



Special Places:

Alberta's Foothills Natural Region

Special Places is a made-in-Alberta strategy to complete a network of landscapes representing the province's six natural regions (20 subregions) by the end of 1998.

Special Places provides the policy, science and process to fill under-represented areas or gaps in Alberta's natural regions, including the Foothills Natural Region.

The Foothills Natural Region extends north from about Turner Valley along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains in a gradually widening belt. Vegetation, geology and landforms separate the two subregions in the Foothills Natural Region.

The Lower Foothills Subregion includes rolling topography created by deformed sandstone and shale along the edge of the Rocky Mountains as well as erosion-remnants with flat-lying bedrock. The wide variety of trees reflects the transitional nature of this subregion's forests.

The Upper Foothills Subregion occurs on the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains. Bedrock outcrops of marine shales and non-marine sandstones are frequent. Forests in this subregion are almost all coniferous.

Foothills Subregions

- Lower Foothills Subregion
- Upper Foothills Subregion



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How much land needs to be designated to fill the gaps in the Foothills Natural Region?

Under the Special Places program, 166 significant and highly visible landforms were identified in Alberta. These are called Level 1 Natural History Themes. From this information, it is possible to set preservation targets for each type of landform in each subregion. In the Foothills Natural Region, the gap based on Level 1 themes is 1690 km.²

Where are the gaps in the Foothills Natural Region's protected areas network?

The Foothills Natural Region contains two subregions: Lower Foothills and Upper Foothills.

While existing protected areas in the Upper Foothills represent some important landscape themes, most are under-represented. In the Lower Foothills Subregion, all themes are under-represented.

How does the Special Places process handle the rights of lease holders on nominated Crown Land?

The Special Places policy states the government will honour existing resource and land use commitments. Local Committees will ensure the review process represents local rights and interests, including those of lease holders.

Will small portions of land in the Foothills Natural Region be considered?

All Special Places nominations, regardless of size, will be considered. The Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC) will consider smaller areas that significantly contribute to filling gaps in the existing protected areas network and meet Special Places objectives.

What is the timeframe for Special Places in the Foothills Natural Region?

The Minister of Environmental Protection has asked the PCC to complete the protected areas network by 1998. The most efficient way to meet this goal is to proceed natural region by natural region. Time needed to complete each natural region depends on the number of nominations and how well they meet Special Places objectives.

The PCC began reviewing the nominations in the Foothills Natural Region in January 1997.

How many nominations have been received in the Foothills Natural Region?

As of November 1996, 96 nominations have been received in the Foothills Natural Region. Through the prescreening process described on the following page, 12 candidate sites were identified and are now being reviewed by the Provincial Coordinating Committee.

How Nominations Will Proceed in the Foothills Natural Region

The Special Places Process

How were nominations prescreened and narrowed down to candidate sites?

When Special Places nominations for the Foothills Natural Region were submitted, it was only the first step – nominated sites are not automatically considered candidate sites.

Candidate sites, those with a high probability of meeting the preservation goal, were identified in a prescreening process. The prescreening is completed by an Interdepartmental Directors Committee and reviewed by the Provincial Coordinating Committee.

Existing commitments on candidate sites, such as leases, will continue to be honoured. However, interim protection measures, which limit new activities or developments, may be applied to candidate sites in the Foothills Natural Region to ensure their integrity is not compromised during the review process.

What is the Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC)?

The Provincial Coordinating Committee is the multi-stakeholder group that provides overall direction and awareness for Special Places. The PCC reviews nominated sites against Special Places policy, principles and science.

After the prescreening, what is the review process for nominations?

Following a review of nominations by the PCC, the Committee will recommend candidate sites which should move forward for further consideration. Once selected, those sites will proceed to Local Committees for further consideration.

Local Committees (LCs) are established regionally to review candidate sites. Municipal Governments in the Foothills Natural Region will be offered the opportunity to host and chair the LCs as well as assist in defining the membership. LCs have about four to six months to make recommendations to the PCC. The PCC then reviews and makes recommendations for designation to the Minister of Environmental Protection.

What is the role of Local Committees?

The volunteer Local Committees contribute site-specific management principles and recommend boundary options and appropriate landuse activities. Made up of local stakeholders, these committees will consider broad local input in their recommendations to the PCC. Local Committees' memberships can include local elected officials, tenure holders, industry and various local interest groups. If the Local Committee cannot support the candidate site, it will not proceed through the designation process.

For More Information . . .

This fact sheet is one of several available sources of information about Special Places. The Special Places "Policy and Implementation Plan" covers the Special Places process. You can find information about the natural regions and Special Places in the booklet "A Framework for Alberta's Special Places" and the brochure "Preserving Our Heritage, Protecting Our Future." If you need copies of these publications, contact the Alberta Environmental Protection Information Centre at (403) 422-2079. If you're calling from outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000 and ask to be connected to (403) 422-2079.

For general information about Special Places, call (403) 427-0047. If you're calling from outside Edmonton, call the government Rite operator toll free at 310-0000 and ask for 427-0047.

For more information about Special Places in the Foothills Natural Region, contact one of the following Alberta Environmental Protection regional offices:

Edson
(403) 723-8505

Peace River
(403) 624-6402



Preserving our heritage. Protecting our future.

If you're calling long distance, call the government Rite operator toll free at 310-0000 and ask for the number to which you want to be connected.

You can also get more information by writing to:

**Alberta Environmental Protection
Corporate Management Service
11th Floor, South Petroleum Plaza
9915-108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2G8.**

To read about Alberta's Special Places on the Internet, visit the Environmental Protection Web site at:

<http://www.gov.ab.ca/~env/>

*click on the Lands icon and select Special Places from the menu displayed.



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