve and enhance access for equestrian-use activities and promote safe use and education for horse riders and other recreational users about equestrian-friendly trails. This aligns with their values of caring and stewardship.

On Alberta's Public Lands, equestrians share staging areas and trails with many other users, including hikers, mountain bike riders, ATV users, and many more. For everyone's safety

and enjoyment, it's a good idea for all users to understand some basic knowledge about horses and how to encounter and pass each other safely and appropriately on the trails.

You may be surprised to know that even horses with extensive trail riding experience see hikers with large packs, bikers with helmets and shiny sunglasses, and swiftly moving, silent trail users as a threat. Despite thousands of years of domestication, horses retain all the instincts and reactions of prey animals, and thus, are naturally programmed to be alert for danger from predators.

Equestrians work diligently with their mounts to gain trust and safely guide them in conditions that an equine might perceive as dangerous. However, each horse reacts differently to situations and, in some encounters, can be unpredictable. Reactions can vary from 'spooking' (moving extremely quickly across or on the trail), to spinning, or sometimes even bucking to get to safety. Such a reaction could result not only in injury or even death to riders, but also to other nearby users. Knowing simple approaches to encountering and passing horse riders helps to keep everyone safe.



The North American standard for trail etiquette is to yield the right-of-way to horse riders. Along the trail you will notice a yield sign showing both hikers and bikers yielding to horse riders. This sign was created to remind trail users that they should always be watching the trail ahead, and when horses are spotted, stop and pull off the trail while remaining visible. Don't hide! When applicable, and if safe to do so, move to the downhill side of the trail since predators normally approach from above. Smile and speak to the rider – this assures the horse that you are, indeed, a human, and is key to a safe encounter for all parties.

If you come up on a horse rider(s) from behind, be sure to call out from a good distance. Don't wait until you are immediately behind the horses. Ask the riders how best to pass safely and be patient while they move into safe locations. Don't assume that it is OK to ride or run by the party, but again, ask what is appropriate. Never ride or run up fast and unannounced behind horses!

Everyone deserves to stay safe, enjoy their time on Alberta's Public Lands, and share the trails together. A little knowledge about horses on the trails helps everyone achieve this. Visit AEF's website for more resources or to join those who ride Alberta's trails, at Albertaequestrian.com

Happy Trails!



Be bear smart when riding:

- Make noise – a loud shout (“Hey-o” or “Hey Bear” every few minutes is more effective than bear bells)
- Travel in groups, don’t let anyone fall behind or run ahead
- Carry bear spray within reach and know how to use it



Looking for equestrian trails to explore? Check out:

- **Panther Valley Trail**
Bighorn Backcountry
- **Threepoint Creek Trail and connector trails**
Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone
- **Willmore Wilderness Park Trail Network**

Bighorn Dam

Public land in the Bighorn Backcountry • West of Rocky Mountain House



The Bighorn Dam is a popular recreation spot west of Nordegg. Many people use the area to camp, or as a base for paddlers, or to enjoy nearby hiking, cycling and OHV trails. Camping at the Bighorn Dam is breathtaking. During your stay, you will experience a 360-degree mountain view overlooking Abraham Lake. On your next visit to the area, be sure to follow signs of where random camping is permitted.

Camping at the Bighorn Dam is a wonderful way to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, however, don't expect to have the place to yourself. The area is well-loved by Albertans and visitors.

Because of its popularity in recent years, Alberta's government has completed erosion remediation work, and installed outhouses and bear-proof storage lockers at the camping area to reduce the impact of high volumes of use on the sensitive environment. Bear-resistant food storage lockers are for campers to store food, cooking equipment, toiletries, and anything else with a scent during their stay in the area. Lockers are more common in backcountry campsites; however, they are helpful for tent campers to store their cooking equipment, garbage and food in during frontcountry camping stays as well. Remember to empty the locker at the end of your trip and pack out everything you packed in, including garbage.

Campers 18 and older require a Public Lands Camping Pass to camp at the designated camping areas at the Bighorn Dam. Learn more on page 47.

Camping at Bighorn Dam isn't your typical rustic, random camping experience. Random camping on public land offers little to no amenities. Campers should go prepared to be self-sufficient for the duration of their stay. Plan ahead for your water, garbage and bathroom needs during your stay.

Looking for more random camping opportunities on public land? Check out:

- **Camping nodes**
Ghost Public Land Use Zone
- **Caesar Flats**
Livingstone Public Land Use Zone
- **Random Camping**
Along the Forestry Trunk Road (Hwy 734)



Bighorn Backcountry

Be bear smart when camping:

- Choose your campsite wisely. Set up camp away from the places bears use as travel corridors or food sources, like rivers, lakeshores, shrubs or berry patches.
- Pick campsites that have good lines of sight. This will allow you and the bear to see each other before a close encounter happens.
- Arrange tents, trailers and vehicles so there is enough room between them for a visiting bear to make a quick and easy escape.
- Carry bear spray within reach at all times when in camp.
- Don't bring food, toiletries or the clothes you wore when cooking or fishing into your tent. Store them in a vehicle, bear-resistant container or bear-proof locker that is at least 100 meters away from where you are sleeping.
- Cooking and cleaning should be done at least 100 metres away from your tent. Don't leave dirty dishes around for long and after cleaning them dispose of the dishwater outside the 100 metre radius of your camp.
- Store garbage in bear-resistant containers and pack it out.
- Never abandon, bury or partially burn food scraps. Bears will be able to smell the lingering food odours. Burn scraps completely to ashes.
- Be cautious when moving around the camp at night. Carry your flashlight and bear spray and make enough noise to alert visiting wildlife of your presence.

Campfire safety

Be safe and responsible when enjoying a campfire on public land.

- Use designated or existing stoves, fire rings or fire pits. These are designed to keep fires from spreading and are the best choice for a safe campfire.
- If there is no designated or existing fire ring, choose a site that is clear of dry grass, bushes, leaves, branches, tree trunks, peat moss and overhanging branches.
- Have tools nearby, including a shovel, axe and enough water to fully extinguish your fire.
- Make a circle about one metre around and dig or scrape down to the mineral soil. Clear away any flammable materials within one metre of the pit
- Let the fire burn down before you plan on putting it out. Spread the embers within the fire pit, then add water or loose dirt, and stir.



- Expose any material still burning. Add more water and stir again until you can no longer see smoke or steam. Do not bury your fire as the embers may continue to smoulder and can re-emerge as a wildfire. Repeat until your campfire is cool to the touch.
- If your fire is out, you should not be able to feel any heat from the ashes.

Learn more at [Alberta.ca/campfire-safety](https://alberta.ca/campfire-safety)

A large, bright campfire burning at night. The fire is made of sticks and branches, and is surrounded by large rocks. In the background, several people are visible, some sitting and some standing, enjoying the fire. The scene is set in a dark, wooded area.

**Soak it. Stir it.
Soak it again.**

**Do your part to prevent wildfires.
Remember to fully extinguish your
campfire and never leave it unattended.
Soak it, stir it, and then soak it again.**

Alberta



Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association

Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association is a volunteer, non-profit society with a mission to promote responsible use of Alberta's Southern Rockies and to ensure the conservation of our wilderness areas for the continued use of future generations. They are focused on sustainability and place high priority on safety and rider education. They have a proactive program of multi-use trail maintenance including maintaining present bridges and the installation of new bridges on existing trails that previously had no proper crossings.

The CNP Quad Squad is very concerned about the conservation and preservation of the beautiful forest area. The association was incorporated in 1998 and is focused on protecting waterways, riparian areas, and fish habitat by building OHV bridges, maintaining the present trail system of about 600 kms for all users, and ensuring the safe and responsible use of off highway vehicles. They have a membership of 250 families who volunteer on work projects as well as raising funds through raffle, casino, and various community fund raising opportunities. CNP Quad Squad members worked together to put in over 3,030 volunteer hours in 2023. Over the years, along with various grants, they have raised and invested millions of dollars that have been put into trail maintenance and building OHV bridges.

In 2021 the Quad Squad was able to purchase a mini track-hoe and tractor, enabling them to properly maintain the trails, build swales to allow water run-off into the forest floor, and repair erosion on damaged trails. This process keeps silt from entering the water courses and protects fish habitat.

2023 was a busy year for the CNP Quad Squad. Six projects were completed including maintenance, building of swales, erosion compaction and trimming vegetation on the Dutch Creek Trails, Hastings Trail, York Creek Plane Crash Trail, Big Dip repair and widening, and Spoon Valley brush clearing.

They work very closely with the Provincial Government Agencies such as Forestry and Parks Divisions on all projects. CNP Quad Squad partnered with Trout Unlimited this year to build two new trails to bypass old routes where Trout Creek had overtaken and was running down the trail. This was completed in Porcupine Hills. CNP Quad Squad's total in kind services to the Government of Alberta for 2023 was over \$28,000.00 including over 622 volunteer hours on these projects alone.

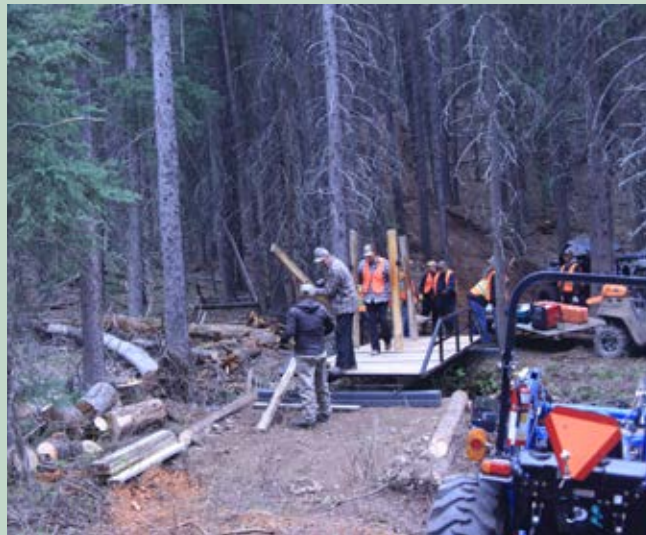


The CNP Quad Squad also takes time to enjoy and show off their network of trails. Approximately eight events take place during the riding season including the Season Opener/ Poker Run, Day Rides and Season Windup/Poker Run. These are family friendly events open to both new and long-time members. The events increase knowledge, usage, and safety on the designated trail systems of the area, and best of all are a great time for all who participate!!

If you enjoy being out and about in Alberta's South Rockies, you may also be interested in taking part in building and maintaining bridges and trails to preserve the beautiful forestry and mountain areas. Visit their website to join, learn more and help us out! quadsquad.ca

Be bear smart when riding your OHV:

- Carry bear spray within reach and know how to use it
- Travel in groups, don't let anyone fall behind or run ahead
- Be aware of your surroundings – look for signs of bears in the area like scat, tracks or digs



Ride responsibly

Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) have exhaust systems that get hotter than 200°C. At these temperatures, built-up materials (such as grass, muskeg, moss, or other debris) can heat up, smolder and ignite. Keep your OHV clean and free of debris to reduce the risk of starting a fire.

Before you ride, clean out hot spots and remove debris from your machine.

Carry firefighting equipment such as a small shovel, collapsible pail or fire extinguisher.

Make sure your muffler and spark arrestor are working properly.

Stop frequently. Take the time to knock debris from your machine's hot spots. If the debris is smoldering, soak it, stir it, and soak it again to make sure it is extinguished.



Responsible recreation and safety

Know before you go

Make time ahead of any outdoor adventure to plan and prepare. Anyone recreating on public land or using designated and provincial trails is responsible for protecting themselves, other users, the trails, and the land. Following a few simple steps can help ensure you have fun and stay safe so you can enjoy the great outdoors:

- Choose a trail that matches the skill and abilities of your group. Know the terrain and plan for natural hazards and potential emergencies.
- Know the rules of the trail or area you are visiting, and for your planned activities.
- Before heading out, check:
 - the forecast and be prepared for all weather conditions: weather.gc.ca
 - for any closures and advisories in effect on public land: Alberta.ca/public-land-closures
 - for fire bans or advisories for the area you plan to visit: AlbertaFireBans.ca
- Assign someone to be your emergency contact. Let them know where you are going and when you will return. Let your emergency contact know to contact the RCMP if you miss your return check-in.



Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone
photo: Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association



BE OUTDOOR READY



Search and Rescue Alberta (SARAB) is a non-profit organization with over 1,500 highly skilled, professionals participating in 33 teams across six regions. All team members are volunteers who work in both operational and non-operational capacities.

Since 1991, SARAB volunteers have provided highly specialized assistance to lost or injured persons as well as province-wide emergency support in the event of a major disaster.

In addition to basic search and rescue, SARAB provides:

Medical Response

Rope Rescue

Ice Rescue

Swift Water Rescue

Equine Resources

Canine Search

Disaster Response

Preventative Education

Take the necessary steps

It's critical to ensure you remain safe while spending time in the outdoors. Ensure your planning includes the **3T's**:

- + **Training**
- + **Trip Planning**
- + **Taking the Essentials**

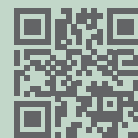


SARAB recommends always having a navigation and communication device.

Note: Please ensure you maintain a subscription for your satellite communication device.

368

Number of incidents SARAB team members responded to last year



Visit [Adventuresmart.ca](https://www.adventuresmart.ca) for more information.

[saralberta.ca](https://www.saralberta.ca)

Trail rules

Trail users are responsible for knowing where they are, the regulations for the trail or area, and the regulations that apply to their activity.

On designated trails:

- Follow all signs and notices, publications (like this one), and any direction from an officer.
- Follow the posted rules for types of activity permitted on the trail and other restrictions that may apply to a trail or area.
- Pack out what you pack in! Take all garbage and waste with you to dispose of at home or at a waste transfer station.
- Keep pets under control. Some trails and areas may prohibit pets or have leash requirements.
- Motorized users, except snow vehicle users, must stay on the trail tread.
- Do not leave any vehicles, including bicycles, off-highway vehicles, snow vehicles, other motor vehicles or camping units unattended on the tread of a provincial trail.
- Do not discharge a firearm (recreational target shooting) within 400 metres of a provincial trail tread, unless hunting as defined under the *Wildlife Act*.

Additional rules may apply to trails in Public Land Use Zones. Learn more at [Alberta.ca/PLUZ](https://alberta.ca/PLUZ)

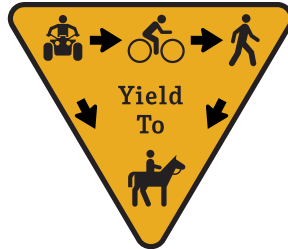


Livingstone Public Land Use Zone
photo: Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association



Trail etiquette

- Stay on the designated trail, avoid using or creating side trails that can lead to trail braiding.
- Respect the land by leaving it in a better condition than you found it.
- Avoid travel through wet or sensitive areas whenever possible.
- Leave all gates and fences as you found them, open or closed.
- Respect other users and share the trail:
 - Motorized users should yield to non-motorized users like hikers and cyclists, and all users should yield to equestrian users.
 - Slow down when passing other users. If you are traveling in a group, hold up the number of fingers to indicate how many are in your group.
 - Be mindful of other trail users. Stop and move to the side of the trail to let faster moving users pass, if safe to do so.
 - Yield the right of way to people travelling uphill.
 - Say hello to other trail users.
 - If you're not sure how to pass a group of horses or equestrian users, ask.



Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone

Keep the Trail Safe

When approaching oncoming traffic, know and use hand signals.



1 Finger = 1 to follow



2 Fingers = 2 to follow



3 Fingers = 3 to follow



4 Fingers = 4 to follow



5 Fingers = 5 and up to follow



Closed fist = Last in group

When passing another group it is best to warn others on how many are left behind you.

Alberta

Stay safe

You are responsible for your own safety on Crown land. Outdoor safety starts with prevention. Follow these tips below to go prepared:

- Carry extra food and water, warm clothing, a waterproof layer, and a first aid kit.
- The area you are visiting may not have cell coverage. Bring a satellite communications device (if you have one) and a current map.
- Be bear smart. Carry bear spray year-round, keep it within reach and know how to use it. Learn more at alberta.ca/alberta-bearsmart
- Respect wildlife and never approach or feed them.
- Save information and reporting line contacts in your mobile device so they are available if you need them. Find public land recreation contacts on page 47.

Hinton Search & Rescue

Planning to head outside and explore Yellowhead County's backyard? Do you know what to do if you get lost or injured? Hinton Search and Rescue is here to help when you need us most! We are a team of volunteers with over 25 years of experience providing dedicated assistance when you didn't know you would need it.



“SO OTHERS MAY LIVE”

Hinton Search & Rescue is a team of over 40 volunteers that has grown and adapted to meet the needs of Albertans. We have three divisions that can locate a person that may be lost, missing or in distress, regardless of the terrain that they are in. Hinton Search & Rescues “Ground”, “Mounted” and “Drone” teams are ready to deploy at a moments notice. Our responders are highly trained and fully equipped to handle any kind of situation that we encounter. Through partnerships with Alberta Parks, Alberta Conservation Officers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, you can be assured there is no delay when you need us most!



STATS

In 2023, Hinton Search and Rescue volunteers dedicated:

- 193 hours for incidents for
- 15 call outs that averaged
- 13 hours of incident duration

Volunteers participated in

- 79 training exercises totaling
- 539 hours for training and mock exercises

OVERALL TOTAL

- 5,049 team total volunteer hours

TIPS & TRICKS

- Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back
- Avoid exploring alone - it's more fun with a friend!
- Always have some form of communication device with SOS capability
- Always be prepared to spend 24 hours outside - pack responsibly!



HSAR is proud to be among the first SAR teams in Alberta to utilize drone technology during live searches

Yellowhead County's backyard includes the Athabasca Ranch, Brule Lake and Coal Branch Public Land Use Zones and public land near Hinton. Explore public land trails in the area on the map on pages 18-19.

Be BearSmart

Humans share public land with some of Alberta's incredible wild species, including grizzly bears and black bears. While we are out exploring the trails and enjoying the great outdoors, bears are also on the move. Bears are focused on eating and protecting their young and they may not always be diligent in avoiding people. The responsibility to prevent human-bear encounters is human's responsibility in bear country. It's important to be bear smart on all of your outdoor adventures.

The risk of encountering a bear increases:

- At dusk, night or dawn.
- Where sightlines are short because of heavy cover, bends in trails, or when approaching hills.
- When passing through berry patches, or crossing avalanche paths where bears might be feeding.

- Carry bear deterrents like bear spray year-round. Keep them within reach and know how to use them.
- Take friends or family on your outdoor adventures—it's safer to travel in groups.
- Make reasonable noise. Wind, rain or flowing water can mask the sounds of humans approaching.
- Keep your food and garbage away from bears. Pack out what you pack in.
- Be aware of your surroundings and watch for signs of wildlife, including scat, tracks, bear digs and scratches. If the signs you see look fresh, leave the area, and watch for the bear until you've reached a place of safety.

Practicing BearSmart habits will help you to exist with bears and other wildlife on public land. Learn more at bearsmart.alberta.ca



Recreation activities

Alberta's public land trails provide opportunities for a wide variety of recreation activities. Find detailed information about what activities are permitted on public land, activity-specific rules and best practices online at [Alberta.ca/PublicLandRecreation](https://alberta.ca/PublicLandRecreation)



Boating, canoeing and kayaking



Camping



Campfires



Climbing and caving



Cycling, electric bikes (E-bikes) and mountain biking



Drones



Angling



Firearms and hunting



Hiking



Horses and equestrian use



Motorized use



Recreate responsibly

Alberta's public lands offer opportunities for recreation in some of the most awe-inspiring ecosystems in the province. If you're a nature lover or an outdoor enthusiast who enjoys recreating on public land, you have a responsibility to take care of it.

By being mindful of our impact on the environment and taking collective action, we can minimize negative impacts on public land landscapes and natural resources. Follow these responsible recreation practices to help ensure public land is resilient and that we can continue to enjoy them on all of our outdoor pursuits for years to come:

- Choose routes with hard, durable surfaces. Avoid travelling on wet or muddy trails, or in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Use designated trails and water crossings.
- Respect reclamation and reforestation areas. Stay on the trail to avoid unintentionally having an impact on sensitive species of plants and wildlife.
- Avoid creating new trails or trail braiding to avoid things like mud or puddles along trails.
- Keep wheels out of the water and off of the bed and shore of waterbodies and wetlands to reduce erosion and sedimentation of fish bearing streams.
- Keep your equipment and vehicles clean and free of debris to prevent the spread of invasive weeds and species into Alberta's ecosystems.
- Respect wildlife. Never feed or approach them.
- Leave all flowers, fossils and artifacts where you found them for others to enjoy.
- When travelling on agricultural public land, follow all access conditions provided by the leaseholder. Respect livestock and property.
- Pack out everything you pack in.



Willmore Wilderness Park

Public Lands Camping Pass

The majority of Alberta's public land can be enjoyed by users at little to no cost. Campers, backpackers, horse packers and other users 18 years and older who are planning to spend the night on public land along the Eastern Slopes between Waterton National Park and Grande Cache require a public lands camping pass. Children and youth under the age of 18 do not require a pass. Passes cost \$20 per person for a 3-day pass, or \$30 per person for an annual pass. Purchase your pass online before heading out to public land, where cell service may be limited. Campers must provide proof of payment to enforcement officers.

Learn more at: [Alberta.ca/CampingPass](https://alberta.ca/CampingPass)



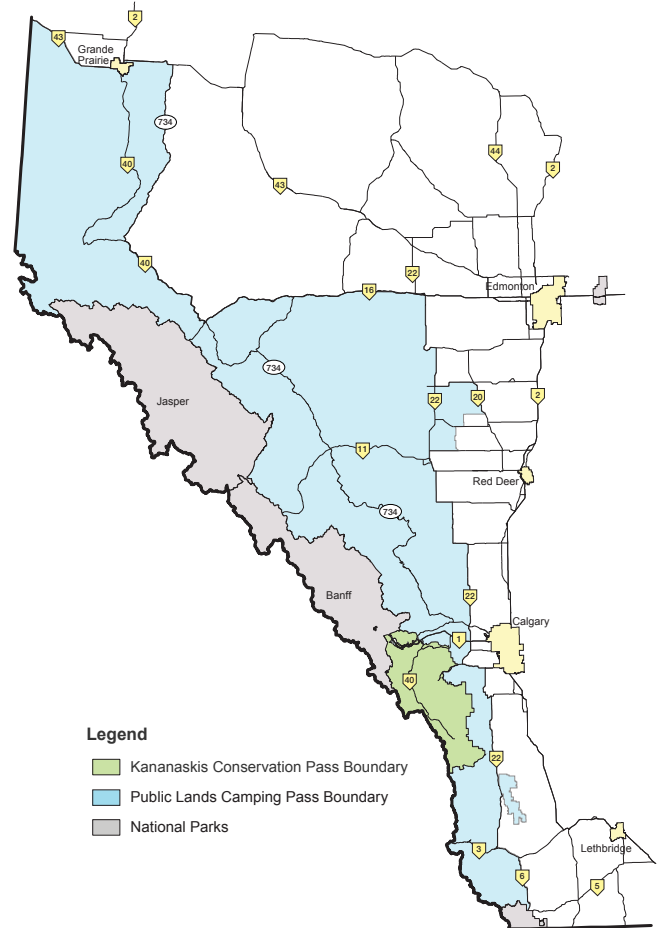
Bighorn Backcountry



Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone

Since it was introduced in 2021, the Public Lands Camping Pass has generated \$3.6 million in sales. By purchasing a pass, you are directly supporting recreation on public land. Revenues from the pass have been reinvested in the area for:

- Hiring seasonal field operations staff
- Upgrades to public land trails and recreation infrastructure:
 - Assessment of existing trails and infrastructure
 - Maintenance and repairs to trails, bridges, fences, information kiosks, outhouses, garbage receptacles
 - Construction of new trail and recreation infrastructure including bridges, gates, benches and hitching rails
 - Contracted services for maintenance and grading of McKinnon Flats Road
- Improving experiences for public land users:
 - Replacement of wayfinding, regulatory and educational signs on public land trails
 - Contracted services for maintenance of outhouses and garbage receptacles
- Improving access to information and education of public land users
 - Hiring seasonal recreation engagement officers
 - Printing and distribution of PLUZ maps
- Enhancing enforcement efforts & promoting public safety through regular uniformed patrols
- Support recreation partners on public land through the Alberta public land trails grant program. Learn more on page 63



A special note for random campers this year:

There have been some changes to the Public Lands Camping Pass Area. Random campers visiting public land to the North of highway 16 and East of highway 40 no longer require a pass. Use the interactive Recreation Map to find out if you require a pass for the area you are visiting: Alberta.ca/RecreationMap

More information & contact numbers

Information and reporting lines are available to help all recreationists get the information they need to have safe and fun outdoor experiences.

For all Emergencies: 9-1-1

Fire Ban Information: 1-866-394-3473

Report Wildfires: 310-FIRE (3473)

For information & to report public safety incidents, illegal activities or enforcement concerns 24/7 on Crown land: 310-LAND (5263), or from outside of Alberta: 1-833-310-5869 (Toll Free).

Report A Poacher: 1-800-642-3800

Report spills, releases or environmental emergencies to the Energy and Environmental Response Line: 1-800-222-6514

Stay up to date with recreation on public land:
[Facebook.com/RespecttheLand](https://www.facebook.com/RespecttheLand)



Livingstone Public Land Use Zone

Caring for our trails

Alberta's public land is managed to support a variety of uses.

Alberta's public land trail system offers many opportunities for all types of recreationists to explore public land. The Ministry of Forestry and Parks is responsible for managing designated public land trails to ensure trail user safety and enhancing recreation experiences, while considering other public land uses.

The *Public Lands Act*, Public Land Administration Regulation and *Trails Act* are the three main pieces of legislation that guide recreational use on public land. Familiarize yourself with the legislation by visiting: [Alberta.ca/PublicLandAccess](https://alberta.ca/PublicLandAccess)

The *Trails Act* at work

Legislation guides planning, management and responsible use of the land. It outlines the rules and regulations to ensure acceptable use of provincial lands for industry, economic development, conservation and biodiversity management, cultural activity, and recreational uses. These often exist within the same area.

The *Trails Act* and amendments to the *Public Lands Act* came into effect in February 2022 to establish a trail management system for motorized and non-motorized recreational trails on Alberta's public land. For details visit [Alberta.ca/Trails Act](https://alberta.ca/Trails Act)

The trails described in this guide are designated and managed to better protect recreation opportunities, trails and recreation infrastructure. Designated trails offer high quality, well managed and safe trail experiences for all Albertans and visitors to the province.

Public land trails are designated under the *Trails Act*, established under the *Public Lands Act*, and can also be designated in a Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ). Trail designation enables the province to:

- establish and manage trails
- protect recreation infrastructure
- ensure public safety
- enhance trail experiences
- improve sustainable use of trails
- conduct enforcement for inappropriate use

Learn more at:

[Alberta.ca/managing-designated-public-land-trails](https://alberta.ca/managing-designated-public-land-trails)



Livingstone Public Land Use Zone

Enforcement on public land trails

Specialized staff are responsible for enforcing provincial acts and legislation on Crown land, including provincial trail rules. Collaborative enforcement efforts help ensure public safety, environmental protection, and sustainable use of Crown land. Enforcement officers include:

- Conservation Officers
- Environmental Protection Officers
- Fish and Wildlife Officers
- Municipal Peace Officers
- RCMP
- Sheriffs
- Wildfire Peace Officers

Failure to follow the regulations, legislation and signage on public land may result in an on-the-spot fine ranging from \$60 to \$600, direction to leave the area for a specified period, or criminal prosecution. Other offences on Crown land may result in seizure of property, and/or a mandatory court appearance where a fine can be up to \$100,000. Learn more about enforcement efforts on Crown land online by visiting: [Alberta.ca/PublicLandAccess](https://alberta.ca/PublicLandAccess)





Clearwater Trails Initiative Society



Clearwater Trails Initiative (CTI) has been active since 2013 and became a society in 2017. The society considers themselves as a Synergy Group (member of Synergy Alberta) and they try to bring together interested active stakeholders in the green areas of Clearwater County. Their work falls in what is called the “Vacant Crown Lands” or that area falling between the settled agricultural lands in the east and the Crown’s public land use zones in the west. This is a large, active area that includes industry (oil and gas, forestry, mining), agriculture (grazing), trapping and of course, recreation of all types. With all these interests overlapping on the landscape it is imperative that planning and management of recreational trails includes multiple stakeholders to minimize impacts, avoid negative stakeholder interaction and economize trail construction.

While CTI does construct/refurbish trails for public use this has also been a way for the society (and many other Alberta groups) to connect with governments, work through the approval processes and seek to reduce red tape and more clearly define government, industry and volunteer trail manager roles and responsibilities. This has led to new funding sources and innovative, effective solutions for economical, resilient trails. These trails need to be safe and provide a positive trail experience for recreationists. The evolution of the *Trails Act* and funding opportunities for public land are examples of progress in recreational trail management. This is an ongoing pursuit and CTI is also part of the Nordegg Planning Area Sub-Committee organized through the Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee.

Since 2017 CTI has been working in the Meadows area southwest of Rocky Mountain House. Industry here is mostly timber related (West Fraser) with some oil and gas now proceeding. Timber harvest is largely complete for the foreseeable future over a significant portion of the area. Working with West Fraser they were able to identify logging roads that were scheduled to be reclaimed, or not needed for many years. The society has been able to designate some of these as OHV trail within a 55 km loop from the North Fork Road to the North Saskatchewan River and back. Parts of the trail also include a pipeline (Tidewater) and powerline (Altalink) right of ways. The ground is typically quite hard and not prone to erosion so minimal work was required on existing right of ways to maintain an excellent trail standard. New trail was constructed across clearcuts and through some mature forest to connect existing trails. Eight bridges were also installed. CTI considers this a “family” trail, built to a high standard, and suitable for inexperienced riders.

Funding has been sourced through the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) as designated by West Fraser. We are indebted to West Fraser for in kind contributions during the planning, approval and construction phases as well as to Clearwater County and Alberta Environment and Protected Areas for their ongoing support.



Trail management system

1. Trail management planning

Trail management plans can be developed to identify permitted activities on trails or within trail networks, and to identify locations for new trails. These plans consider public safety, user experiences and other public land uses. As part of the process, Indigenous communities and organizations, recreation partners and affected stakeholders have opportunities to share their experiences and concerns, as well as provide input and advice into the trail management plan.

3. Trail manager

The Alberta government can manage a designated trail or appoint a recreation partner as a trail manager, who is authorized under a Trail Agreement to maintain trails and trail infrastructure.

Learn more about trail managers on page 52.

5. Recreation funding

The province has allocated funding to support maintenance and development of safe and sustainable trails. Funding is provided to many recreation organizations to develop and maintain trails for hiking, biking and other activities. Additionally, trail managers can apply for funding for recreation management projects on public land trails through Alberta's Public Lands Trail Grant Program.

Learn more about funding for trails on pages 13 and 14.

2. Trail designation

Public land trails can be:

- designated under the *Trails Act*
- established under the *Public Lands Act* as a provincial trail
- designated in a public land use zone

Trail designation under provincial legislation enables the province to establish and manage trails while considering other land uses (e.g., forestry, energy, agriculture) to protect recreation infrastructure and minimize adverse affects.

There are over 7,000 kilometres of designated trails on Alberta's public land. Designated trails have rules in place for trail users to ensure public safety, improve trail experiences and enable sustainable use and management of recreational trails. Public land trails may be multi-use or designated for a single type of recreational use. Learn more about the rules for designated trail use on page 41.

5. Trail agreement

A trail agreement formalizes the roles and responsibilities of the province and a trail manager for the sustainable management of provincial trails. Trail managers will be able to carry out specific types of work on provincial trails without the need for additional approvals from the province. This enables routine and timely trail maintenance.

Trail managers

Albertans look forward to outdoor activities and public land recreation opportunities year-round. By partnering with community organizations that help maintain Alberta's world-class trail system, Alberta's government is ensuring future generations can enjoy the province's trails through a strong focus on recreation, responsible use and protecting the environment.

A trail manager is a recreation partner who is authorized to maintain trails and trail infrastructure. They carry out specific types of work on provincial trails without the need for additional approvals from the province, such as marking trail treads, cleaning and removing debris, doing minor repairs to enable safe use and passage, grooming, and repairing signs.

Trail managers play an essential role to:

- help enhance trail experiences for users
- improve recreation opportunities
- improve safety and access for users
- protect Alberta's natural and cultural heritage

Current trail managers for designated public land trails include:

- The Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association, the Alberta Snowmobile Association, and their affiliated clubs, have been appointed as trail managers to maintain designated motorized and multi-use public land trails and infrastructure province-wide. Learn more about the work of two motorized clubs, Calgary ATV Riders Association, and the Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association on page 56, and on pages 36-37.
- The Great Divide Trail Association is appointed as a trail manager for the designated public land trail sections of the Great Divide Hiking Trail. Learn more about the work they do on pages 27-28.
- Hinton Mountain Bike Association is appointed as a trail manager for the Bighorn Trail as well as other designated public land trails within Hinton's mountain bike trail network. Learn more about the work they do on page 64.
- The United Riders of Crownest is appointed as a trail manager for the designated public land trail sections of their mountain bike trail network in the Crowsnest Pass. Learn more about the work they do on pages 29-30.



Livingstone Public Land Use Zone, Photo by Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association



Calgary ATV Riders Association

The Calgary ATV Riders Association (CARA) is a family-based non-profit organization that hosts club led rides throughout the calendar year. Association membership works year-round practicing sustainable stewardship on trail cleanups, development and maintenance projects as a group or individual functions. The association's mission is to promote responsible use of Alberta's Southern Rockies and to ensure the conservation of wilderness areas for continued use for future generations. Membership remains focused on sustainability and place high priority on safety and rider education and currently have an agreement with Forestry and Parks with a proactive program of multi-use trail maintenance development.

In 2023 CARA saw 53 volunteers with a total of 385 hours spent on the ground either in trail stewardship or ground clean up. Their largest project was improving an existing trail between Lost Knife and Lesueur trail in the Ghost Public Land Use Zone. This trail is vitally important in its connectivity in the South Ghost section of the PLUZ. The trail has faced some challenges. Working with Environment and Parks, they were able to come to a final resolution to build and place mats in certain sections of the trail to allow proper water flow and the vegetation to reestablish. In total they installed over 1,100 feet of treated mats and the result is a connector that we all can be proud of for years to come. AOHVA and Spray Lake Sawmills partnered with CARA to provide grant funding for the project.

CARA hosts a Stewardship weekend, outside of major projects for maintenance within our area of responsibility and assign volunteers to help care for the backcountry with our yearly clean-up. They have valued volunteers that work from Transalta road up to and including Waiparous Valley road collecting trash. The association notes that Albertans are responding to the concept of packing out what you pack in. Each year the back country is cleaner than the season before.

CARA also believes in partnering with non-motorized groups and have hosted and or participated in joint projects with Trout Unlimited Canada and the Ghost Watershed Society. Together they have been helping to steward the backcountry and have linked common goals. The organization also believes strongly in showcasing and working with the community. CARA's staple event is the Children's Starlight Foundation Ride4Smiles. For the past three years they have partnered with this great organization and their families to offer an adrenalin packed September weekend of OHV rides along with games and camping.



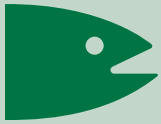
Visit their website to learn more, and to find upcoming CARA events: calgaryatvriders.com

Managed trails and the environment

Sustainable recreation on Alberta's public land trails not only enhances recreation access and opportunities across the province, it also encourages the protection of natural spaces and biodiversity.

Improvements to trails and recreation infrastructure support species recovery plans with habitat ranges that overlap popular recreation trails and areas. New bridges and bioengineering projects encourage recreational users to keep their boots and wheels out of the water and away from shorelines to support clean and clear watercourses to protect and restore native trout habitats.





The Alberta Native Trout Collaborative

When it comes to the health of Alberta's headwaters, native trout are the canaries in the coal mine. Adapted to the cold, clean, complex, and connected waterways of the Eastern Slopes, they can only thrive when these waterways are well cared for. Unfortunately, westslope cutthroat trout, Athabasca rainbow trout, and bull trout (Alberta's provincial fish) are all threatened species.

To support the recovery of our native trout species, the [Alberta Native Trout Collaborative](#) was created in 2019 through the collaboration of the Alberta government and some of Alberta's most ambitious conservation organizations. Together, Trout Unlimited Canada, Riparian Management Society, Alberta Conservation Association, CPAWS Southern Alberta, fRI Research, and Alberta Environment and Protected Areas have joined forces to rehabilitate native trout habitats across the province. An important part of habitat restoration also includes understanding the needs of Albertans who recreate in the Eastern Slopes. By working together and recreating responsibly, we can support healthy waters for fish and people. The recent work done by collaborative members Trout Unlimited Canada and Alberta Environment and Protected Areas at MacKenzie Creek is a great example of how smart trail planning can be a win-win for recreators and for fish.



Bull trout, Alberta's provincial fish, is an at-risk native species.



MacKenzie Creek

MacKenzie Creek is located southeast of Hinton and is an important spawning habitat for bull trout and Athabasca rainbow trout living throughout the entire McLeod River watershed. The creek has been closed to angling since 2000, but the area remains a popular spot for off-highway vehicle (OHV) users.

Unfortunately, the existing OHV trails are rife with stream crossings and are situated dangerously close to the creek. This has led to severe degradation of the streambanks and to high levels of sedimentation in the streams. Murky waters pose a significant threat to native trout, impeding their ability to see and breathe, and burying vulnerable fish eggs. Even when there aren't any people or vehicles on these trails, the bare, compacted soils erode and act as water raceways that deposit excess sediment into the stream every time rain falls or snow melts.

Since 2019, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas has been working to replace these poorly located OHV trails with a new, engineered loop trail that is longer, safer, and more resilient.

At the same time, Trout Unlimited Canada has been reclaiming the old, unsuitable trails using the 'rough and loose' technique and bioengineering. This project is still ongoing, with all partners working hard to complete the new trail and reclaim the old ones for a win-win solution for Albertans and native trout.

Trout Unlimited Canada is working hard to reclaim the decommissioned trails and the degraded riparian areas using techniques like 'rough and loose' and bioengineering.



Before (top) and after (bottom) restoration of one of the decommissioned OHV trails at MacKenzie Creek.



Rough and loose technique



New bridge construction at MacKenzie creek helps keep "wheels out of water" on the new trail.

Technique Spotlight: Rough and Loose

A decommissioned trail at Tay River, before restoration.

The same trail, renaturalized, several years after the 'rough and loose' technique was applied.

The restoration technique "rough and loose" involves digging a checkerboard pattern of pits and piles that breaks up the flow of water on previously compacted slopes, leaving soils loose so that native plants can easily recolonize the area. Rather than water rushing along the slope's surface and delivering sediment into the stream, it collects in these pits, soaking into the loose soils and recharging groundwater. This technique is often complemented with the addition of woody debris to kickstart regeneration.



A decommissioned trail at Tay River, before restoration.



The same trail, renaturalized, several years after the 'rough and loose' technique was applied.



WELCOME TO OUR BACKYARD!

Please enjoy it with respect.

Sasquatch and Partners is an environmental stewardship initiative encouraging responsible recreation on public land.



The initiative is spread across five partnering municipalities along the Eastern Slopes which include: Clearwater County, Mountain View County, Greenview County, Brazeau County and Yellowhead County.



Sasquatch's message of respect and ecological stewardship in the west country focuses on building a sense of community pride and ownership by residents and visitors that will be effective and sustainable in the long term.

The awareness campaign encourages visitors to camp and travel in areas that are safe for the traveller and for the environment by:

- Promoting responsible use of the natural areas of the west country including preserving aquatic habitat and the integrity of sensitive areas
- Mitigating risks related to random camping near well sites, use of pipeline right-of-way
- Keeping recreational activities compatible with industry and environmental stewardship
- Finding positive solutions to challenges that arise when industry and recreation intersect in the west country

LEAVE NO TRACE

Sasquatch approved recreation:

- Pack out all garbage and recycling.
- Control your campfire and make sure it is out when you leave.
- Keep campsites a minimum of 50 metres from oil and gas facilities.
- Stay on existing trails and share trails with others.
- Respect wildlife and the upland and lowland areas where they live.
- Respect livestock such as cattle and horses.

More information on the Sasquatch & Partners Initiative can be found on Clearwater County's website.

Did you know?
 There are **19**
 Welcome to Our
 Backyard/Sasquatch
 signs in Clearwater
 County!

WHERE CAN SASQUATCH BE FOUND?

Visitors to the west country will see Sasquatch signs around the area along major highways, in Public Land Use Zones, in day-use areas, campgrounds, and at visitor information centers.

Not only does Sasquatch’s message of environmental stewardship appear on signage across the County, but he also makes a few guest appearances at conferences and sports shows across the province.



Random camping and trail use in the west country is a unique opportunity. Visitors enjoy un-paralleled scenery and diverse recreation experiences. The benefits brought to the local economy are greatly appreciated. Our recreational choices are important, as natural landscapes are easily damaged, especially in wet conditions.

The “Welcome to Our Backyard” campaign encourages users to enjoy the great outdoors, respectfully and to take care of the natural spaces so that they are preserved for now and for future generations.



Investing in public land trails

Funding for trails

Millions of Albertans and visitors from around the globe explore Alberta's public land trails each year. Alberta is investing in public land to improve the designated trail system and expand access to recreation opportunities across the province.

From 2023-2025 \$14 million will be invested to enhance provincial trails and opportunities on public land, primarily along the Eastern Slopes. The projects supported by this investment will ensure safe access to recreation, improve public safety, and enhance visitor experiences.

Over the past year, funding has supported:

- Improvements to the Atlas and McGillivray Staging Areas in Livingstone Public Land Use Zone.
- Refurbishment of Prairie Mountain Trail in Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone. Learn more on page 24.
- Redevelopment of Jumpingpound Public Land Recreation Area Day Use Area in Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone.
- Planning and construction of the Rail Trail, from Nordegg to Saunders PRA. Assessment, planning and design of additional section of the trail between Saunders PRA and Rocky Mountain House. Learn more on pages 25-26.
- Tershishner Trail Upgrade in the Bighorn Backcountry.

Additional projects include:

- The assessment, planning and design work for trail refurbishment at Cardinal Headwaters in Coal Branch Public Land Use Zone, the MacKenzie Creek watershed, Mount Hamell, Muskeg Falls and Twin Falls.
- The assessment, planning and design work for trail refurbishment in Livingstone Public Land Use Zone.
- The refurbishment of trails and amenities in the Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone.
- Building and improving designated public land trails.
- Improving existing infrastructure on public land across the province.

Learn more about planned projects at:

alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=86842FD59B84F0CBA-5647-E2EABB8BF69DF0B1



Public land near Grande Cache

Alberta’s Public Land Trails Grant Program

Developing recreation opportunities and improving access to public land is a priority for the Alberta government. The province relies on partner organizations to maintain and enhance designated trails and recreation infrastructure and create new recreation opportunities for all of us to enjoy. The Alberta public land trails grant program launched in 2022, and in its first two years, allocated \$2.23 million in funding to improve designated non-motorized trails on public land. Funding supports partner-led projects that contribute to:

- enhancing existing recreation opportunities
- developing safe and sustainable recreational experiences
- operationalizing a new approach to managing recreation on Crown land
- furthering Alberta’s Crown Land Vision

Safe and sustainable trail systems will help Alberta families and visitors enjoy healthy lifestyles and benefit communities with increased tourism opportunities year-round.

Supporting community trail organizations helps build local capacity to maintain trails, improve user safety, build ecological knowledge and contribute to local tourism. Volunteer based trail organizations will contribute their expertise, time and energy to magnify the impact of this funding and provide incredible value for Albertans.

The 15 recreation organizations who received grant funding in 2022 have been conducting maintenance and repairs of existing infrastructure, monitoring and maintaining recreational trails, conducting site rehabilitation and reclamation, and promoting recreation through education and outreach.

An additional 14 organizations received grant funding in 2023. Learn more at Alberta.ca/albertas-public-land-trails-grant-program

Organization	Project detail
9-Mile Recreation Society	Ski trail safety improvements for seniors
Alberta Hiking Association – Crowsnest	Hiking trail improvements and enhancements
Alberta Wagon Trekkers Association – Cutoff Creek	Wagon trail maintenance and repair
Alberta Wagon Trekkers Association – Panther	Wagon trail maintenance and safety improvements
Argentia Beach Sports Recreation Parks and Wildlife Society	Trail maintenance and improvement
Crowsnest Nordic Ski Club	Ski trail grooming, maintenance, and signage
Hinton Mountain Bike Association	Mountain bike trail upkeep and maintenance
Nordegg Trail Society	Trail development and maintenance
Oldman Watershed Council	Education and outreach
Rainbow Equitation Society	Improve and maintain existing trails.
Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society	Equestrian trail re-opening and connections
United Riders of Crowsnest	Trail maintenance, improvement, and inventory
Willmore Wilderness Foundation	Trail clearing and maintenance
Kakwa Sherman Trails Society	Trail assessment and maintenance



Hinton Mountain Bike Association (HMBA)

In Hinton, we are lucky to have mountain biking trails starting right outside our doors. Biking trails have a legacy in and around Hinton – early trails were established along old cutlines and were built by volunteers with a pulaski, shovel and a rake and a get it done attitude. These cutlines were transformed by adding a few extra curves, climbs and descents for fun, cruising rides. Other trails have been shaped over years of breaking in a single track to destinations and viewpoints in the surrounding forests of Hinton.

An increase in popularity of mountain biking over the last two decades have lead to the expansion of Hinton's bike trail networks. More trails mean more opportunities for bikers, as well as hikers and runners! But increased use also means increased need for trail maintenance. HMBA has partnered with the Government of Alberta to become a Trail Manager for the Hinton mountain bike trail network. This partnership provides clear direction on maintaining our trail networks and the funding opportunities to help us complete more challenging projects. HMBA has already replaced and constructed small bridges and boardwalks to keep wheels out of wet areas!

The Alberta Public Land Trails Grant enabled HMBA to source the right tools, resources and people to keep our trails going for decades to come. Funding received through the program has helped HMBA:

- modernize HMBA's trail building tools to help maintain erosion sumps and diversions to manage moisture around our trails and to help direct water off of trails
- put a few dedicated members through chainsaw training to make sure they are qualified to safely operate chainsaws and clear down trees
- purchase industrial brush clearing saws, pruners and safety gear to maintain sight lines on trails
- purchase treated lumber stringers and source rough cut lumber decking and the right fasteners to build long lasting boardwalks over sensitive and saturated soil areas that meet trail building standards.
- Solicit the support and expertise of contractors for work that cannot be carried out by volunteers.

This partnership provides the support that will continue to make Hinton one of the premier mountain biking destinations in Alberta for many more years.





Alberta TrailNet Society

Alberta's Provincial Trail Council



Trail environments foster physical activity, health and active living, and support economic diversification and growth. Trail systems provide affordable, accessible, multiuse recreation and transportation infrastructure, preserve green space and wildlife corridors, and offer opportunities to appreciate and learn about Alberta's diverse historical, natural, cultural and economic history. Alberta TrailNet Society, in its role as a provincial trail facilitator, promotes the development and managed use of all types of trails in the interests of a broad range of user groups.

Alberta TrailNet Society (TrailNet) was incorporated in 1989 as a charitable non-profit society. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, TrailNet is dedicated to promoting the development and responsible use of our provincial network of recreation trails, known as the Wild Rose Trail System. Many provincial trail user associations (Hike Alberta, Nordiq Alberta, Alberta Bike Association, Alberta Equestrian Federation, Alberta Snowmobile Association) are represented on TrailNet's Board.



Promoting a Trail Network, Including the Trans Canada Trail, Connecting All Albertans

What TrailNet does:

- Develop and distribute practical information and advice on the planning, design, construction, and ongoing management of trails.
- Represent and promote the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) in Alberta, and allocate funding and other resources (signage, etc.) to groups actively involved in developing the TCT route through Alberta.
- Help identify federal, provincial, municipal, donor and other funding for trail development.
- Provide a forum for inter-user group discussions and cooperation.
- Represent Alberta interests at national and international trail conferences and in inter-provincial/territorial discussions regarding trail issues that are both provincial and national in scope.
- Represent member trail associations' trails, trail operator and trail user interests in provincial discussions, forums, initiatives and conferences regarding land use; land access; parks and public lands; provincial policy, legislation and regulation; tourism and economic development; transportation and signage; public health and safety; education programs; and other stakeholder issues.
- Support research on topics critical to understanding and responding to the increasing public demand for and ongoing development of trails, recreational corridors, and a safe recreational trail system in Alberta.
- Network with the greater Alberta trail community, bringing individuals and groups with shared goals together to assist them in achieving their trail building objectives.
- Hold and manage abandoned rail corridors for their long-distance connectivity as greenways, wildlife corridors, and for future development of trails and other public recreation infrastructure.
- Continue work on the Provincial Trail Map Project including the acquisition of new and updating of existing provincial trail and tourism data, and the production of additional regional trail maps in the future.

Albertans continue to build trails and are increasingly using trails year-round to pursue healthy recreation opportunities including long distance and commuter travel. TrailNet is challenged with building an aware human environment supportive of trails and the opportunities they provide, and sensitive to the importance of ensuring minimum impacts and maximum benefits to the human, physical and natural environment. Alberta TrailNet Society supports and promotes these efforts.





Livingstone Public Land Use Zone
Photo by Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad Association

