



Working Towards the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

A Workbook to Share Your Views on the Regional Advisory Council's Advice to the Government of Alberta Regarding a Vision for the Lower Athabasca Region



**Government
of Alberta** ■



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Alberta's Land-use Framework, released in December 2008, sets out a new approach to managing the province's land and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals.

The Land-use Framework establishes three desired outcomes for our province:

- a healthy economy supported by our land and natural resources;
- healthy ecosystems and environment; and
- people-friendly communities with ample recreational and cultural opportunities.

These outcomes recognize that Alberta's economic, environmental and social goals are highly integrated. How we choose to pursue one set of goals ultimately affects the others. This has an impact on how Alberta manages its land and natural resources.

The *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*, proclaimed in October 2009, creates the legal authority to implement the Land-use Framework. The Act provides for the development of a regional plan for each of Alberta's seven regions. One of these regions is the Lower Athabasca Region.

The Purpose of a Regional Plan

A regional plan is intended to set a vision of how a region should look over several decades. Each regional plan will consider a planning horizon of at least 50 years, and will be reviewed every five years to ensure it is effective.

Regional plans are not intended to describe how your neighbourhood will look in the future, or set rules about your local property. Municipal governments continue to be responsible for local land-use planning, through municipal plans and land-use bylaws.

Regional plans will set the overall objectives for a region. They will identify where major activities (such as industrial development, agriculture or recreation) should take place in the region in order to better co-ordinate activity on the landscape. In making these choices, regional plans will consider how to balance Albertan's economic, environmental and social values.

Regional plans will also consider how the activities in one region may impact other regions¹. For example, airsheds and watersheds often cross regional boundaries, as do many transportation and utility corridors.

Although a regional plan will not ordinarily direct uses on lands under federal jurisdiction, it will consider their long-term needs and how they may impact objectives in the region.

¹The Lower Athabasca Region is bordered by the Lower Peace, Upper Athabasca and North Saskatchewan regions as well as Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.

Developing the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

The Government of Alberta is working towards the development of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan.

In December 2008, the government established a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) to provide advice, insight and perspective on current and future land-use activities and challenges in the region. The RAC was comprised of members with a cross-section of expertise and experience in the Lower Athabasca Region.

The RAC was given terms of reference to guide its work, and was asked to provide advice in four key areas:

- economic growth and development scenarios;
- land conservation objectives;
- regional air and water thresholds; and
- human development considerations.

Now that the RAC has submitted its advice² to the Alberta government, an important milestone has been reached. The next step is for the Government of Alberta to develop a draft regional plan for the Lower Athabasca Region. This will be informed by the RAC's advice, cross-ministry knowledge and the views of residents, businesses, communities and other governments that have a stake in the region and its future.

An Opportunity to Share Your Views

Millions of people now live and work in Alberta, increasing the level of activity on the land. Regional planning is about managing our land and natural resources so that we can balance these many activities while achieving our desired economic, environmental and social goals. To do this, we need to make tough choices and set priorities for the landscape.

In some cases, land uses are not very compatible with each other. Using a landscape for some activities means it can't be used for others. Priorities have to be identified, and choices and trade-offs have to be made.

The RAC has provided advice about land uses in the Lower Athabasca Region, including recommendations on how to balance these uses and where choices are required. This workbook is intended to get feedback on the key aspects of the RAC's advice as presented in its document, the **Lower Athabasca Regional Advisory Council's Advice to Government Regarding a Vision for the Lower Athabasca Region**³.

² Although there was not consensus by the Regional Advisory Council on all recommendations contained in its advice to government, all recommendations reflect the majority of members' views.

³ The Government of Alberta's views and intentions may not necessarily coincide with the recommendations of the Lower Athabasca Regional Advisory Council.

To help inform the government's development of a draft regional plan, you are encouraged to review ALL the advice provided by the RAC and provide comment in this workbook.

This workbook focuses on the four key areas for which the Alberta government sought the RAC's advice. Each section of the workbook gives an overview of the advice requested from the RAC, highlights some of its learnings and summarizes its recommendations to government. Your input on these recommendations is essential as the government works to develop a draft regional plan. This workbook is designed to help you share your views on these important matters.

This workbook can be completed online at landuse.alberta.ca

To submit print versions of the completed workbook mail the workbook to:

**LARP Phase 2 Workbook
c/o Stantec Consulting, PC 1165
200 - 325 25th Street SE
Calgary, Alberta T2A 7H8**

The workbook may also be submitted at any local Sustainable Resource Development office in the region.

The deadline for submission of this workbook is October 8, 2010.



Section 1: Vision for the Region

The Lower Athabasca Region is located in the north-eastern corner of Alberta. It is home to a diverse and skilled population, mostly located in the urban centres of Fort McMurray, Cold Lake and Bonnyville.

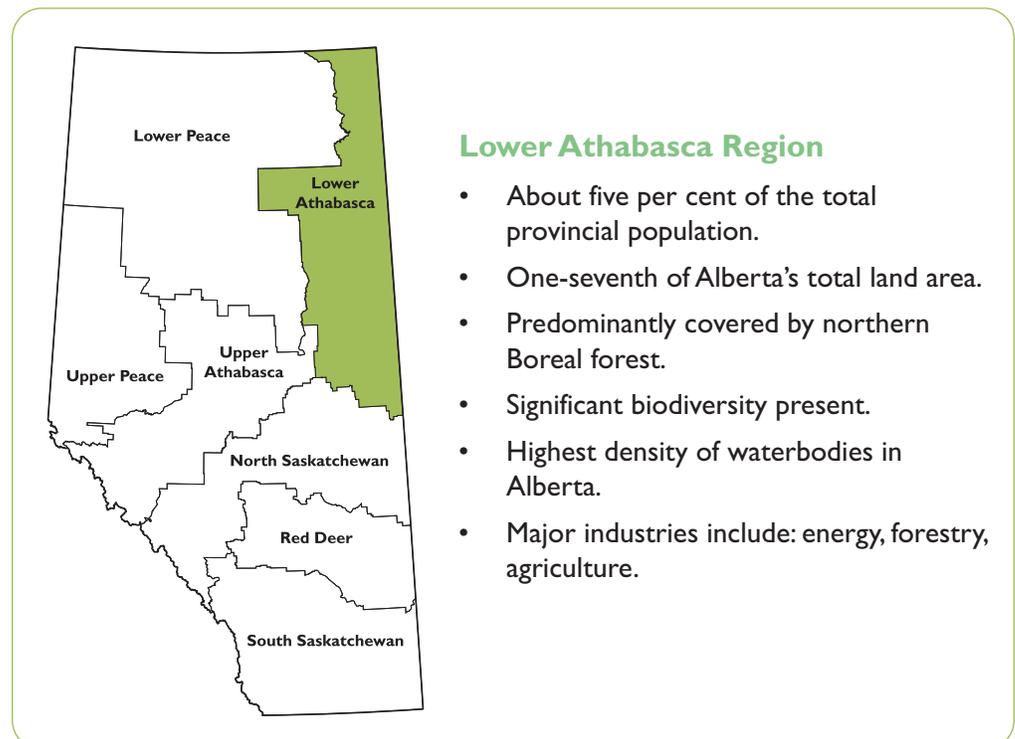
One of the most significant features of the region is the presence of extensive oil sands resources. Oil sands development provides substantial employment and income and is a major contributor to the provincial, national and international economies. It also contributes significant revenues to the Alberta treasury, helping pay for programs, services and infrastructure for Albertans.

Oil sands development will be an important part of the region's future, but the intensity of development will be dependent on several economic, environmental and social factors.

Economically, the region is also home to forestry, agriculture and recreation and tourism industries which are all subject to ongoing shifts in global demand levels. Over the long term, it is desirable to diversify the region's economy.

Environmentally, the region's air, water, land and biodiversity must be kept healthy, even as the region's population and economy continue to grow. New environmental and biodiversity thresholds will need to be established to supplement those already in place.

Socially, the region has experienced a marked increase in population associated with oil sands development. Skilled workers will continue to be needed to support the region's economic growth. To support these workers and their families, the region will require sufficient infrastructure, recreation spaces and community services.



Based on this diverse information, the RAC has proposed the following vision for the Lower Athabasca Region:

The Lower Athabasca Region is an exceptional mosaic of peoples, communities, forests, rivers, wetlands, lakes and grasslands that are cared for and respected. It is a vibrant, dynamic region that is a major driver of the Canadian economy supported by strong, healthy, prosperous and safe communities. Sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes are balanced through the use of aboriginal, traditional and community knowledge, sound science, innovative thinking, and accommodation of rights and interests of all Albertans.

This vision describes what the RAC sees for the region in the long-term. It will serve as a guide for future decisions that are made about the region’s land and natural resources.

Share Your Views

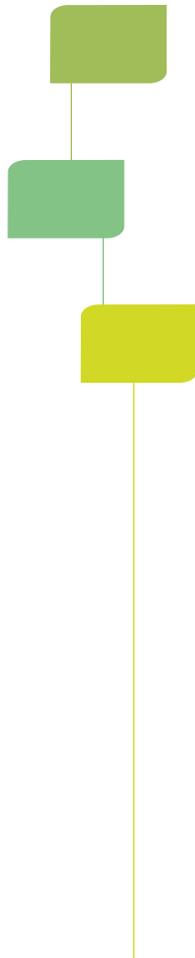
1. How strongly do you agree with the proposed vision for the Lower Athabasca Region?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. In describing a vision for the region, the RAC has tried to achieve a balance among economic, environmental and social values. What do you think about the amount of emphasis given to each of these values in the proposed vision?

	More emphasis needed	No change needed	Less emphasis needed
Economic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. How would you improve the content of proposed vision for the region? Consider the values and issues addressed and any that may be missing.



Section 2: Economic Growth and Development

Advice Requested of the RAC

The RAC was asked to consider three potential economic development scenarios in the region based on varying levels of oil sands production (i.e., current state, mid-range, high-end) and to provide advice consistent with the following guidelines:

- resource development in the Lower Athabasca Region will remain a key economic driver for Alberta. Accordingly, the land base should be managed to support economic development opportunities as the primary but not sole priority;
- the three development scenarios are to be explored within the context of desired cumulative environmental thresholds for the region; and
- options should be developed to address potential forest land base shortfalls in the Lower Athabasca Region over the long-term (i.e., 50 or more years).

What was Learned

Future development in the region will be heavily influenced by market factors that are largely beyond the control of the Alberta government, such as global demand and prices for natural resources.

- The main factor that stands to limit future growth of oil sands development is access to skilled labour. Having the required economic, social infrastructure and recreation opportunities will be key in attracting and retaining this workforce.
- One of the key issues is ensuring that the environmental impacts of oil sands development (i.e., impacts on air, water, land, biodiversity) are minimized. Increasing the level of bitumen development in the region is possible if impacts on the environment stay within to-be-established environmental limits.
- Most oil sands in the region will be developed using drilling methods (i.e., in-situ extraction) rather than mining. This type of development will result in a different type of impact.
- Multiple industries (e.g., energy, forestry, recreation and tourism, agriculture) are working on the same landscapes in the region. There is a need to provide greater clarity around where these industries should and should not develop and how their developments need to be coordinated to minimize their collective impacts on the land.
- The long-term viability of the forestry industry will be impacted by other development activities (e.g., oil sands development) and the potential creation of additional conservation areas on the landscape that may constrain timber supplies. Natural wildfires are also likely to occur. Multiple strategies are needed to mitigate the short-term and long-term impacts of decreasing timber supplies.
- The government of Alberta needs to be proactive in supporting future population and economic growth in the region. This includes planning required infrastructure and using environmental management strategies so that the region's air, water and land remain healthy and sustainable.
- The use of air and water thresholds will help minimize the impacts of development on the region's air and water resources. Additional measures are needed to minimize impacts on land and biodiversity (e.g., fish and wildlife).

- Multiple strategies must be pursued to reduce the land footprint of industries, communities and Albertans. These include: integrated land management, timely and progressive reclamation, setting a disturbance threshold and managing access to certain lands.

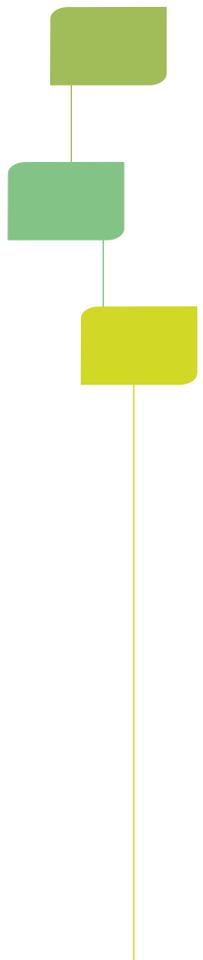
What is Recommended

2.1 Use land-use classifications to guide future land-use decisions

The RAC has proposed five new land-use classifications⁴ that identify land-use priorities to help guide future land-use decisions in the region. These are designed to provide greater certainty to Albertans, governments and industry about how lands will be managed, and how and where we will grow.

Land-use classification	Priority uses	Other uses
Agriculture	Agriculture, agri-forestry	Resource development, country residential, recreation and tourism
Conservation	Ecosystem integrity and conservation	Aboriginal and non-aboriginal traditional uses, limited primitive recreation and tourism, limited industrial activity (existing industries depart over time)
Mixed-use resource	Energy and timber production, managed in ways that minimize impacts on air, water, land and biodiversity, and respect integrity of cultural resources and aboriginal traditional uses	Recreation and tourism, work camp population centres, grazing, aboriginal traditional uses
Population centres	Residential, commercial and light industrial development, supporting uses (e.g., parks, civic uses)	
Recreation and tourism	Recreation and tourism, traditional uses, ecological conservation	Other land uses if recreation and tourism values can be maintained.

⁴These land-use classifications apply only to those lands under provincial and municipal control. Any lands that fall under federal control, including Department of National Defence installations and First Nations reserves, are not subject to these land-use classifications and will be managed separately. In addition, Métis Settlements do not fall under this land-use classification.



The RAC has also identified three overlays in the region. These span multiple land-use classifications and will require more detailed planning:

- **Lakeland Country** – Special recreation and tourism management planning area needed to develop an iconic destination for tourism and recreation. This will provide recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the region.
- **Multi-use corridors** – May include a combination of roads, railways, pipeline and utility corridors, trails and municipal infrastructure. By grouping these uses, the overall footprint in the region should be reduced.
- **River corridors** – Will require additional planning and management strategies to safeguard their ecological function. They also have important cultural and economic roles.

These land-use classifications will provide greater clarity around primary use, and how and where industry should and should not develop.

In addition to primary uses, land-use classifications will provide for other compatible activities. For example, agriculture areas could also be used for limited forestry or limited natural gas extraction. Each classification will have an established management intent, which will guide decisions about how land in that classification is used.

Share Your Views

4. How strongly do you agree with the recommendation for a land-use classification system as proposed above?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. How strongly do you agree that these land-use classifications are representative of values expressed in the LARP vision?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. How appropriate are the priority uses for each land-use classification?

	Too Broad	Appropriate	Too Narrow
Agriculture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conservation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixed-use resource	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Population centres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation and tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

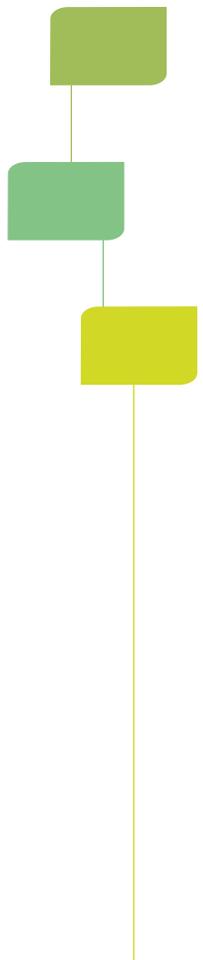
7. Please share any additional comments regarding the proposed land-use classification system.

2.2 Mitigate timber shortfalls

The RAC recommended a number of strategies for mitigating timber shortfalls that will be faced by the forestry industry over the long-term. These strategies are aimed at making strategic and optimal use of the region’s landscape, recognizing that the forest land base will be smaller in the future. The objective is to support the long-term viability of the forestry industry, in co-existence with the oil sands and agricultural industries.

Key strategies recommended by the RAC include:

- expand intensive, comprehensive forest management on public lands – this would mean increasing growth rates and use of trees from the timber lands that remain outside of conservation areas. It could require planting genetically superior trees, early control of competing vegetation, thinning and fertilization;
- require oil sands producers to minimize the size and duration of land disturbance – to optimize the remaining timber lands, enhanced practices would be required, such as narrower seismic lines, smaller well pads, harvesting trees before land disturbance and aggressive reclamation and reforestation programs;
- implement integrated land management – to minimize impacts on the landscape, companies would need to work with each other and the Alberta government to co-ordinate planning and share use of roads, seismic lines and other features;



- increase timber production from tree plantations on private lands – establishing tree plantations would also be a compatible use in the agriculture area. Private landowners could use their lands to grow timber, if they chose to do so. This would help mitigate timber losses in other parts of the region; and
- work to reduce timber losses due to natural factors – the use of hazard reduction programs, fire suppression and aggressive control of infestations could help reduce the amount of timber lost to these natural occurrences.

Share Your Views

8. The RAC suggested a number of key strategies for mitigating timber shortfalls to support the long-term viability of the forestry industry. Rank the following key strategies from most to least important for mitigating timber shortfalls. **Use each option (most – least important) only once.**

	Most important	Second	Third	Fourth	Least important
Expand intensive forest management on public land	<input type="radio"/>				
Require oil sands producers to minimize the size and duration of land disturbance	<input type="radio"/>				
Implement integrated land management	<input type="radio"/>				
Increase timber production from tree plantations on private land	<input type="radio"/>				
Work to reduce timber losses due to natural factors	<input type="radio"/>				

9. Please share any additional comments regarding the RAC’s recommendations related to mitigation of potential timber shortfalls.

2.3 Minimize land disturbance associated with industrial development

Over time, more industrial development (i.e., oil sands production) will occur in the region.

One strategy recommended by the RAC is the establishment of a land disturbance⁵ threshold for oil sands development. A land disturbance threshold would set an upper limit on the total amount of land in the mixed-use resource area that can be disturbed by industry at any point in time.

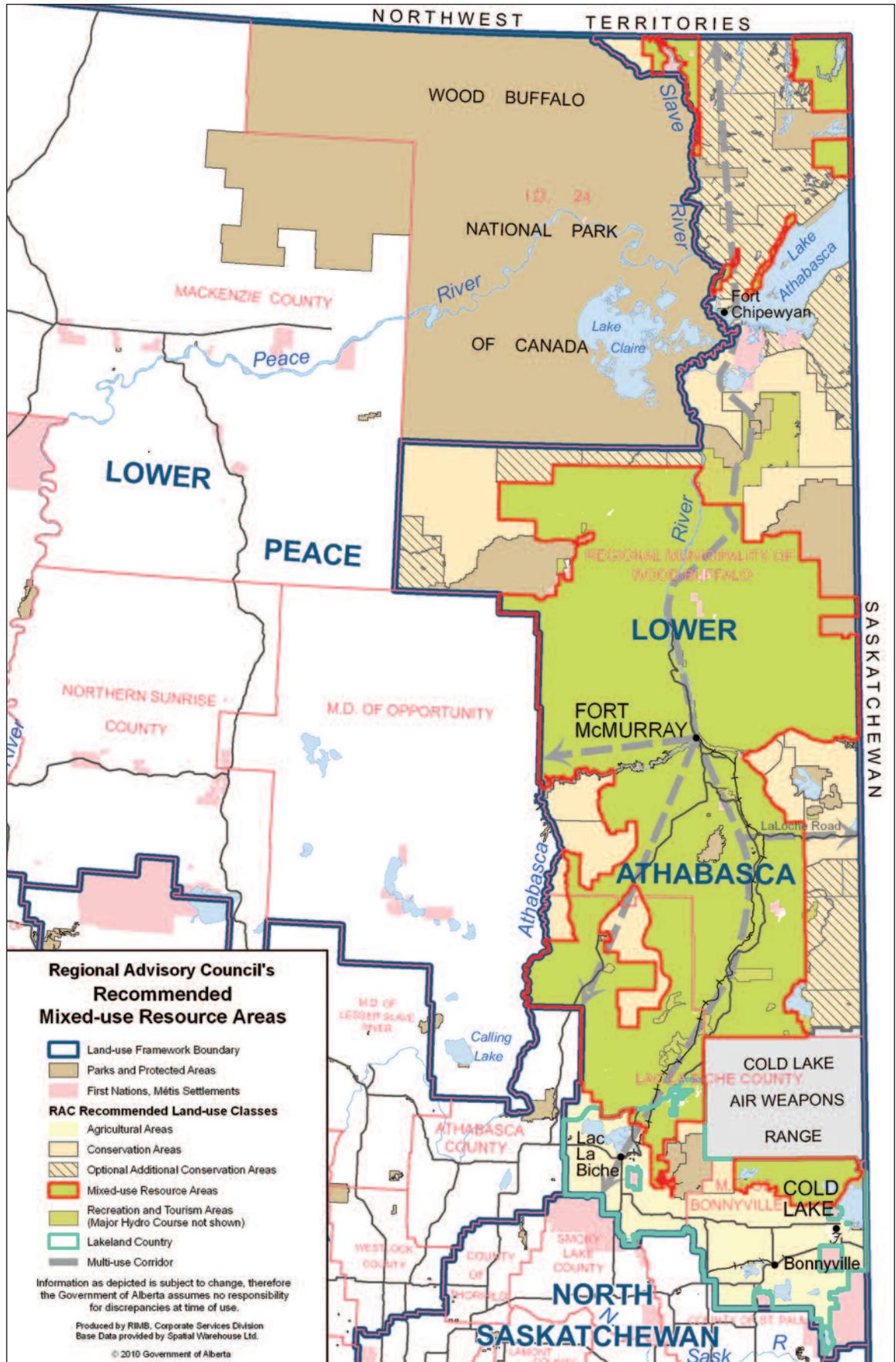
A land disturbance threshold would allow for increased economic development, but in ways that reduce the impact on the land. The threshold will encourage industries to co-ordinate their activities and use new technologies and process improvements that would minimize environmental impacts.

To stay under the land disturbance threshold, the timely and progressive reclamation of disturbed lands as industrial activities are completed will be increasingly important.

Mixed-use Resource Area

- Comprises approximately 60 per cent of the region's land area (based on a conservation target of 20 per cent).
- Mostly covered by forest.
- Underlain with rich oil sands resources, petroleum and natural gas, and mineral resources.
- Management intent: economic activity, managed in ways that minimize impact on land, air, biodiversity and water and respect integrity of cultural resources and aboriginal traditional uses.
- Primary uses: resource development (i.e., oil sands production, natural gas production, forestry, minerals development).

⁵ Once lands are reclaimed they are no longer considered disturbed.



Share Your Views

10. The RAC recommends setting a land disturbance threshold in the mixed-use resource area. How strongly do you agree with the need to establish a land disturbance threshold?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please share any additional comments regarding the proposed land disturbance threshold.



2.4 Reclaim and re-purpose lands in progressive fashion

The RAC recommends that reclaimed lands be planned and put to new uses that will help achieve the desired economic, environmental and social objectives for the region. Using this flexible approach, newly reclaimed land might be re-purposed for a variety of uses – such as conservation, recreation and tourism, forestry, community uses, traditional aboriginal uses or others.

One factor that slows the rate of reclamation is public use of some landscapes. People often use industry roads and linear features to access nearby lands for hunting, fishing, recreation or traditional uses. While these remain compatible activities, the Alberta government may need to manage public access to some areas if we want lands to be reclaimed progressively and in a timely fashion.

Share Your Views

12. The RAC proposes that disturbed lands be progressively reclaimed and re-purposed for a variety of new uses based on the evolving needs of the region. How strongly do you agree with this recommendation?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Please share any additional comments regarding progressive reclamation and re-purposing to a variety of other uses.

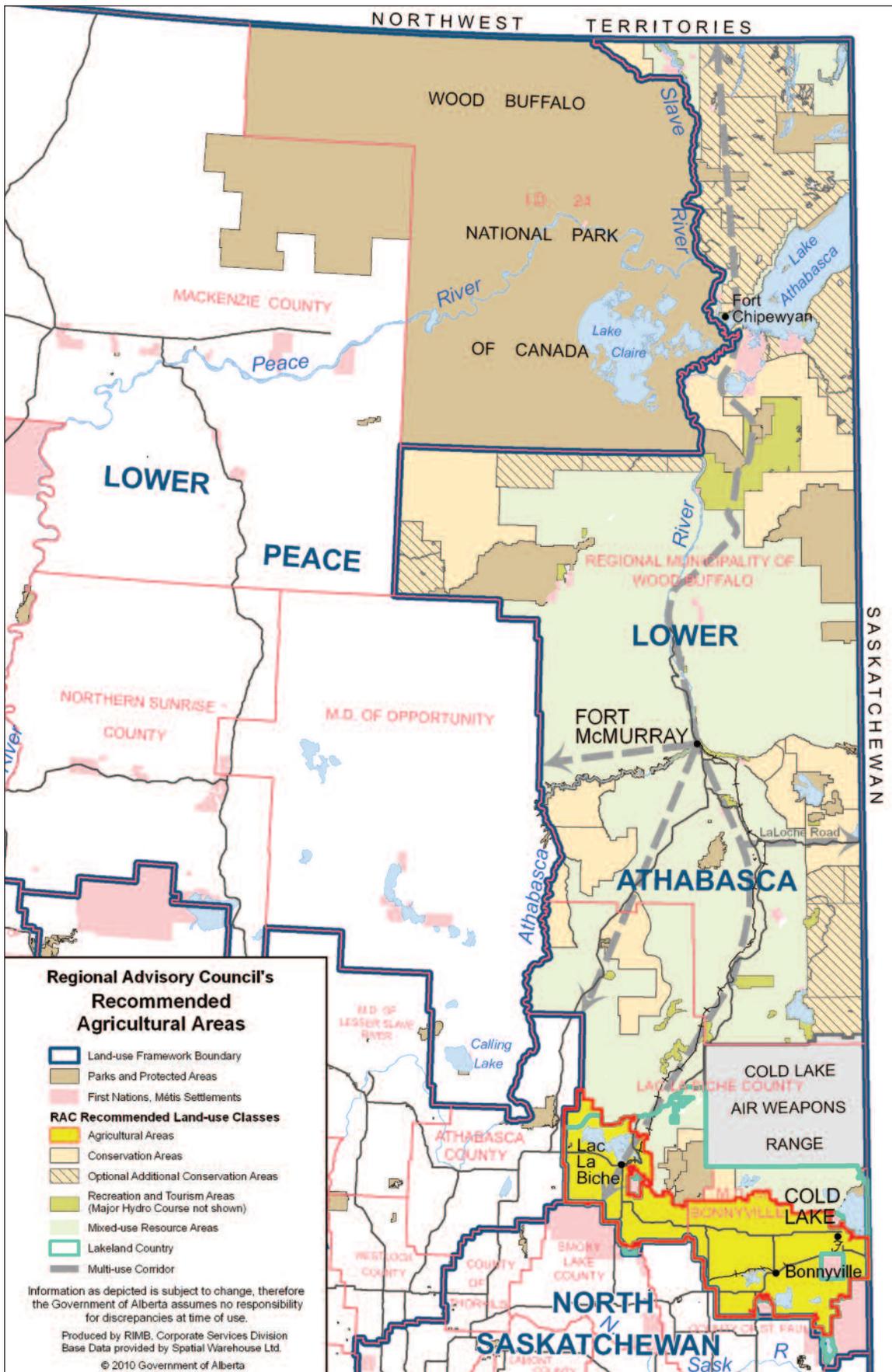
2.5 Agricultural lands

The RAC recommends maintaining overall agricultural productivity in the most productive agricultural areas in the region. Where economically practical, some areas of agricultural land should be utilized for tree plantations. Agricultural lands should be encouraged through stewardship actions to support wildlife diversity and water quality.

The RAC also recommends that in the agricultural areas underlain with oil sands deposits, subsurface development should proceed predominantly through the use of in situ techniques, allowing agricultural uses to continue where compatible. Intensive resource development is an overriding temporary use to ensure resource utilization, provided it is done in a manner to reduce impact on agriculture. Other uses, such as country residential development and recreation and tourism, may be permitted when consistent with provincial and municipal policies.

Agricultural Areas

- Approximately seven per cent of the region's land area.
- Mainly privately-owned lands in southern part of region.
- Mostly used for crops, pasture, livestock production.
- Also have value for aesthetics and wildlife habitat.
- Management intent: maintain agricultural productivity in the most productive current agricultural areas.
- Primary uses: agriculture and agri-forestry.



Share Your Views

14. Please share any additional comments regarding the RAC’s advice on agriculture areas.

2.6 Plan infrastructure in anticipation of future growth

Economic and population growth in the Lower Athabasca Region needs to be supported. The RAC recommends that the Government of Alberta proactively plan, fund and develop infrastructure in anticipation of economic and population growth.

The RAC suggests that these efforts be closely tied to the approval process for new resource development projects. This would improve alignment between the region’s growth and the region’s capacity to support that growth.

Share Your Views

15. The RAC proposes that the government proactively plan and develop infrastructure in anticipation of economic and population growth. How strongly do you agree with this recommendation?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Please share any additional comments regarding the RAC’s recommendations on infrastructure planning in the region.

Advice Requested of the RAC

The RAC was asked to assess and advise which lands in the region could contribute to a conservation objective of approximately 20 per cent of the region, consistent with the following guidelines:

- observe the key criteria for establishing conservation lands;
- demonstrate how the conservation scenario can be met, while minimizing and limiting any negative impacts, including mineral tenure and fiscal implications; and
- explore the feasibility of meeting a conservation scenario higher than 20 per cent, while achieving the stated economic objectives.

The RAC was provided the following key criteria for establishing conservation areas:

- areas with little or no industrial activity;
- areas that support aboriginal traditional uses;
- areas that are representative of the biological diversity of the area (e.g., landforms, species, vegetation);
- areas that provide landscape connectivity; and
- areas of sufficient size (i.e., roughly 4,000-5,000 km²).

What was Learned

- Conservation areas contribute to maintaining ecological systems and processes, including healthy air, water and biodiversity. Conservation areas also provide an important baseline, enabling us to assess our environmental performance in developed areas with reference to natural ecological values.
- Establishing conservation areas is important for maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife, including species at risk. However, this alone is not enough to address species at risk in the region, such as the woodland caribou. Other strategies will also be required.
- Conservation areas are important for supporting aboriginal traditional use.
- Currently, six per cent of the region's land base is designated as legislated parks and protected areas, which contribute to conservation objectives. The RAC identified another 14 per cent of the region's land base that meet the key criteria for conservation areas. The RAC believes it is possible to reach a conservation objective of 20 per cent in the region while achieving substantially increased oil sands production.
- Many proposed conservation lands provide connectivity to Wood Buffalo National Park, existing conservation areas and each other, and would thereby support wildlife movement and habitat stability.

- Some of the proposed conservation areas are underlain with energy (oil sands and petroleum and natural gas) and metallic and industrial resources, and many of the areas have been allocated for energy and mineral tenure. Some proposed conservation areas also have existing forestry tenure. Changing these lands into conservation areas may require compensation to the forestry or energy and mineral companies if their existing tenure in these areas is cancelled. Some would also reduce the amount of lands available for timber production, creating challenges for the forestry industry.
- Resource companies may develop and use new technologies that make it possible for companies to extract resources underlying conservation areas.

What is Recommended

3.1 Allow for other compatible land uses in conservation areas

One of the five land-use classifications recommended by the RAC is conservation areas. This classification will have an established management intent, as well as approved, non-approved and priority land uses.

While the primary intent of these areas is maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem function, some specific areas will have other important purposes. For instance, some areas will provide functional habitat for woodland caribou as a key priority. Other areas involve a high frequency of aboriginal traditional uses – such as subsistence hunting and fishing, berry picking and ceremonies – which must continue as priorities.

Conservation Areas

- Currently about six per cent of the region's land area (designated as legislated parks and protected areas).
- All publicly owned lands.
- Management intent: maintain ecological systems and processes, including biodiversity.
- Primary uses: ecosystem integrity and conservation.
- Also valued for primitive recreation and aboriginal traditional use.

Allowed

Existing sustainable levels of hunting, fishing and trapping.

Recreation/tourism (primitive).

Motorized access may be permitted in some conservation areas. Where permitted, they will be restricted to designated trails and staging areas (includes guiding/outfitting).

Aboriginal traditional use (hunting, fishing for subsistence needs, berry picking, ceremonial activities, motorized access to staging points in specific areas to ensure access for exercise of treaty rights).

Multi-use corridors (only when other options are not available).

Activities to protect the forest from wildfire, insects and disease.

Existing uses, such as conventional oil and gas, will be permitted to continue but will terminate when existing mineral tenure expire.

Not Allowed

Timber harvesting (except for protection of the area from wildfire, insects and disease).

No new tenure will be issued.



3.2 Lands which would support a conservation objective of 20 per cent or greater

The RAC identified a number of lands that could contribute to increasing the amount of conservation lands to 20 per cent of the region's land base. The RAC also identified a number of additional landscapes that could be conserved to achieve a higher percentage of conservation lands. Refer to the accompanying numbered map for the geographic location of each potential conservation area.

While these additional areas offer connectivity, and many also coincide with known migration and habitat patterns of remaining woodland caribou, many of these lands may be underlain with oil sands deposits, petroleum and natural gas or with metallic and industrial minerals such as uranium, gold and building stone.

The RAC has recommended a number of strategies to minimize the costs to industry associated with establishing conservation areas, such as honouring existing commitments.

Share Your Views

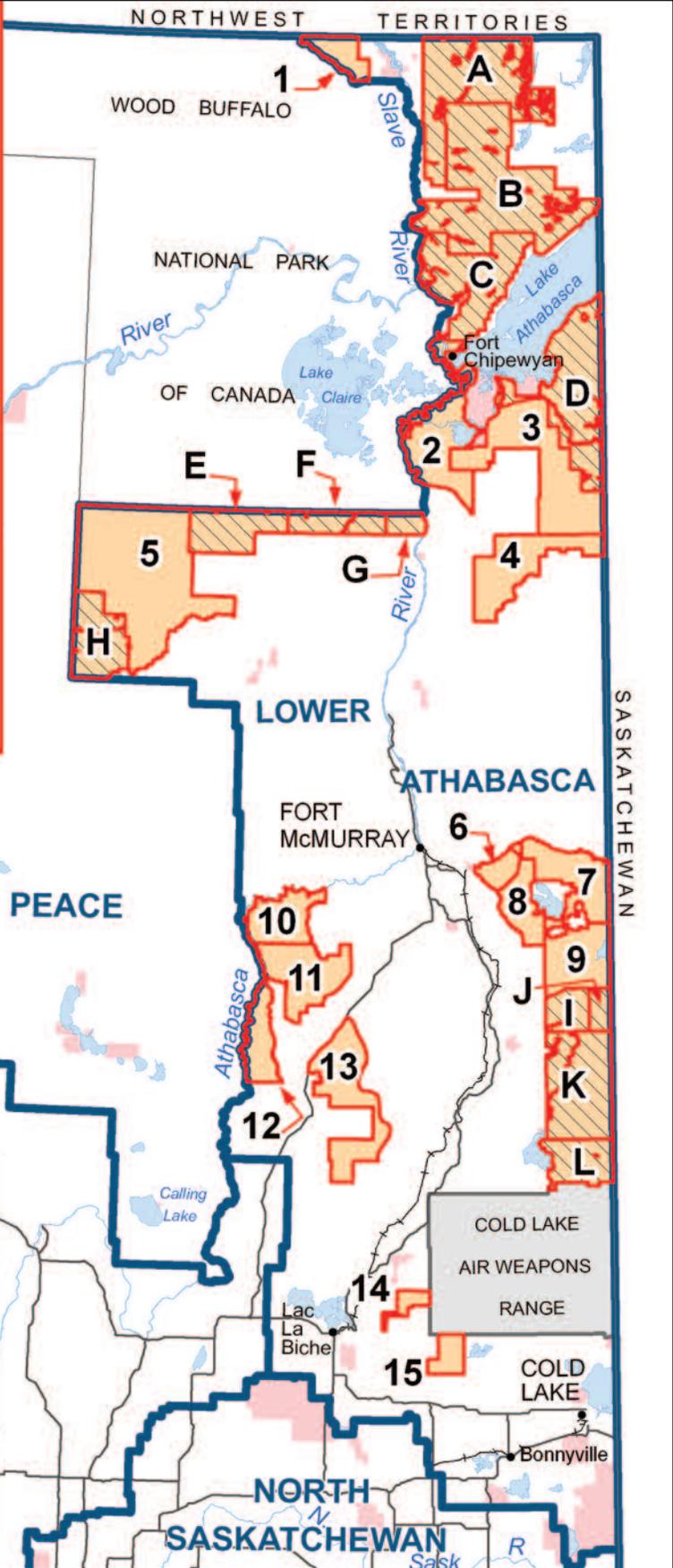
17. Rank the importance of the following factors/considerations from most to least important when deciding which landscapes to conserve.

Use each option (most – least important) only once.

	Most important	Second	Third	Fourth	Least important
Creating areas that are large in size and well connected	<input type="radio"/>				
Minimizing the economic costs to Albertans	<input type="radio"/>				
Matching the habitat patterns of the woodland caribou	<input type="radio"/>				
Protecting the most environmentally sensitive lands and features	<input type="radio"/>				
Ensuring conservation lands are dispersed throughout the region	<input type="radio"/>				

18. The RAC has proposed a number of lands for designation as conservation areas. Rate the importance of each of the proposed conservation lands. You only need to rate the ones you wish.

- CONSERVATION AREAS**
- 1 Salt River
 - 2 Peace-Athabasca Delta
 - 3 Maybelle River
 - 4 Richardson
 - 5 Birch River
 - 6 Clearwater South
 - 7 Gordon Lake/Clearwater
 - 8 Gordon Lake West
 - 9 Gipsy Lake
 - 10 Algar North
 - 11 Algar South
 - 12 Algar SW
 - 13 House River
 - 14 Lakeland North
 - 15 Lakeland South
- OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION AREAS**
- A Canadian Shield
 - B Wylie Lakes
 - C Athabasca Lake North
 - D Big Point Channel/Athabasca Plain
 - E Alice Creek
 - F Alice Creek East
 - G Berdenskies
 - H Birch River South
 - I Bohn
 - J Bohn East
 - K Bohn South
 - L Winefred Lake



**Regional Advisory Council's
Recommended
Conservation Areas**

- Land-use Framework Boundary
- First Nations, Métis Settlements
- RAC Recommended Conservation Areas**
- Conservation Areas
- Optional Additional Conservation Areas

Information as depicted is subject to change, therefore the Government of Alberta assumes no responsibility for discrepancies at time of use.

Produced by RIMB, Corporate Services Division
Base Data provided by Spatial Warehouse Ltd.
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	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
1. Salt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Peace-Athabasca Delta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Maybelle River	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Richardson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Birch River	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Clearwater South	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Gordon Lake/Clearwater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Gordon Lake West	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Gipsy Lake	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Algar North	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Algar South	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Algar SW	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. House River	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Lakeland North	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Lakeland South	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Identify your top three priorities from the list above.

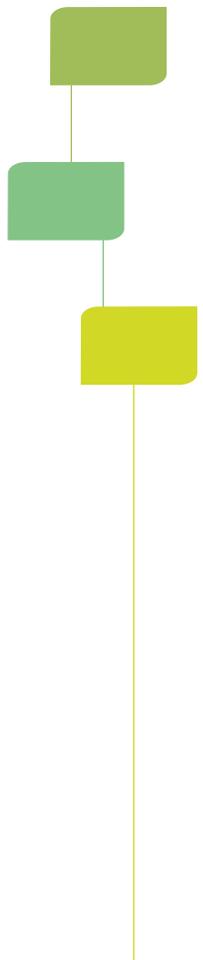
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

20. RAC Recommended additional conservation areas for greater than 20 per cent conservation target. Rate the proposed additional conservation areas:

	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
A. Canadian Shield	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Wylie Lakes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Athabasca Lake North	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Big Point Channel/Athabasca Plain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Alice Creek	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. Alice Creek East	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
G. Berdenskies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
H. Birch River South	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I. Bohn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
J. Bohn East	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K. Bohn South	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L. Winefred Lake	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Identify your top three priorities from the list above.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



22. Is there an area you would like to see conserved that has not been proposed by the RAC? If so, explain why. Identify up to three additional areas.

Area	Reason

23. Please share any additional comments regarding land conservation objectives in the region.

Advice Requested of the RAC

The Alberta government will be establishing regional thresholds for air and water. The RAC was asked to use the established watershed and airshed thresholds to develop its advice, consistent with the following guidelines:

- assess the three economic development scenarios with reference to the specified regional cumulative environmental thresholds for air and water; and
- where both the economic and environmental objectives cannot be satisfied in all scenarios, assess the options and recommend the preferred option.

What was Learned

- The limiting factor to economic growth in the region is access to skilled labour. Originally, it was assumed that environmental factors, specifically access to water, would limit future economic growth in the region. In any case, future development in the region must be undertaken in ways that minimize the impact on the region's air and water.
- The government needs to shift to a regional approach for managing the cumulative effects of development. While each new development has incremental effects on air and water, all developments together have a cumulative impact. These cumulative impacts must be considered as decisions are made about managing existing and future activities on the landscape.
- Air and water thresholds need to be established. These will serve as maximum allowable impacts on the air and water in the region. Triggers will also need to be put in place at lower levels, to proactively address early warning signals that changes are occurring in the region's air and water.
- Alberta Environment is developing regional management frameworks for air, surface water and groundwater. The management frameworks describe how air quality, surface water quality and groundwater quality and quantity will be protected. A framework calls for investigation and consideration of the need for management actions when a trigger is reached, in order to minimize impacts and prevent them from reaching unacceptable levels. Frameworks also set the foundation for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting of results to Albertans.

What is Recommended

4.1 Develop robust environmental management frameworks

The RAC recommended that the Government of Alberta ensure that air and water management frameworks are in place and effective. This means the frameworks should be enforceable and support clear, strong regional regulations and thresholds.

The use of management frameworks should provide greater assurance that the region’s air and water will be kept healthy. Industries, and other land users in the region having an impact on the environment, will need to work together and use innovative practices and technologies to ensure their impacts stay below the established air and water thresholds.

To support the regional thresholds, local place-based triggers and limits may also be set and levels monitored to help us understand how the localized impacts of developments are contributing to region-wide impacts.

When air or water impacts reach a trigger level, a series of actions in accordance with the applicable air or water management framework must be taken by stakeholders and government. Actions could include: reducing the amount of pollutants being emitted, limiting water use and other remedial strategies. The goal is to proactively address issues so that local impacts do not lead to region-wide stresses.

New regional environmental management frameworks are being developed for air, surface water and groundwater. Specifically, the frameworks focus on ambient air quality for two pollutants of interest (nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide) across the region, water quality on the Lower Athabasca River and groundwater quantity and quality across the region.

In addition to the frameworks for air and water, the RAC suggested the creation of a land and biodiversity framework to monitor and manage impacts to these components of the environment.

24. How strongly do you agree with the RAC’s recommendations to establish air and water thresholds, limits and triggers?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Based on the description provided earlier, how strongly do you agree that establishing and using air and water management frameworks will improve management of the region’s air and water?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. How strongly do you agree with the RAC's suggestion that a land and biodiversity framework be developed and implemented?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Please share any additional comments regarding the RAC's recommendations on air and water management frameworks.

4.2 Develop improved regional monitoring and reporting processes

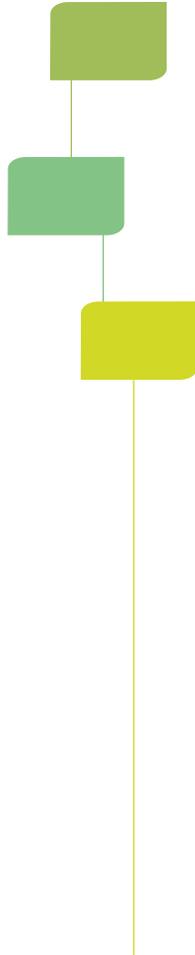
Systems for monitoring emissions and ambient conditions related to air and water already exist in many parts of the region. With the shift to a regional cumulative effects management approach, there needs to be enhanced monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The RAC recommended that the Alberta government ensure consistency in monitoring and reporting, and identify opportunities to streamline this work. Improved monitoring processes will reduce costs, eliminate duplicate efforts and lead to improved results and analysis.

Share Your Views

28. How strongly do you agree with the RAC's recommendations to improve regional monitoring and reporting?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Please share any additional comments regarding the RAC's recommendations on improving reporting and monitoring.



Section 5: Human Development Considerations

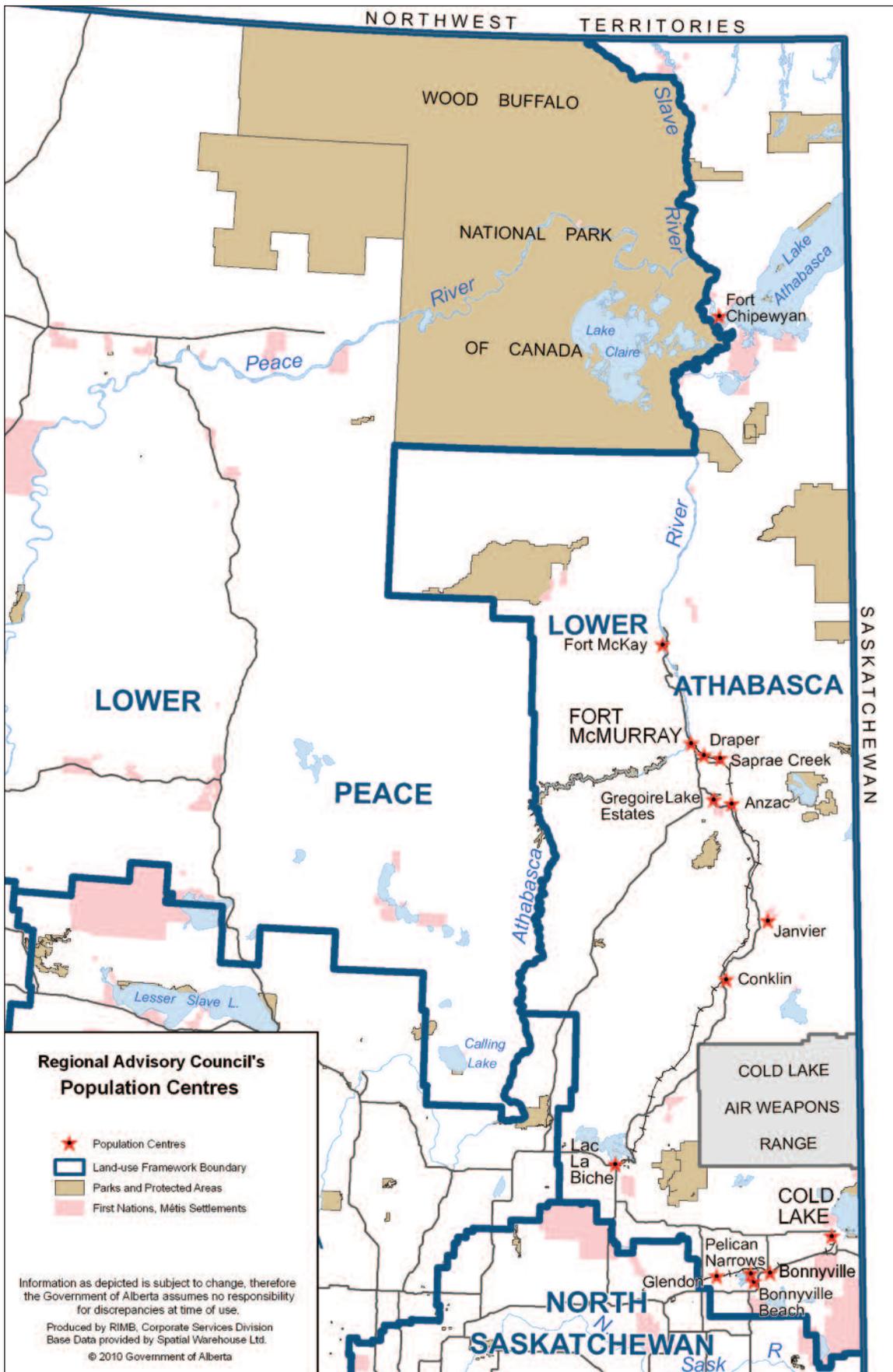
Advice Requested of the RAC

Recognizing the inter-related nature of economic, environmental and social objectives, the RAC was asked to:

- consider options for tourism development with emphasis on Lakeland Country;
- consider options for recreational development, including advice on effective management of recreation activities on provincial Crown land;
- provide advice on the general location of major transportation and utility corridors in the region and the considerations that must be addressed by the Alberta government in planning the specific locations;
- provide advice on the implications associated with the three economic development scenarios as they affect population growth and labour needs; and
- provide advice on the impacts to aboriginal communities as well as treaty and other constitutional rights exercised by members of those communities.

What was Learned

- The majority of the population in the region lives in the urban centres of Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Lac La Biche and the town of Bonnyville. Residential development in the region is heavily influenced by economic growth and opportunity, which are in turn influenced by market forces. The limiting factor to economic growth in the region is access to skilled labour. The region will need to accommodate increases in population to support the labour force needs of additional economic development.
- Recreation opportunities are fundamental to attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, necessary to meet anticipated growth. Current recreation opportunities are not meeting the needs of the current residents or visitors, and the region is not well positioned to meet the recreational needs for the future. Recreation and tourism are also major contributors to the region's economy. Growth in the region's population generates significant demand for managed recreation spaces and opportunities that contribute to the quality of life in the region. Recreation and tourism also present important economic development and diversification opportunities for the region.
- Population growth has contributed to increased recreational use of public lands. These activities can have impacts on land and biodiversity. To achieve environmental objectives in the region, the Alberta government needs to better manage human access to public lands.
- Given the region's economic and population growth, infrastructure planning and development is especially important in the Lower Athabasca Region. Infrastructure pressures are being addressed through studies that encourage and support inter-municipal planning. The establishment of multi-use corridors can help concentrate linear infrastructure such as roads and pipelines in a smaller footprint.



Population Centres

- Located throughout the region.
- Primary uses: residential, commercial and light industrial development, and supporting uses (e.g., parks, civic uses).

What is Recommended

5.1 Plan for population growth as new resource developments are approved

The RAC envisions that population centres be encouraged to plan for efficiently serviced development. To support this, the RAC feels that population centres should also be a land-use classification. This will reduce costs to municipalities in delivering services, reduce impacts on natural features near communities and limit the amount of land that must be removed from other uses (e.g., forestry, energy and agricultural land-related uses) to support the growth of urban boundaries.

Future population increases in the region will largely be associated with increased economic development, primarily oil sands development.

Increased population in an area can put pressure on its social and physical infrastructure. The RAC notes that the Alberta government must help support municipal planning efforts by considering the population impacts of new resource developments as they are approved, and by planning and developing infrastructure in anticipation of the development.

Share Your Views

30. Please share any your comments regarding the RAC's advice on population centres.

5.2 Establish recreation and tourism areas that provide a variety of opportunities and meet the preferences of residents and tourists

The RAC recommends a land-use classification for recreation and tourism areas, and it identified proposed recreation and tourism lands in the region using the following criteria:

- desirability of area for recreation;
- proximity to population centres, including ease of access;
- compatibility with other land uses, both existing and proposed; and
- existing management intent.

The tourism potential of the region has yet to be realized. The RAC believes there is a significant opportunity to help diversify the regional economy by focusing on the tourism industry and the region's tourism assets. Specifically, the RAC recommended that the provincially unique tourism potential of Lakeland Country be maximized by:

- developing the area as Alberta's next year-round iconic tourism destination, providing a full range of activities, with a particular focus on the provincially unique water-based features and rich culture/heritage;
- establishing an iconic tourism development and management plan; and
- developing and implementing a plan for conserving, interpreting and protecting historic resources based on Alberta Culture and Community Spirit's Provincial Master Plan, with priority to Fort Chipewyan, Bitumount, Quarry of the Ancestors, Lac La Biche Mission and the Clearwater River.

Parks and Protected Areas

- Approximately three per cent of the region's land area.
- Builds upon existing recreation and tourism areas.
- Majority of areas include lakes and sites with regional historical significance.
- Unique and important areas include: Quarry of the Ancestors, Fort Chipewyan and the Richardson Backcountry.
- Leverages Lakeland Country as an iconic recreation and tourism destination.
- Management intent: provide variety of recreation and tourism opportunities for local residents and non-local visitors.
- Primary uses: recreation and tourism, traditional uses, ecological conservation.

Lakeland Country has the potential to attract significant numbers of visitors from the province and elsewhere. The tourism industry in this area is to be emphasized and promoted.

The RAC recommended that recreational opportunities in the region be enhanced by:

- maintaining the integrity of natural and built recreation and tourism features within the region;
- ensuring cross-jurisdictional planning, development and renewal of indoor recreation facilities and infrastructure;
- expanding the region’s campground capacity with priority given to expansion/enhancement of the Birch Lake campsite in Gipsy Lake Wildland Provincial Park;
- maintaining the integrity of the region’s scenic areas;
- planning and developing a designated regional trail system; and
- designating some reclaimed lands from the mixed-use resource areas as new recreation and tourism areas.

The RAC has identified a number of strategies to change the current approach to recreation management on public lands by ensuring recreational use of public lands is actively planned and managed. The RAC recommended:

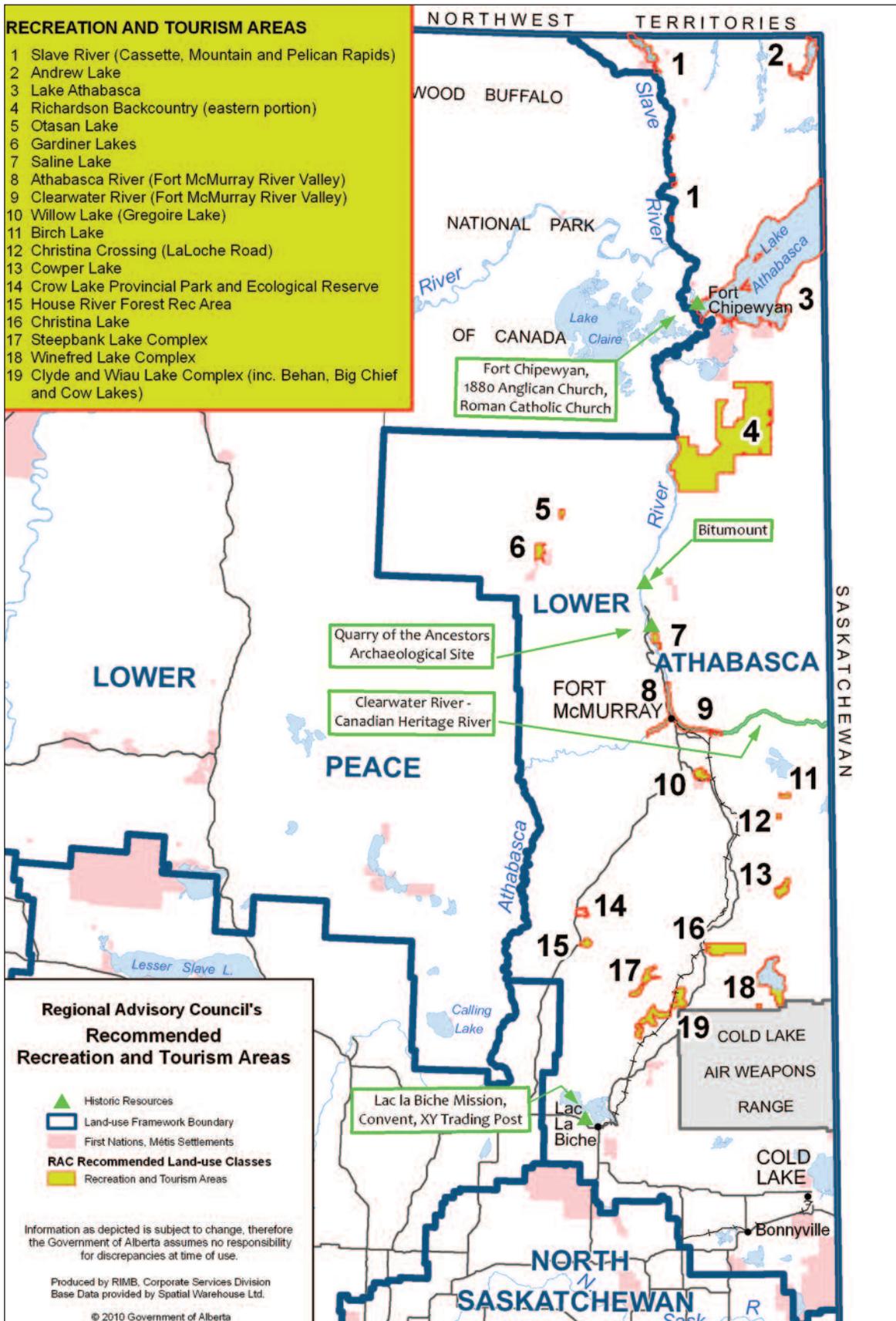
- clarifying and enforcing where intensive, higher impact and commercial recreation activities can occur;
- enhancing and ensuring timely, fair and firm enforcement;
- improving education and outreach programs like Respect the Land and access to information about managed recreational opportunities; and
- managing access to recreational water bodies and recreational areas to maintain their integrity and limit their overuse.

Share Your Views

31. How strongly do you agree with each of the following strategies to enhance recreation and tourism opportunities in the region?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Expanding the region’s campground capacity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning and developing a designated regional trail system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Designating some reclaimed land as new recreational and tourism areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing Lakeland Country as an iconic year-round provincial tourism destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. The RAC has proposed a number of lands for designation as recreation and tourism areas. Rate the importance of each area as a recreation and tourism resource. You only need to rate the ones you would like.



	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
1. Slave River (Cassette, Mountain and Pelican Rapids)	○	○	○
2. Andrew Lake	○	○	○
3. Lake Athabasca	○	○	○
4. Richardson Backcountry (eastern portion)	○	○	○
5. Otasan Lake	○	○	○
6. Gardiner Lakes	○	○	○
7. Saline Lake	○	○	○
8. Athabasca River (Fort McMurray River Valley)	○	○	○
9. Clearwater River (Fort McMurray River Valley)	○	○	○
10. Willow Lake (Gregoire Lake)	○	○	○
11. Birch Lake	○	○	○
12. Christina Crossing (La Loche Road)	○	○	○
13. Cowper Lake	○	○	○
14. Crow Lake Provincial Park and Ecological Reserve	○	○	○
15. House River Forest Recreation Area	○	○	○
16. Christina Lake	○	○	○
17. Steepbank Lake Complex	○	○	○
18. Winefred Lake Complex	○	○	○
19. Clyde and Wiau Lake Complex (inc. Behan, Big Chief and Cow lakes)	○	○	○

33. Identify your top three priorities from the list on page 34.

Area	Reason



34. Do you have any other comments regarding the RAC's recommendations on recreation and tourism?

5.3 Plan for and manage the recreational use of public lands

Public activities on public lands (such as hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, random camping, traditional uses) can also have direct and indirect impacts on land biodiversity and public safety. For example, forestry roads enable people to access remote areas for random motorized vehicle use – this can impact land management, reclamation efforts and fish and wildlife habitats.

Hunting, fishing, recreation and aboriginal traditional uses are important activities for many residents and visitors in the Lower Athabasca Region. Government and residents of the region also want to maintain healthy lands and populations of fish and wildlife.

The RAC recommends that public access to these lands be planned and managed in ways that will minimize impacts on land biodiversity and public safety. This could mean limiting access to certain areas at certain times, and designating specific areas for specific uses. For example, the government would clarify where motorized recreational access may occur.

Share Your Views

35. How strongly do you agree that access to public lands has to be managed.

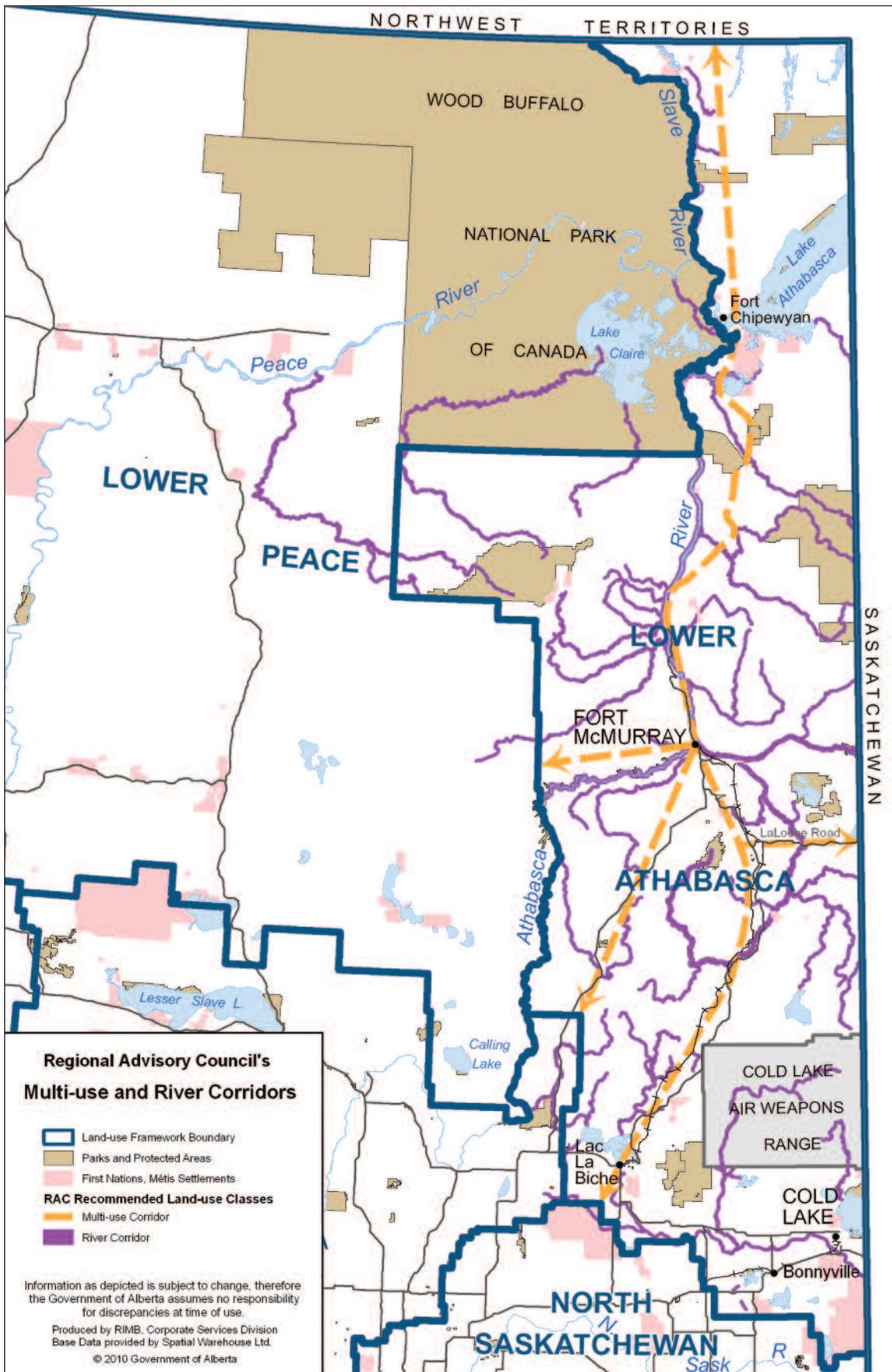
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. Please share any additional comments regarding the RAC’s recommendations on managing recreational access to public lands.

5.4 Detailed planning of multi-use corridors

The RAC has identified the need for multi-use corridors in the region based on development expectations over 50 years. It suggests that these general corridor alignments be incorporated in the regional plan, and that more detailed planning is required within these corridors for alignment of infrastructure within them. These corridors are intended to be part of a provincial system that would extend beyond the region:

- north/south corridor linking the Fort McMurray area with the Industrial Heartland;
- north/south corridor linking the Fort McMurray area and the Northwest Territories;
- north/south corridor linking the Fort McMurray area and Lac La Biche, aligned along Highway 881; and
- east/west corridor linking the Fort McMurray area to La Loche, Saskatchewan to the east and Red Earth Creek to the west, along the conceptual Highway 686.



Share Your Views

37. Multi-use corridors are proposed to provide better long-term transportation and utility connections to areas within and adjacent to the Lower Athabasca Region, while reducing the fragmentation of lands. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following proposed multi-use corridors?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
North/south linking the Industrial Heartland and the Fort McMurray area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
North/south linking Fort McMurray and the Northwest Territories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
North/south linking Fort McMurray and Lac La Biche along Highway 881	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
East/west linking Fort McMurray to La Loche, SK (east) and Red Earth Creek (west) along the conceptual Highway 686	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

38. Please share any additional comments regarding multi-use corridors in the region.

5.5 Work with aboriginal communities in key areas to achieve regional objectives

Twelve First Nations reserve lands, two Métis Settlements and several communities with high Métis populations are in the Lower Athabasca Region. Traditional uses occur throughout the region. Activities in the region can have impacts for aboriginal peoples and communities.

As the region has evolved over time, there have also been changes to the traditional way of life for aboriginal peoples. In light of these changes, it is important to make use of opportunities for aboriginal peoples to participate more fully in the region's growth and evolution.

The RAC recognizes that consultation with aboriginal peoples needs to occur to see how and where they see themselves fitting into the process. With this in mind, the RAC recommends that the Alberta government continue to collaborate with aboriginal peoples to develop engagement strategies, and develop formal roles and accountabilities for aboriginal peoples in future land-use planning, environmental assessment and monitoring, stewardship, reclamation and reuse. The RAC recommends this include using aboriginal traditional knowledge when developing ecological indicators and management frameworks.

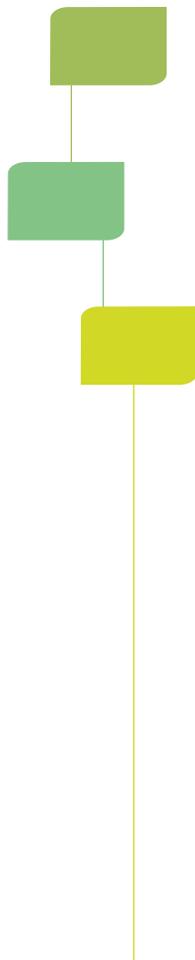
Access management will be important for ensuring respect for aboriginal peoples' treaty and other constitutional rights to activities on public land. Respecting the integrity of known significant cultural resources and aboriginal traditional use are important.

Share Your Views

39. How strongly do you agree with each of the following recommendations of the RAC related to better collaboration with aboriginal peoples?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop formal roles and responsibilities to participate in land-use planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop formal roles and responsibilities in environmental assessment and monitoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop formal roles and responsibilities in stewardship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop formal roles and responsibilities in reclamation and reuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. Please share any additional comments regarding the recommendations from the RAC on better collaboration with aboriginal peoples.





Section 6: Next Steps

Thank you for sharing your views.

Your input on the advice and recommendations of the RAC are vital for shaping the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan. A summary of the results of this workbook and the consultation process will be made available through the Land-use Framework website at landuse.alberta.ca. Additional information on the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan and its progress can also be found on the Land-use Framework website.

Informed by the input and feedback of Albertans, the Government of Alberta will develop a draft regional plan for the Lower Athabasca Region. The draft plan will be presented to Albertans in 2011 for feedback before a final regional plan is completed.

41. Please share any additional comments you may have regarding the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan.

42. Where is your primary residence?

Alberta, in the Lower Athabasca Region	Alberta, outside of the Lower Athabasca Region	Canada, in a province other than Alberta	Outside of Canada
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43. What are the first three characters of your postal code?

_____ Live outside of Canada _____

44. Do you participate in recreation and tourism experiences within the Lower Athabasca Region?

Yes	No
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

45. Do you currently work within the Lower Athabasca Region?

Yes	No
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. Are you employed by or associated with any of the following? Check all that apply:

Public sector (federal/provincial/municipal government)	<input type="radio"/>
Industry (energy, forestry, agriculture, tourism and others)	<input type="radio"/>
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	<input type="radio"/>
An aboriginal community	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>



47. To which age group do you belong?

17 or under	<input type="radio"/>
18 - 34	<input type="radio"/>
35 - 49	<input type="radio"/>
50 - 64	<input type="radio"/>
65 or greater	<input type="radio"/>

48. Would like to be added to the LARP mailing list? If so, please enter your email address below. Your email address will not be used to identify your responses to any of the workbook questions.

"The collection of this personal information is authorized under section 33(c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the privacy provisions of that Act will protect your information. Your personal information is being collected to allow the Land Use Secretariat to provide you with additional information about the Land-use Framework initiative. If you have any questions about the collection or use of this information, please contact the Consultation Coordinator, Land Use Secretariat, 10035 - 108 St. Edmonton AB T5J 3E1 or by phone at 780-644-7974.

Thank you for sharing your views by completing this workbook.

To submit print versions of the completed workbook mail the workbook to:

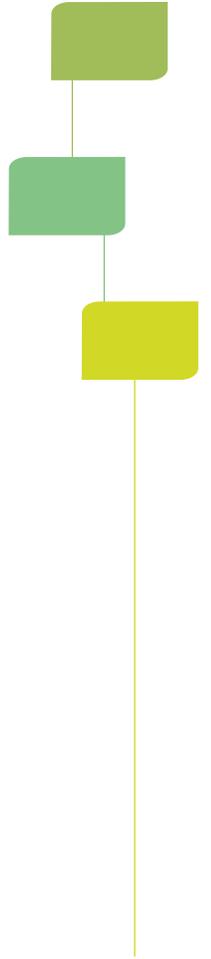
LARP Phase 2 Workbook
c/o Stantec Consulting, PC 1165
200 - 325 25th Street SE
Calgary, Alberta T2A 7H8

The workbook may also be submitted at any local Sustainable Resource Development office in the region.

The deadline for submission of this workbook is October 8, 2010.

Additional Comments

Please list the number of the section or question you are making additional comments about.

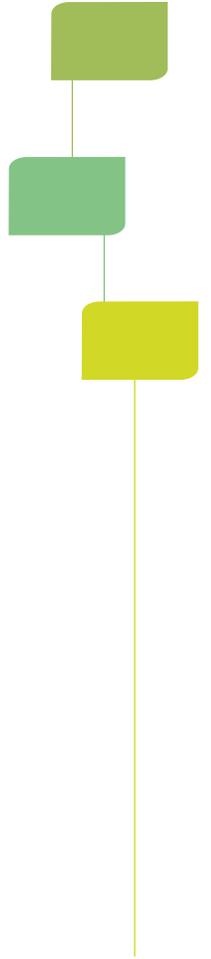


Additional Comments

Please list the number of the section or question you are making additional comments about.

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