

# **BIGHORN BACKCOUNTRY**

## **ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**



**Alberta**  
SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT

**October, 2002**

# BIGHORN BACKCOUNTRY

## SPECTACULAR BY NATURE

Alberta's Bighorn Backcountry offers spectacular Rocky Mountain scenery and unforgettable recreational opportunities. It's a world-class attraction, and some rules have been put in place to ensure Bighorn Backcountry retains that natural beauty for generations to come.

Developing the right kind of management for Bighorn Backcountry has taken a lot of time and energy on the part of many dedicated individuals. The area was included in the 1977 (revised 1984) Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes and also in the Nordegg-Red Deer River Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan of 1986. These plans remain in place, and are now (as of 2002) supported further by a Bighorn Backcountry Access Management Plan, developed with input from an Advisory Group and from the public at large.

Bighorn Backcountry is more than 5,000 sq. km. (1.25 million acres) of public lands managed by Alberta for resources (clean water, fish, wildlife) and for use by tourists and recreationalists. In some parts of the region, industry and commerce are present in the form of trapping, oil & gas and hospitality services. Roads are few, though access has increased in recent years via river tourism, helicopter, off-highway vehicle and horse.

You are welcome to visit and enjoy Bighorn Backcountry. You are simply asked to familiarize yourself with the rules and points of etiquette affecting where you may travel and how you can best honor the sensitive wilderness beauty of this region. Numerous volunteer stewards are active within the region, and they will certainly appreciate your cooperation as well.

Make it a point to **"Stay on the Trail"** and leave no trace of your visit, so that the amount of true wilderness available for your enjoyment in Bighorn Backcountry is not diminished or degraded.

## **THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW AS A VISITOR TO BIGHORN BACKCOUNTRY**

Alberta implemented regulations in 2002 around camping, trail riding and off-highway vehicles to protect Bighorn Backcountry's wilderness environment.

Trail management in the Bighorn will consider the following principles:

- Trail opportunities will be adaptively managed so if existing trails are closed new trails will be opened to ensure balanced access and enjoyment.
- Any trail may be closed by a Forest Officer for any substantial reason, such as fire hazard, severe flooding or erosion.
- Trail use that respects management guidelines and protects the environment will create opportunities for additional trails.

All users are encouraged to participate in a form of "Neighborhood Watch" so that RCMP, Fish and Wildlife or Forestry staff are informed of serious infractions that harm the environment or other people's enjoyment of it.

Educational literature and "etiquette" programs are available to help other users enjoy a wildland experience without leaving any trace of their visit. Users are encouraged to take advantage of educational programs and literature to maximize their enjoyment of trails and facilities designed to protect the environment from damage.

The Bighorn area has been divided into six Forest Land Use Zones (FLUZs). These zones, described in more detail on the following pages, allow Forest Officers to control access and manage for issues such as wildfire or human-caused environmental damage. Forestry staff will provide more detailed information on request. Enjoy this spectacular part of Alberta's wilderness backcountry – and leave it just the way you found it, so it'll be equally beautiful next time you visit!

More information can be obtained from:  
Sustainable Resource Development  
Clearwater Area Office  
4919 - 51 Street  
Rocky Mountain House, AB T0M 1T0  
Phone: (403) 845-8250 (310-0000 toll-free)

or on the Internet at **[www.bighorn.gov.ab.ca](http://www.bighorn.gov.ab.ca)**

### **Blackstone/Wapiabi Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ)**

The Blackstone-Wapiabi FLUZ covers an area of about 485 sq. km. (120,000 acres) It contains no designated trails for motorized recreational activity, but there is a network of trails for non-motorized and equestrian access. The zone is reached via Highway 11 (David Thompson Highway) and from Highway 734 (Forestry Trunk Road). There are no Forest Recreation Areas in the region, though it is served by the adjacent Blackstone Gap FRA on the east side and Crescent Falls FRA on the southeast corner. The zone also is adjacent to the Wapiabi Provincial Recreation Area.

Most of the region consists of a wide rolling valley between the Bighorn and the next mountain range to the west. It is the source for high quantities of clean water, for which there is high downstream demand. Wildlife habitat supports elk, sheep, wolf, moose, deer and grizzly bear, as well as aquatic species such as bull trout, Rocky Mountain whitefish and cutthroat trout.

In this zone, activities include equestrian trail riding; hiking; mountain biking; dog sledding; hunting, fishing and trapping; caving in the Wapiabi Cave; backcountry camping; potential future energy operations and activity to maintain forest health.

<b>Permitted Uses Within the Blackstone/Wapiabi Forest Land Use Zone</b>			
<b>Type of Use</b>	<b>Permitted</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>
Foot Access	X		
Fishing	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Hunting	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Scientific study	X	Access and collection as approved by SRD	
Forest Health activities	X		
Trapping	X	OHV and snowmobile access as authorized by a Forest Officer.	
Camping (primitive)	X	No cutting of live green trees; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp structures to remain without authorization.	
Commercial operators (guides/outfitters)	X	Specific operating conditions will be applied through the disposition or as directed by a Forest Officer.	
Recreational Equestrian use	X	Equine tethered at least 100 m. away from lakeshores.	
Non-motorized boating	X		
Motorized boating			X
Motorized Recreation (OHVs)			X
Mountain biking	X		
Snowmobile use			X
Motorized recreation (on-highway vehicles)			X
Helicopter Access	X	No landing on, or within 200 m. of, any lake without authorization.	
Petroleum/natural gas/mineral exploration and development.	X	Specific conditions will be attached to each authorization to minimize the overall impact of activity, including restrictions on timing, routing and location of camps.	

### **Job/Cline Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ):**

The Job/Cline FLUZ consists of almost 1,400 sq. km.(350,000 acres). While there are no roads within the region, there are designated winter and summer trails available to visitors. These provide access to mountainous and scenic terrain to snowmobile and other off-highway vehicles. Summertime “No-Go” areas have been identified for equestrian users near the Cline River. Trails for non-motorized and equestrian access also exist.

This zone is adjacent to Jasper National Park and White Goat Wilderness Area and includes the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve. Access is via the David Thompson corridor (Highway 11) and the area is served by the Crescent Falls FRA.

The zone is characterized by many popular high-altitude and backcountry recreation opportunities. Its resource values include water production, hunting and trapping, and numerous other consumptive and non-consumptive recreational assets. Wildlife habitat supports Bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain goats, grizzly bears, elk, deer and moose, as well as aquatic species such as bull trout and Rocky Mountain whitefish. Several lakes have been stocked with cutthroat and golden trout.

Activities enjoyed in this zone include off-highway vehicles and snowmobiles on designated trails; fishing; equestrian trail riding; mountain biking; dog sledding; hunting; helicopter tourism; rock and ice climbing. The zone includes the Bighorn’s heaviest hiking area.

<b>Permitted Uses Within the Job/Cline Forest Land Use Zone</b>			
<b>Type of Use</b>	<b>Permitted</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>
Foot Access	X		
Fishing	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Hunting	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Scientific study	X	Access and collection as approved by SRD	
Forest Health activities	X		
Trapping	X	OHV and snowmobile access as authorized by a Forest Officer.	
Camping (primitive)	X	No cutting of live green trees; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp structures to remain without authorization.	
Commercial operators (guides/outfitters)	X	Specific operating conditions will be applied through the disposition or as directed by a Forest Officer.	
Recreational Equestrian use	X	Equine tethered at least 100 m. away from lakeshores; no equine on Allstones Creek, Landslide Lake, Lake of the Falls or Waterfalls Creek trails June 1 to Sept. 30, unless otherwise posted.	
Non-motorized boating	X		
Motorized boating			X
Motorized Recreation (OHVs)	X	Allowed on designated trails only, July 1 to Apr. 30 or Dec. 1 to April 30, unless otherwise posted.	
Snowmobile use	X	Allowed on designated trails and random sledding areas only, Dec. 1 to April 30 unless otherwise posted .	
Motorized recreation (on-highway vehicles)			X
Mountain biking	X		
Helicopter Access	X	No landing on, or within 200 m. of, any lake without authorization.	
Petroleum/natural gas/mineral exploration and development.			X

**Kiska/Willson Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ):**

The Kiska-Willson FLUZ covers about 1,000 sq. km. (250,000 acres) and partly it borders the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve. It contains more than 1,300 km of designated trails providing the full range of rugged and scenic experiences for summer and winter visitors. Trails for non motorized and equestrian access also exist. Access is via the David Thompson Corridor (Highway 11) and the Forestry Trunk Road (Highway 734). Staging areas are provided by the Crescent Falls, Hummingbird, Cutoff Creek, Clearwater, Eagle Creek and Panther FRAs. Almost 300 km of regular roads also exist within the region.

This region includes montane, boreal uplands and some subalpine features and is adjacent to the North Saskatchewan River and Abraham Lake. The level of this lake is regulated by the Big Horn Dam. Habitat supports elk, moose, deer, sheep and black and grizzly bears. Rocky Mountain goat populations have been relocated to the region. Other features include dramatic scenery and geological features, rare plants and an abundance of archaeological/cultural sites.

Activities taking place in this zone include off-highway vehicles and snowmobiles on all existing designated trails; staging areas for many trails and destinations; lodging; canoeing, kayaking and jet boating on the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers, equestrian trail riding; hiking; mountain biking; dog sledding; trapping and hunting; ice climbing; fishing; extensive provincial campgrounds; potential future energy operations.

<b>Permitted Uses Within the Kiska/Willson Forest Land Use Zone</b>			
<b>Type of Use</b>	<b>Permitted</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>
Foot Access	X		
Fishing	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Hunting	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Scientific study	X	Access and collection as approved by SRD	
Forest Health activities	X		
Trapping	X	OHV and snowmobile access as authorized by a Forest Officer.	
Camping (primitive)	X	No cutting of live green trees; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp structures to remain without authorization.	
Commercial operators	X	Specific operating conditions will be applied through the disposition or as directed by a Forest Officer.	
Recreational Equestrian use	X	Equine tethered at least 100 m. away from lakeshores; no horses on Allstones Creek trail June 1-Oct. 1 unless otherwise posted.	
Non-motorized boating	X		
Motorized boating	X		
Motorized Recreation (OHVs)	X	No OHVs on Pinto Lake and Aylmer trails. A few trails have timing restrictions. Remaining existing trails available year round, unless otherwise posted.	
Snowmobile use	X	No snowmobiles allowed on Pinto Lake and Aylmer trails. A few trails are closed to snowmobiles due to timing restrictions. Remaining existing trails available for use, snow cover permitting, unless otherwise posted.	
Motorized recreation (on-highway vehicles)	X	Permitted on highways and secondary roads or where posted.	
Mountain biking	X		
Helicopter Access	X	No landing on, or within 200 m. of, any lake without authorization.	
Petroleum/natural gas/mineral exploration and development.	X	Specific conditions will be attached to each authorization to minimize the overall impact of activity, including restrictions on timing, routing and location of camps.	

**Upper Clearwater/Ram Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ):**

The Upper Clearwater/Ram FLUZ is almost 2,000 sq. km. (494,000 acres) in area. Designated summer and winter trails allow access to mountainous regions that are very popular with snowmobile and off-highway vehicle users. Trails for non-motorized and equestrian access also exist. The region is adjacent to Siffleur Wilderness Area and Banff National Park.

Main access to this extremely popular region is from the south via Ya Ha Tinda Ranch and from the east through the Clearwater and South Ram River valleys. Forest Recreation Areas for staging and camping include Hummingbird, Canary, Clearwater and Eagle Creek just outside the region’s eastern and southern boundaries.

The region is mostly boreal uplands with smaller boreal foothills and subalpine ecoregions. It has a moderate to high value for water production. Wildlife habitat supports elk, deer, moose, grizzly bear, wolf and Bighorn sheep. The area also supports cutthroat trout populations in the Ram system, and provides critical spawning areas, in the vicinity of Timber Creek, for bull trout of the Clearwater system. Several natural features attract tourist interest, and it’s believed the area is home to numerous sites of archaeological/cultural significance. The zone is off-limits to industrial activity.

Activities taking place in this zone include off-highway vehicles and snowmobiles on designated trails; equestrian trail riding; hiking; mountain biking; dog sledding; trapping and hunting; camping; river travel and heli-tourism; fishing; cross-country skiing; backcountry lodging.

<b>Permitted Uses Within the Upper Clearwater/Ram Forest Land Use Zone</b>			
<b>Type of Use</b>	<b>Permitted</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>
Foot Access	X		
Fishing	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Hunting	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Scientific study	X	Access and collection as approved by SRD	
Forest Health activities	X		
Trapping	X	OHV and snowmobile access as authorized by a Forest Officer.	
Camping (primitive)	X	No live green tree cutting; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp structures to remain without authorization.	
Commercial operators (guides/outfitters)	X	Specific operating conditions will be applied through the disposition or as directed by a Forest Officer.	
Recreational Equestrian use	X	Equine tethered at least 100 m. away from lakeshores.	
Non-motorized boating	X		
Motorized boating			X
Motorized Recreation (OHVs)	X	Allowed on designated trails only, July 1 to Apr. 30 or Dec. 1 to Apr. 30 unless otherwise posted.	
Snowmobile use	X	Allowed on designated trails and random sledding areas only, Dec. 1 to April 30 unless otherwise posted.	
Motorized recreation (on-highway vehicles)			X
Mountain biking	X		
Helicopter Access	X	No landing on, or within 200 m. of, any lake without authorization.	
Petroleum/natural gas/mineral exploration and development.			X

**Panther Corners Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ):**

The Panther Corners FLUZ is not quite 200 sq km. (50,000 acres) in size and contains no designated trails. There is, however, a network of trails for non-motorized and equestrian access. There are no regular roads, but access is provided by the Eagle Creek and Panther Forest Recreation Areas. The zone is reached via the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch Road from the north and from the Forestry Trunk Road on the east.

Terrain of varied elevation and form contains streams that are highly productive sources of water. Wildlife habitat supports elk, Bighorn sheep, mule deer, moose, grizzly bear and wolf. Bull trout and Rocky Mountain whitefish are found in streams, while several high mountain lakes have been stocked with cutthroat trout to expand angling opportunities. The high visual aesthetics, topography and relatively low level of land-use contribute to the wildland values of the region. It's believed the area is home to numerous sites of archaeological/cultural significance. Surface access by the energy industry is prohibited over most of this zone.

Activities popular in this zone include trapping; river rafting; lodging; equestrian trail riding; mountain biking; hiking; alpine fishing; backcountry camping.

<b>Permitted Uses Within the Panther Corners Forest Land Use Zone</b>			
<b>Type of Use</b>	<b>Permitted</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>
Foot Access	X		
Fishing	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Hunting	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Scientific study	X	Access and collection as approved by SRD	
Forest Health activities	X		
Trapping	X	OHV and snowmobile access as authorized by a Forest Officer.	
Camping (primitive)	X	No cutting of live green trees; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp structures to remain without authorization.	
Commercial operators (guides/outfitters)	X	Specific operating conditions will be applied through the disposition or as directed by a Forest Officer.	
Recreational Equestrian use	X	Equine tethered at least 100 m. away from lakeshores.	
Non-motorized boating	X		
Motorized boating			X
Motorized Recreation (OHVs)			X
Snowmobile use			X
Motorized recreation (on-highway vehicles)			X
Mountain biking	X		
Helicopter Access	X	No landing on, or within 200 m. of, any lake without authorization.	
Petroleum/natural gas/mineral exploration and development.	X	Permitted in part of the FLUZ under step-out provisions of the Eastern Slopes Policy. Specific conditions will be attached to each authorization to minimize the overall impact of activity, including restrictions on timing, routing and location of camps/facilities.	

### **Dormer/Sheep Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ):**

The Dormer/Sheep FLUZ is slightly more than 100 sq km. (250,000 acres) in size. It contains limited roads and some designated trails giving access to high mountain areas. Trails for non-motorized and equestrian access also exist. The zone can be accessed via the Forestry Trunk Road to the east, and the Panther Forest Recreation Area.

A high concentration of streams makes this region a highly productive water source. Wildlife habitat supports elk, Bighorn sheep, mule deer, moose, grizzly bear and wolf. Bull trout and Rocky Mountain whitefish are found in streams, while several high mountain lakes have been stocked with cutthroat trout to expand angling opportunities. High visual aesthetics, topography and relatively low level of land-use contribute to the wildland values of the region. It's believed the area is home to numerous sites of archaeological/cultural significance.

Activities enjoyed in this area include off-highway vehicles and snowmobiles on all existing trails, and equestrian trail riding.

<b>Permitted Uses Within the Dormer/Sheep Forest Land Use Zone</b>			
<b>Type of Use</b>	<b>Permitted</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>
Foot Access	X		
Fishing	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Hunting	X	Alberta regulations apply	
Scientific study	X	Access and collection as approved by SRD	
Forest Health activities	X		
Trapping	X	OHV and snowmobile access as authorized by a Forest Officer.	
Camping (primitive)	X	No cutting of live green trees; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp structures to remain without authorization.	
Commercial operators (guides/outfitters)	X	Specific operating conditions will be applied through the disposition or as directed by a Forest Officer.	
Recreational Equestrian use	X	Equine tethered at least 100 m. away from lakeshores.	
Non-motorized boating	X		
Motorized boating			X
Motorized Recreation (OHVs)	X	All existing trails open year-round, unless otherwise posted.	
Snowmobile use	X	All existing trails open year-round (snow cover permitting and unless otherwise posted).	
Mountain biking	X		
Helicopter Access	X	No landing on, or within 200 m. of, any lake without authorization.	
Petroleum/natural gas/mineral exploration and development.	X	Permitted in a portion of the FLUZ under step-out provisions of the Eastern Slopes Policy. Specific conditions will be attached to each authorization to minimize the overall impact of activity, including restrictions on timing, routing and location of camps.	

## APPENDIX I - DEFINITIONS

### Designated Trail

- A road, trail or seismic line designated by signage and on maps for use by Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and snowmobiles. The route may or may not be open for use by other forms of access. The OHV trail includes that part of the route to a width of three metres (9.8 feet) or less as approved by a Forest Officer, and a parking zone of 10 metres or less on either side of the trail. Within Forest Land use Zones, OHVs and snowmobiles must remain on the trail.

### FLUZ

- Forest Land Use Zone – Established under Section 46 of the Forests Act of Alberta. An area of land to which legislative controls are applied to solve specific land use problems. A Forest land Use Zone can be used to:
  - Protect areas containing sensitive resources such as fish & wildlife and their habitats, vegetation, soils and watershed;
  - Protect users from natural hazards;
  - Separate or control conflicting recreational activities.

Various levels of control can be achieved through the FLUZ designation, from exclusion to restriction to authorization of motorized and non-motorized access in specific areas.

### FRA

- Forest Recreation Area, created to provide parking, camping and staging for individuals accessing Bighorn Backcountry.

### No-Go Zone

- An area where OHV or other form of access (as posted) is not permitted, including any lands off the designated trails other than parking areas; any lands within 100 metres of a lake, pond or non-flowing body of water; any meadows, swampland, marsh, stream, grassed slope or other area off the designated trail.

### Off-Highway Vehicle

- A vehicle used for cross country travel on land, water, snow, ice, marsh, swamp or other natural terrain and which:
  - Has a curb weight of 590 kg (1300 lb) or less
  - Has tire pressure of 110 Kpa (16 psi) or less
  - Has a wheel base of 1.85 metres (73”) or less
  - Has a width of 1.78 metres (70”) or less
- Any off-highway vehicles traveling in the Bighorn must be:
  - Licensed as an Off-Highway Vehicle under the *Off-Highway Vehicle Act*, and
  - Equipped with headlights and taillights, and an adequate muffler to prevent sparks and hot gases from creating a fire risk.

### Snowmobile

- Motorized toboggan designed for travel on snow.

**Snowmobile Random Sledding Area**

- Designated areas where snowmobiles are not restricted to trails.

**Wildland**

- A wilderness or back-country setting having a degree of solitude, low evidence of human presence and a natural landscape.