

# Report on the 2018 Compliance Plan for Activities on Public Land

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Authorized by the Public Land Enforcement Committee (PLEC)

MARCH 13, 2019

Alberta 

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Alberta Environment and Parks, Government of Alberta

March 13, 2019

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ISBN 978-1-4601-4624-8

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460146248>

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## Executive Summary

In 2015, the Alberta government launched an initiative to address abuse of public land through the establishment of a cross-ministry Public Lands Enforcement Committee. The three pillars of the compliance program are enforcement, education and prevention. Tools used to successfully execute the program include enforcement personnel, public engagement, social media, data collection and reporting.

A modified program was introduced in 2016 and enhanced in 2017 and 2018. The committee strives to continuously improve the program with intent to establish a benchmark for future education, prevention and enforcement efforts around public land abuse.

Key to the success of the program is the engagement and collaboration of various departments, agencies and the public. Alberta is a vast jurisdiction, and public land is used by a wide variety of stakeholders, each of which has a role to play in ensuring the laws and regulations that protect public land are understood and followed.

In 2018, staff from Environment and Parks, Justice and Solicitor General, Agriculture and Forestry, the RCMP and other municipal enforcement agencies worked closely to engage the public and deliver another effective compliance program.

### Education

- 2018 enforcement activities were launched in May 2018. These activities were conducted by 300 fish and wildlife officers, conservation officers and seasonal park rangers who patrolled public land, parks and protected areas in order to keep Albertans safe, enforce rules and raise awareness about the regulations that protect the land.
- On top of the core funding for public land enforcement and management, the Alberta government provided an additional \$1.5 million for:
  - hiring about 20 seasonal park rangers
  - hiring five seasonal recreation engagement officers
  - hiring eight seasonal problem wildlife positions who deal with issues such as livestock owners losing animals to large predators
  - education materials and targeted outreach

- Government of Alberta staff participated in eight large-scale outreach events/trade shows in large cities across Alberta. These events allowed ministry staff to directly engage with more than 12,000 Albertans about stewardship and recreation on public land.
- Social media advertising and content engaged almost a million Albertans regarding public land related education, prevention, and enforcement messaging.
- Justice and Solicitor General's Fish and Wildlife Facebook page saw an increase of 31 per cent in its follower base; the top post reached 711,800 people. The most popular post related to public land was about the closure of the area surrounding the Wapiti Nordic Ski Club, which is just southwest of Grande Prairie, due to bear activity. The post reached over 86,000 people.
- A total of 102,000 responsible recreation education materials (fact cards, information brochures, maps, and behavioural prompts) were distributed throughout the province.
- Targeted partnerships with retailers (Cabela's, Bass Pro, Canadian Tire, etc.) were initiated to enhance and expand the distribution of recreation education messages to key audiences.
- A suite of public land signage (wayfinding, educational and regulatory) was designed and produced for installation in recreational areas on public land across Alberta.
- A joint Aquatic Invasive Species, Whirling Disease and Wheels out of Water advertisement was placed in the 2018 Alberta Guide to Sportfishing Regulations.

## Prevention

- Alberta Environment and Parks' Operations and Parks divisions, as well as Justice and Solicitor General's Fish and Wildlife, contributed 5,132 person-days towards the delivery of the public land compliance program.
- A total of 71,682 contacts were made with recreational users on public land.
- Over 870 educational, wayfinding and regulatory signs were developed and distributed.
- The Report A Poacher phone line received 203 calls related to public land violations.

## Enforcement

A total of 7,237 enforcement actions occurred on public land, 704 of which were for a combination of *Public Lands Act*, Public Lands Administration Regulation, *Petty Trespass Act*, and Recreational Access Regulation contraventions.

Enforcement personnel were able to write on-the-spot tickets for an additional 38 new and increased specified penalties for existing public land and water body offences. These changes allow enforcement personnel to spend less time in court and more time on the land.

Reports on enforcement actions are compiled throughout the year and are available here:

[https://www.alberta.ca/compliance-assurance-program.aspx?utm\\_source=redirector](https://www.alberta.ca/compliance-assurance-program.aspx?utm_source=redirector)

## Context

- Albertans use public land for a diverse range of outdoor activities such as cross-country skiing, horseback riding, hiking, photography, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, camping, trapping, canoeing, birding, ecotourism and motorized recreation (e.g. OHV use).
- Outdoor recreational opportunities are a big part of the outstanding quality of life in Alberta. However, the growing demand for these types of opportunities is contributing to undesirable environmental impacts, public safety concerns and user conflicts. A few examples of these chronic challenges include:
  - Vehicles being operated and parked on the bed, shore and/or in the water of Alberta's streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands.
  - Random camping spots located in environmentally sensitive areas and utilized for the entire summer by one user.
  - Garbage, vehicles and structures abandoned on public land.

## Land-use Framework

The Land-use Framework identifies managing recreation use of public land as one of its priority actions. It outlines the need for a strategy to better manage growing recreational pressures and activities in Alberta.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) and South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) both identify the increased pressure being placed on the land due to more people seeking outdoor recreational opportunities. To address this pressure, a wide range of recreation experiences and tourism opportunities that meet the preferences of regional residents and visitors need to be provided. Additionally, the SSRP identifies the need for education, awareness and compliance programs to promote and support responsible land use and identified shared stewardship as a key strategy. Land-use Framework plans continue to be developed for all regions in Alberta and are expected to identify recreational use of public land as a key component.

## Livingstone and Porcupine Hills

In May 2018, the Livingstone and Porcupine Hills areas were established as Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ). The area forms part of southern Alberta's eastern slopes, which are highly valued for their natural resources and as the source of most of the region's drinking water. The two new Public Land Use Zones provide designated trails for hiking, mountain biking and off-highway



vehicle use while limiting access in some areas to protect the ecological integrity of the landscape. Almost \$5 million in capital funding over four years will be used to improve staging areas, rebuild and improve trails, install bridges over water crossings, and protect and enhance fish habitat in the southern Alberta eastern slopes.

## Recreation Management

Alberta Environment and Parks Operations' Recreation Management Program for public land identifies a vision for a world-class landscape that offers diverse outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities on public land. The program promotes respect for the environment, promotes responsible use and enables economic diversification.

The program demonstrates government's continued commitment to strong environmental management while also providing ample opportunities for outdoor recreation. The program is working collaboratively with stakeholders to provide sustainable, desirable outdoor recreation opportunities. The Compliance Plan for Public Activities on Public Land is an integral component to delivery and achievement of the programs objectives.

Through the Outdoor Recreation Committee, Environment and Parks and cross-government colleagues have been working to advance recreation management on public land. Key actions include a focus on strategic planning, education, policy development, sustainability and stakeholder relations.

## Intent for the Public Land Compliance Program

In recognition of the growing pressures on public land, the province will continue to collaboratively develop and deliver a compliance program as part of the overall approach to managing activities on public land and ensuring compliance with rules and regulations. The 2018 Compliance Plan for Public Activities on Public Land (the plan) leveraged resources from various ministries and other enforcement agencies, recognizing that compliance assurance outcomes will gradually be achieved over a period of time. Shared responsibility and stewardship of public land was promoted.

The plan incorporated education, prevention and enforcement elements with a focus on offences under the *Public Lands Act* and the Public Lands Administration Regulation, as well as other contraventions encountered on Alberta's public land. These initiatives are an integral component of a comprehensive compliance program.

The **Education** component supported compliance by raising awareness and knowledge of environmental protection and management, regulatory requirements, how to comply with those

requirements and the consequences of non-compliance. Education was also used to encourage environmental stewardship.

The **Prevention** component supported compliance through increased government staff and officer presence on the land base and other methods, such as installation of signs at trailheads to prevent inappropriate vehicles from accessing a trail system. Prevention is a shared responsibility and includes the activities and actions of both the government and the public.

The **Enforcement** component ensured that issues of non-compliance were addressed. This included actions that stopped, remedied, deterred and prosecuted violators where appropriate. Deterrence and prosecution measures were used to address contraventions and contributed towards reducing the likelihood of repeat contraventions.

## Priorities

Priorities were identified to ensure efforts were focused on activities that pose the highest risk of environmental damage:

- Wheeled and tracked vehicles being operated or parked on the bed, shore and/or in the water of Alberta's streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands.
- Random camping in the same location for more than 14 days (including squatters).
- Damage or loss to public land (including dumping of garbage).
- Enforcement of legislation in public land use zones (PLUZs), public land recreation areas (PLRAs), or public land recreation trails (PLRTs).

## Co-ordinated and Efficient Delivery

A strong, co-ordinated and multi-departmental/agency approach was again identified as the route forward.

- Working collaboratively with other departments and agencies, Environment and Parks developed and implemented a public land enforcement program focused on the above provincial priorities, regional concerns and resources available.
- Justice and Solicitor General's fish and wildlife officers' mandate includes public land enforcement and provided an enhanced enforcement response to serious public land violations across the province.

- Environment and Parks, Parks Division seasonal park rangers and permanent conservation officers provided an enforcement presence primarily along the eastern slopes.
- Environment and Parks, Operations Division public lands officers engaged with thousands of recreational users and distributed educational materials to thousands of recreational users in the field and investigated issues that do not require a fully-equipped peace officer to gather evidence of non-compliance.
- Environment and Parks, Operations Division recreation engagement officers distributed educational materials to thousands of recreational users in the field and installed signage throughout the province.
- Environment and Parks, Operations Division environmental protection officers investigate issues that do not require a fully equipped peace officer to gather evidence of non-compliance to support enforcement actions such as administrative penalties, remedial orders, and regulatory prosecutions.
- Other enforcement partners such as the RCMP, Sheriffs Branch and/or municipal peace officers provided an enforcement presence.

## Highlights

### Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) and Forest Closures in Response to Extreme Fire Hazards

On May 25, 2018, a Ministerial Order was issued, closing all public land in a large swathe of Northern Alberta to OHV recreational use. The order was issued due to significant concerns about the fire hazard in the area. This order was in addition to a fire ban issued for the same area that same day. The OHV restriction was lifted June 1, 2018.

An additional fire ban was issued August 12, 2018, in southwest Alberta Control Zones 1, 2 and 3 due to fire hazards in the area. The ban was lifted August 28, 2018.

### Targeted Outreach

There were a number of public community-based outreach events attended across the province by Alberta government staff where educational messages were communicated. The activities attended included: fairs, community events, partnership outreach events, education events with youth, farmers markets. The number of individuals contacted at these events were:

- South Saskatchewan Region: 2,244 contacts
- Lower Athabasca Region: 723 contacts
- Upper Peace Region: 550 contacts
- Red Deer North Saskatchewan Region: 3,469 contacts
- Upper Athabasca Region: 1,786 contacts

In the Lower Athabasca Region, 10 signs and four kiosks were placed at locations across the region. In addition, six farmers markets were attended and 10 school presentations were conducted. Ten notices for random camping in the same location for more than 14 days were issued and two abandoned campfires were extinguished.

In the Upper Athabasca Region, about 50 signs were installed in the Athabasca, Brule, Holmes crossing and Coal Branch Public Land Use Zones. Recreation engagement staff attended the Vega Motor Cross Rally and the Wild Mountain Music Festival and had a joint team information booth set up with Agriculture and Forestry in Cadomin on the August long weekend.

In the Red Deer North Saskatchewan Region, 75 signs were installed. The recreation engagement officer attended the Snow and Mud ATV Jamboree and the Wiley West

Campground in Drayton Valley for Parks Day. Other projects included working with the Resource Management team collecting and resetting trail counters for OHVs, data projects for Fisheries and Land Approvals, determining STARS landing sites, and assisting on two search and rescue missions.

In the South Saskatchewan Region, more than 700 signs were installed, along with 14 kiosks. The regional focus this year was to educate and enforce vehicles that were being operated on the bed, shore and/or in the water of the region's streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. As well, six bridges were installed and one was replaced. The announcement of the new Livingstone and Porcupine Hills PLUZs added to operational workload with public questions and comments through direct phone conversations.

In the Peace Region, 37 new signs were installed. As well, 24 random camping notices were issued, mainly on Highway 40 between Grande Prairie and Grande Cache. The recreational engagement officer attended the Wapiti Off-Road Association Poker Rally and the Canadian Death Race in Grande Cache.

The following activities are a sample of Alberta Parks' conservation officers' activities:

- assisted the Anzac Recreational Society in organizing and providing security during the Gregoire Lake dog sled races;
- conducted a public outreach/education seminar in co-operation with fish and wildlife officers during the Family Day celebrations at the Oil Sands Discovery Center;
- in conjunction with Alberta Parks' interpretive staff, assisted the Eco YOLO student group (Ecole McTavish Jr. High School – Fort McMurray) with the replanting of trees lost during the 2016 wildfires as part of their "Mission Replant Fort McMurray" initiative;
- presented to individual classes at a local elementary school in Fort McMurray regarding bear safety;
- staffed a bear awareness booth at the annual Rocky Mountain House Community Safety Day;
- delivered presentations to numerous school classrooms in Rocky Mountain House on wildlife identification and safe camping practices; and
- participated in Nordegg Days with an OHV/Public Land use education booth. Afterwards, the lands officers, Conservation officers, and county community peace officers conducted a joint OHV patrol of the area to monitor the "ATV Rally" on the trails around Nordegg.

## Public Land Cleanups

Staff engaged community groups and municipalities in the Lower Athabasca Region and organized three large public land clean-ups and numerous small ones. Encouragingly, due to local efforts, two staff-led cleanups were cancelled, as they were no longer needed.

The Red Deer North Saskatchewan Region recreation engagement officer assisted with the Fall Creek Remediation Project and helped build up destroyed stream banks that were considered a prime habitat for bull trout and other fish species.

The Peace Region had multiple areas cleaned of garbage. Two cases were serious enough that charges are being pursued. In addition, two burnt vehicles were removed from the landscape at the Dunes, and one camper at the Cutbank River.

Conservation officers worked closely with the Gregoire Estates community group and the local MLA in a Gregoire Lake shoreline cleanup effort in the Lower Athabasca Region.

Alberta Parks' staff received a public complaint regarding an illegal dump site located near Lusk Creek Day Use Area in the Sibbald Flats area (vacant public land) in Kananaskis Country in the South Saskatchewan Region. Upon investigation, conservation officers located a historical dump site containing significant amounts of debris including metal, glass, rubber, plastic and lumber which had been dumped over the embankment near the creek. Over several days, conservation officers, park rangers, staff and numerous volunteers (22 people in total), put in 180 hours to remove over 2,740 kg of metal, plus a substantial amount of other debris from the site.

*Lusk Creek before (left) and after (right) site cleanup.*



## Long weekend task force

Long weekend patrol teams across the province consist of a variety of regional resources including Alberta Environment and Parks Operations Division lands officers, Parks Division conservation officers, Justice and Solicitor General fish and wildlife officers, and Agriculture and Forestry fire personnel. RCMP members, commercial vehicle inspection officers, community peace officers, emergency services, and local search and rescue organizations also work collaboratively with government staff to support the long weekend patrol efforts.



*May long weekend staff at the Burmis Weigh Scale: water craft inspectors, lands officers, RCMP, wildfire rangers, fish and wildlife officers, and conservation officers.*

## Report on Education

Education and outreach efforts focused on four key public land messages and some of the activities and projects identified were aligned with the department's Recreational Literacy Strategy for Alberta's Public Lands:

- Keep Wheels Out of Water
- Know B4UGo
- Limit Your Random Camping Stay to 14 Days
- Report Land Abuse

As well, there was an online public education survey conducted at trade shows asking people about their activities on public land and their education needs. Most respondents reported that they participated in camping as their primary activity, other interests included hiking, off-highway vehicles use and enjoyment of nature.

### Community Outreach Events

The following are some of the events attended by Alberta government staff:

- Calgary Motorcycle Show (January 5-7): 1,249 contacts
- Calgary Boat and Sportsmen's Show (February 8-11): 1,116 contacts
- Red Deer Sportsman and Outdoor Adventure Show (March 2-4): 1,429 contacts
- Edmonton Boat and Sportsmen's Show (March 15-18): 2,791 contacts
- Calgary Outdoor Adventure and Travel Show (March 24-25): 1,927 contacts
- Grande Prairie Sports Expo (April 6-8): 1,800 contacts
- Edmonton Cottage Life and Cabin Show (April 20-22): 931 contacts
- Fort McMurray Hunt Mania Gun and Sportsman Show (May 11-13): 1,050 contacts



## Education Materials Developed and Distributed

- 15,000 OHV compliance tags
- 30,000 Public Land Use Zone maps (e.g. Ghost, Kananaskis, Porcupine Hills, Livingstone, Hinton Coal Branch, Bighorn)
- 5,000 “Keep Alberta’s Backcountry Beautiful” garbage bags
- 15,000 responsible recreation behavioural prompts (stickers, plugs, drink cozies, playing cards, and buffs)
- 10,000 “Report Land Abuse” stickers and fridge magnets
- 10,000 OHV Quick Fact cards
- 10,000 youth activity books and “Keep Alberta’s Backcountry Beautiful” crayons
- 7,000 waterproof “Wheels Out of Water” licence holders
- 10,000 Livingstone and Porcupine Hills PLUZs quick facts

## Education, Advertising and Partnerships

The Alberta government continued an annual social media campaign with paid Facebook advertisements. Highlights included:

- There was a 76 per cent increase in the number of people who clicked on the ads compared to 2017.
- Messages around *Limiting your stay to 14 days* had the most audience uptake (twice as popular as other messages).
- Messages resonated most with Albertans 55+. This may speak to the shifting demographic of Facebook users.
- Virtually all users took action from a mobile device (86 per cent).
- In total, 950,000 Facebook users saw our ads.
- The Environment and Parks Information Centre (1-877-944-0313) provided information to the public in response to 109 inquiries regarding recreational access to public land.



*Leave no trace when camping. Enjoy camping on Alberta's public land; limit your stay to 14 days.*

## Social Media Awareness and Engagement

Environment and Parks and Justice and Solicitor General regularly share relevant posts and tweets between accounts.

The Respect the Land in Alberta Facebook page is a venue for Albertans to share information and ask questions about camping, biking, hiking and riding on public land. The page has a very engaged OHV and random camping audience. As of January 2019, the Respect the Land Facebook page had 5,869 likes, a 14 per cent increase from the previous year.



Report serious public land abuses in Alberta's backcountry.



**Report serious public land offences to 1-800-642-3800**

If you witness activities like mud-bogging and garbage dumping on public land, report it immediately to Alberta's Report a Poacher line.

[AEP.ALBERTA.CA](http://AEP.ALBERTA.CA)

[Learn More](#)

## Posts Related to Public Land Enforcement

The Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Facebook page is used to promote the responsible use of public land and fish and wildlife resources and is Justice and Solicitor General's most popular social media page. There were 22,107 followers at the end of this reporting year.



Posts related to public land violations regularly reach tens of thousands of people. The most popular post related to public land on the Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Facebook page was about the closure of the area surrounding the Wapiti Nordic Ski Club, which is just southwest of Grande Prairie, due to bear activity. The post reached over 86,000 people.

Environment and Parks' official Twitter account communicates major announcements, ministry business activities and good news stories on environmental management. The account promotes, in general, environmental messaging on how the government is supporting strong environmental stewardship.

Justice and Solicitor General's Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Twitter account is used to communicate relevant announcements, stories related to enforcement actions and convictions of resource abusers, and good news stories about officers engaging with their community. The account is often used to link to Facebook posts to provide even more resource stewardship messaging.

## Report on Prevention

The prevention component is another critical aspect of an effective compliance assurance program. Having staff and officers on the landscape providing information and advising of the rules reinforces expectations for the public. The posting of signs further complements prevention efforts in the same manner. Prevention is a shared responsibility and includes the activities and actions of the ministries and the public.

### Staff and Officer Presence on Public Land

Environment and Parks Operations Division, Parks Division, and Justice and Solicitor General's Fish and Wildlife contributed 5,132 person-days towards the program and made 71,682 contacts with members of the public.

### Signage

A total of 872 educational, regulatory and wayfinding signs were produced in 2018. The signs were distributed across all regions of the province and continue to be installed. The signs were distributed as follows:

- 700 signs – South Saskatchewan Region
- 37 signs – Peace Region
- 75 signs – Red Deer/North Saskatchewan Region
- 50 signs – Upper Athabasca Region
- 10 signs – Lower Athabasca Region

## Report on Enforcement

Deterrence and prosecution measures are used to address public land use contraventions and contribute towards reducing the likelihood of repeat offences.

By increasing the enforcement presence on public land, and the addition of new and increased specified penalties for public land related offences, government is demonstrating to stakeholders and the public that it is serious about managing outdoor recreation. A co-ordinated enforcement program spanning the mandate of several ministries and multiple jurisdictions was imperative to increasing enforcement efforts.

Officers patrolling public land also enforce other legislation relating to public safety (i.e. OHV, liquor, fire bans), hunting, fishing, and more.

The statistics represent enforcement actions on public land only and do not carry over to Alberta Park's land bases (provincial parks, provincial recreation areas and wildland provincial parks).

### Types of Enforcement Actions

- Written Warning – a formal warning that documents the details of an offence.
- Prosecution – a charge that proceeds through the provincial court system. For most recreation-related offences, these are typically issued through a violation ticket or an appearance notice.
- Time to Produce – before proceeding with a licencing prosecution (such as OHV licencing/registration/ insurance) an officer may issue a “time to produce” document, giving the person the opportunity to produce proof that their paperwork is in order. This is often used in conjunction with a ticket so a person understands the consequences and does not need to be re-served if they fail to send in the proof.
- Eviction – an order for a person or group to vacate public land for a period of time.
- Enforcement Order – an order for a public land legislated issue to be remediated. Failure to comply with the order can result in a charge.

The following table includes enforcement actions under public land legislation, which includes the *Public Lands Act*, Public Lands Administration Regulation, *Petty Trespass Act* (PTA), and Recreational Access Regulation (RAR). The PTA applies to Crown land subject to a disposition and the RAR applies to the duty to allow access to a person for recreational purposes to land that is the subject of an agricultural disposition.

The table below identifies prosecutions, written warnings and other enforcement actions, which consist of the following:

- time to produce documents;
- evictions;
- information letters;
- enforcement orders; and
- 24-hour suspensions

Verbal warnings are not included.

Statistics are provided for the past three years. They were produced in a consistent manner for each year and include enforcement actions taken on all public land.

	Prosecutions			Written Warnings			Other Enforcement Actions		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Boating Legislation	10	9	12	43	63	177	0	3	1
Criminal Legislation	18	11	31	87	56	46	1	1	1
Environment Legislation	33	22	30	13	10	13		10	0
Fisheries Legislation	1,482	1,256	1,178	991	842	915	17	17	2
Forestry Legislation	1	36	19	27	34	20	1	5	3
Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Legislation	515	582	540	236	151	159	1	0	0
Parks Legislation	21	3	9	22	2	2		0	0
Provincial Offences Procedures Act	35	7	3	28	9	5		0	0
Traffic Safety and OHV Legislation	1,483	1,216	1,387	865	820	1,067	187	117	98
Wildlife Legislation	691	577	525	342	311	288	5	3	2
Public Land Legislation	200	315	309	708	369	372	52	120	23
<b>Total Enforcement Actions</b>	<b>4,489</b>	<b>4,034</b>	<b>4,043</b>	<b>3,362</b>	<b>2,667</b>	<b>3,064</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>130</b>

Below are statistics for the number of person days contributed by Alberta Environment and Parks recreation engagement officers (AEP), fish and wildlife enforcement officers from Justice and Solicitor General's (JSG) Fish and Wildlife (FWEB), and conservation officers and seasonal park rangers from Parks Division (Parks).

The contacts described includes all members of the public (including anglers, campers, hunters and other recreational users) contacted on public land by the aforementioned staff. While the primary role of officers in AEP Operations Division is to provide education/outreach information, AEP Parks Division and JSG staff also provide educational messages during compliance checks. Education is integral to an effective compliance program. The majority of the public comply with the rules and are responsible in the way they enjoy various outdoor activities.

	Person days			Contacts		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
<b>AEP</b>	3	457	438	111	10,636	15,359
<b>FWEB</b>	4,079	3,862	3,306	40,977	40,037	33,904
<b>Parks</b>	754	1,146	1,388	27,791	36,231	22,419
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,836</b>	<b>5,465</b>	<b>5,132</b>	<b>68,879</b>	<b>86,904</b>	<b>71,682</b>



## Examples of Enforcement Actions and Investigations



*These quad tracks, found in August, lead into the Montagneuse River where it flows into the Peace River.* This area west of the Town of Fairview is a common local area to quad, hunt, and fish. By law, wheeled or tracked vehicles are not allowed on the bed or shore of watercourses, wetlands or water bodies, except where there are designated crossings. Driving in these areas produces harmful ruts and erosion problems. In addition, fine sediments stirred up by tires is harmful to fish. This case led to Environment and Parks and Justice and Solicitor General staff running two helicopter remote moose camp patrols in the Peace River Unit, where they focused on remote moose camps, unlawful cabins and public land abuses.



*Quad tracks crossing ephemeral, muddy or muskeg type streams that flow into Windfall River, resulting in siltation.*

The Windfall area, west of Whitecourt, is popular with recreational users, particularly OHV enthusiasts during the summer months. Fish and wildlife officers dedicated four person-days of patrols per month over the summer in the area. Officers focused patrols in the Silver Creek area because of its central location between gravel pits and its history of unauthorized activities. Compliance of recreational users in the Windfall area is very high. Officers conducted numerous OHV checks and found the compliance rates to be 95 per cent or higher, an increased rate of compliance from previous years. There were 10 violations detected (one alcohol related, one for no licence plate, one for not having a helmet, and seven related to lack of documentation). Officers also recommended sites for barriers, signage, and reclamation, to prevent and direct OHV use to protect sensitive areas.



*The driver of this white truck that got stuck near Coal Lake was fined for causing damage to public land.*

In September, fish and wildlife officers received a call about a vehicle stuck on the north end of Coal Lake, northeast of Wetaskiwin. An officer located a white Dodge on the south side of Highway 616 stuck in the mud on a section of public land. The ground was muddy with pools of water and very susceptible to rutting from vehicles. The vehicle was towed out. The driver was charged with causing damage to public land and received a \$500 fine.



*Abandoned campfires, like this one at Willow Creek, can cause considerable damage.*

In August, a Report A Poacher (RAP) call was received about an abandoned campfire in the Willow Creek area in southwest Alberta. The caller said some campers threw a bunch of garbage into their fire pit during their cleanup, then immediately left the area, despite the urging of nearby campers to put it out before leaving. The fire was still burning strong and surrounded by long dead grass. The fire hazard on that day was listed as “very high.” The fire escaped, causing a small grass fire, which was immediately put out by nearby random campers. The complainant was able to obtain valuable evidence, which was passed onto the RAP line and subsequently to the Blairmore Fish and Wildlife Office. An officer located one of the campers at the site and issued a \$287 violation ticket under the Forest and Prairie Protection Regulation for failing to extinguish a fire.

Near the beginning of the summer, fish and wildlife officers met with public land officers and industry leaders to identify areas of concern specific to the Ghost Public Land Use Zone.

One specific area of concern identified by industry was a wetland which had a pipeline that travelled under it near the TransAlta road. Violators had been using the wetland as a mud pit to bury their 4x4s. The industry representative was quite concerned that the vehicles might puncture the gas line, which he indicated would be 'catastrophic' for the environment and residents of the lower Ghost River.

This area was heavily patrolled in conjunction with forest officers who provided education and by fish and wildlife officers, who charged 21 individuals when they failed to heed the forest officers' warning.

Cochrane fish and wildlife officers worked with lands managers on signage in the Ghost PLUZ to improve compliance. The PLUZ saw a massive increase in strategically placed signage in areas where historical violations were known to occur; however, a percentage of users still failed to pay attention to the new signs.

The violation in this photo was in the Harold Creek Wildlife corridor and as the officer approached he detected that the individual was laying in the back of his truck discharging his rifle at a target. This was also a violation of several other pieces of legislation. The individual could face up to \$517 in specified penalty fines. The matter is still before the court.

In May, fish and wildlife officers patrolling near the Yara Creek near Sundre, spotted someone driving an OHV up and down the river bed. The individual was educated about the harm that could cause, given that the creek is fish-bearing. He received a \$500 fine.

In another instance, a man posted a video of himself driving his truck up the middle of the Sheep River, while fishing. Fish and wildlife officers went to his home in Turner Valley where he confessed to the unauthorized activity. He was issued a violation ticket with a \$287 fine.



*The driver of this truck ignored signage to stay out of the wetland.*



In May, fish and wildlife officers were called to a complaint on Crown land at Highway 940, west of Claresholm. The complainant said someone was operating a motor vehicle and had driven it off-road into a fen. The vehicle was stuck and had damaged the soil and vegetation during its travel (see photos above). Additional damage was done to the area when two ATVs tried to free the vehicle. The vehicle displaced large chunks of soil due to the spinning of its tires and caused siltation in the water. The ruts from the tires caused a change in the flow of the water over the surface of the ground.

The disturbance to the fen is unreasonable, as Highway 940 allows for easy travel in the area and is engineered with a culvert to allow water to flow undisturbed under the roadway. The driver of the vehicle was fined \$575 for causing damage to vacant public land.

Conservation officers and park rangers with the Parks Division concentrated their efforts on public land in the following areas or districts: Kananaskis/Elbow, Pincher Creek, Rocky Mountain House and Fort McMurray. The following are examples of the incidents they handled.

In May, Alberta conservation officers received a public complaint regarding off-road trucks causing damage to a wetland area north of Burnstick Lake, west of Caroline. The public land wetland area had deep tire ruts through its centre.

Officers located the accused who was camped a short distance away, along with the off-road truck described and photographed by the witness. Officers charged the driver with engaging in activities likely to cause damage to public land. The accused pleaded guilty in Rocky Mountain House Provincial Court and was fined \$750.





In August, conservation officers were called by an Agriculture and Forestry peace officer who had observed an offence from a lookout tower in the Livingstone PLUZ. Two vehicles had driven to high alpine ecosystems where no designated trails were located.

Officers issued two appearance notices which contained eight charges in total under the *Public Lands Act*, Public Lands Administration Regulation, *Wildlife Act* and the *Gaming and Liquor Act*. The individuals attended court in Pincher Creek, pleading guilty to four charges, and were fined \$1,600.





In June, conservation officers on patrol observed an individual on a gravel bar within the Livingstone River. The individual appeared to access the location with a dirt bike to fish that area of the river. There were no historical or designated trails to this location. The subject had failed to obey signs, drove the dirt bike on the bed and shore of the river without registration or insurance and was also committing fishing violations. The individual faced nine charges under the *Public Lands Act*, *Traffic Safety Act* and *Fisheries Act*. The individual pleaded guilty to \$1,038 in total fines.





In July, conservation officers responded to a complaint that three trucks had been driven through the Livingstone River to access a random campsite. There were no designated trails or crossings at the location in question. One individual was located and issued a \$287 specified penalty ticket.



Also, in August, a fish and wildlife officer received an email from a source about illegal activity that occurred earlier that month. An individual drove an OHV quad down the middle of Racehorse Creek, northwest of Pincher Creek (see photo at left). The source provided video of the suspect and OHV in action. A

licence plate number was obtained and the suspect was contacted. He admitted to the violation and was issued a \$287 violation ticket for using a wheeled conveyance to enter the bed or shore of vacant public land.

Other common sights and occurrences frequently encountered by Parks staff include:



*Messy random campsites*



*OHV/Quad tracks behind signs that read "No motorized vehicles beyond this point."*