



ABOUT PUBLIC LANDS

Information on Acquiring Public Lands

Public Land Use in Alberta

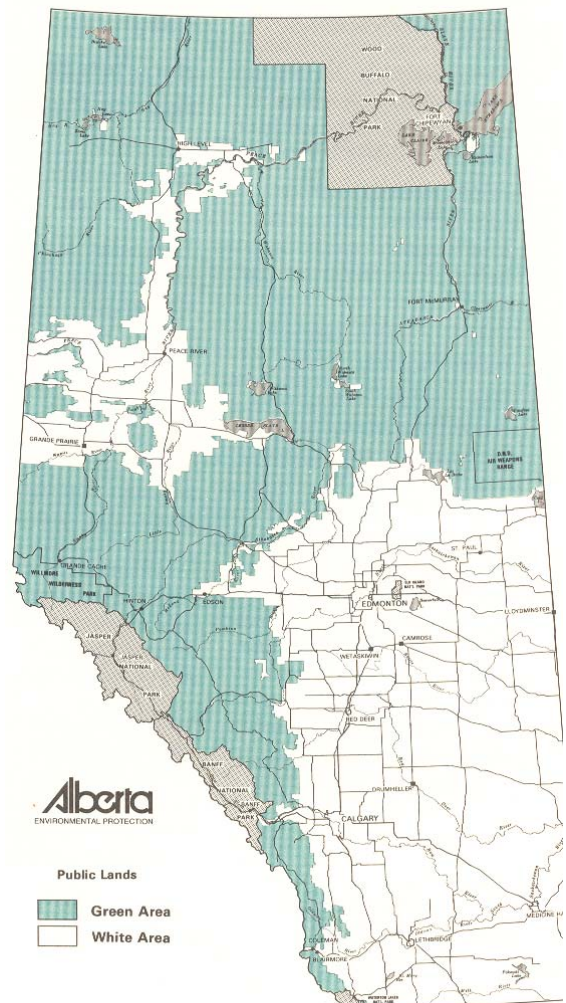
Approximately 60 per cent of the province's land base is public land. It is managed for a variety of uses, under an integrated resource management philosophy (integrating the many resource uses and needs on public lands). Although the majority of the land supports forest production, it is also important for watershed protection, wildlife habitat, recreation, oil and gas well sites, agricultural production and industrial development, to mention only a few of the uses.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to describe some of the uses permitted on public land. It also provides general information on how to purchase or obtain a disposition (lease, licence or permit) for such land.

For administrative purposes, public land is divided into two broad land use areas: Green Area and White Area (see map). Generally, lands in the Green Area are more remote, have lower quality soils and have a more varied topography than in the White Area.

The Green Area (non-settled) is managed primarily for timber production, but other uses are permitted. Intensive activities involving settlement or agricultural development are restricted because the land base is required for forest production and there is a high cost for providing services such as roads.

In the White Area (settled) the types of acceptable uses are usually less restrictive than in the Green Area. However, it may be difficult to find suitable land that is available.



Who Can Apply

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada. If the applicant is a corporation then it must have at least 75 per cent Canadian ownership. However, there are no ownership restrictions for resource extraction-related dispositions.

How to Apply

The steps involved in acquiring public land (sale, lease licence, permit) are generally as follows:

- Identify suitable parcel(s) by legal description (quarter section, township, range and meridian or lot, block and plan).
- Submit an application and required fee.
- Land managers determine if the land is suitable for the intended use.
- Land is awarded on basis of highest bid if being sold.
- Land is awarded on the basis of highest bonus tender if a lease or licence is being granted. Grazing land in the Green Area may be awarded on the basis of need.
- Land is usually not sold for non-agricultural uses and if it is, the agreement often contains a sell-back clause. Such land is usually awarded to the applicant without competition at market value, if the related activities such as gas plant do not lend themselves to public bidding.

Rental Payments and Property Taxes

Rental payments are required for all lands under lease, licence or permit. In most cases municipal property taxes are payable directly to the local municipal authority.

The following information describes some of the agricultural and non-agricultural uses permitted on public land. Further details can be obtained by contacting any of the offices listed at the end of this brochure.

Availability for Agricultural Uses

Only a limited amount of suitable land is available for lease or sale in settlement areas.

The majority of the potentially suitable unallocated agricultural land is located within the Peace River region. The improvement potential of this soil is generally limited and may require special management practices. With appropriate agronomic practices, a wide variety of crops including grains, oilseeds, forage and seed crops are being successfully grown.

Public land required for recreation or conservation purposes, or bordering lakes and rivers, is not available for sale or cultivation. In some cases it may be available for livestock grazing.

Public Land Sales

Public land in the White Area can be sold if there are no potential erosion or conservation limitations, and other resource values are not considered sufficiently important to require retention in government ownership. Sales are by cash payment only. Title is issued after payment is received.

Farm Development Leases

Leases may be granted where the department does not wish to sell the land because of possible resource conflicts, conservation or erosion concerns, or other physical limitations of the land.

Cultivation Permits

Cultivation permits are issued annually to allow the cropping of land already under cultivation.

Grazing/Hay Permits

Grazing permits are also issued on land reserved for other purposes or when it is not considered in the public interest to grant long-term dispositions on specific land. Grazing permits may be renewed at the department's discretion. Hay permits are issued annually for the haying season only.

Grazing Reserves

There are about 32 grazing reserves throughout the province. Livestock operators may put livestock on the reserves, where space is available. Reserves are managed for both livestock grazing and other multiple uses such as hunting and fishing.

Head Tax Permits

Head tax permits are issued for livestock grazing for short periods of time (usually less than a year) in the more remote areas. The land may not have to be fenced and municipal taxes are not applied.

Grazing Licences

A grazing licence may be issued for livestock grazing on public land for a term of up to 10 years. Licences are usually issued when there are other uses of the land such as timber production. Grazing within a Forest Management Agreement Area can only be authorized under a licence.

Availability for Industrial, Commercial, Recreational and Other Purposes

Industrial

Public land may be used for wellsites, pipelines, access roads and other similar activities. Corporate applicants may require surface dispositions for resource extraction purposes (e.g., petroleum and natural gas, oil sands and coal development). Land required for surface rights is not advertised.

Commercial/Recreation

Commercial or recreational use of land may be authorized by a miscellaneous lease, miscellaneous permit or a recreational lease. If the applicant is a municipality of a registered non-profit society, and the use is recreational, then a 25-year recreational lease may be issued.

Commercial uses such as plant sites, mill sites, tower sites, landfills and heliports are authorized by miscellaneous lease. Temporary developments such as trappers, cabins and base camps are authorized by a miscellaneous permit. Lands required are not normally advertised and applications are assessed on their individual need and merit.

Commercial Recreation/Tourism

A lease may be issued through the Commercial Tourism and Recreation Leasing process (CTRL) for the development of commercial recreation or tourism facilities on public land.

Residential

Disposition of public land intended solely for residential purposes is normally not approved unless the lands are within subdivisions.

Availability for Other Short-Term Uses

Temporary field authorization (TFA) may be granted to use public land for a stated purpose without issuing a formal disposition. This type of authority may be used to approve such activities as public recreational events and temporary access for evaluation of a site for possible development.

TFAs may also be utilized to authorize access for site preparation prior to granting a disposition.

Land Exchanges

Privately owned land may be exchanged for public land where:

- A government agency wishes to acquire private land.
- There is an opportunity for the government to obtain land needed for conservation purposes.

Timber Harvesting

Most timber harvesting occurs in the Green Area under a policy of sustained yield management. Rights to harvest timber in the Green Area have been allocated under authority of Forest Management Agreements, Timber Quotas and Miscellaneous Timber Use programs. Timber harvesting may also be carried out in the White Area. Individuals who wish to harvest timber in small quantities or for their own use should contact the local Land and Forest Services' office for further information. This includes permits for firewood, transplants, Christmas trees, posts and poles, and saw timber.

If you require further information, please contact one of the following offices:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Lands Division

Land Management Branch
9915 - 108 St.
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2G8
Telephone: (780) 427-3570

Rangeland Management
9920 - 108 St.
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2M4
Telephone: (780) 427-3595

OR call the Lands Division office in your area.

Or you can visit the Lands Division Website:
<http://srd.alberta.ca/lands/default.aspx>