

Phase 2 Public Consultation Summary

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan



SOUTH



Overview

Alberta's Land-use Framework (LUF) sets out a new approach to managing our province's lands and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals. One of the key strategies for improving land-use decision-making established in the LUF is the development of seven regional plans based on seven new land-use regions. Each regional plan will address the current conditions in that particular region, and will anticipate and plan for relevant development-related activities, opportunities and challenges over the long term.

In 2008, the Government of Alberta announced the LUF and said it would proceed first with the Lower Athabasca and South Saskatchewan regional plans. The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) – the regional plan for Alberta's oil sands region in the northeast area of the province – was approved by the Government of Alberta and it became effective September 1, 2012. Implementation is underway. Development of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) continues.

Regional plans are developed in consultation with Albertans, including a wide variety of stakeholders, aboriginal people and municipalities. Regional advisory councils, comprising individuals with a cross-section of expertise and experience, are appointed to provide advice to the government on the development of the regional plan. The South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council (RAC) was established in May of 2009. Based on an approved terms of reference the council was asked to explore the relationship between water, population growth, economic development and land conservation. The RAC provided its advice to the government in 2011 and completed its work.

The Alberta government's Land Use Secretariat (LUS) oversees the development of each regional plan and is responsible for reporting and monitoring the success of the plans. LUS provides policy analysis, research and administrative support to the regional plan development process, and leads the consultations for all seven regional plans. The secretariat works with a larger regional planning team, representing Alberta government ministries and agencies, to develop regional plans for Cabinet approval.

The government consulted on the advice provided by the South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council in late 2012 through an online workbook and a series of public and stakeholder consultations held in 20 locations (cities, towns and villages).



Consultations

The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) will be developed with the input and feedback of Albertans through a three-phase consultation process:

Phase 1: input on issues in the region

Phase 2: feedback on advice from the South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council

Phase 3: feedback on the draft SSRP

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Phase 1 consultation, public and stakeholder input sessions were conducted in 16 locations across the region between November 30 and December 10, 2009. The purpose of these sessions was to:

- Provide the public and stakeholders with information about the South Saskatchewan regional planning process,
- Gather input on topics raised in the SSRP terms of reference.

In March 2011, the SSRP Regional Advisory Council advice and Phase 2 workbook were released. In addition to completed workbooks, written submissions were accepted up to December 21, 2012.

SSRP Phase 2 consultations were carried out between November 6 and December 6, 2012 and had two key objectives:

- Review the Regional Advisory Council's advice with representatives of key stakeholder groups throughout 17 communities in the region and in Edmonton, Red Deer and Drumheller;
- Seek input and feedback on RAC's advice according to the following questions for the five key topic areas:
 1. Vision/Strategic Land-use Principles
 2. Healthy Economy
 3. Healthy Ecosystems and Environment
 4. Healthy Communities
 5. Land-use Direction/Management Intent



Consultation Methodology and Locations

Stakeholder sessions were conducted in each location from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. A separate report entitled Phase 2 Stakeholder Consultation Summary – South Saskatchewan Regional Plan is available from the LUS in hard copy and on the website.

As well, all Albertans were encouraged to review the RAC's advice and provide their feedback by completing either the online or hard-copy versions of the workbook called Phase 2 – Working Towards the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, A Workbook to Share Your Views on the Regional Advisory Council's Advice to the Government of Alberta for the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan. In total, 1,302 completed workbooks were received with the majority submitted electronically. A separate report entitled Phase 2 Workbook Summary – South Saskatchewan Regional Plan is available from the LUS in hard copy and on the website.

The public information and input sessions were held between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. in the same locations as the stakeholder sessions and were advertised as "Community Conversations". In each location, the government set up a series of panels providing background and information about the LUF, the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA)* and a summary of RAC's advice. During each Community Conversation, attendees were invited to help themselves to SSRP Phase 2 and general Land-use Framework material at the reception table and then review the information as part of a facilitated tour. Participants were encouraged to respond to the same questions posed to stakeholders at the earlier sessions; that is:

- Where do you support RAC's advice and why? Where do you have concerns and why? What is missing?

Government employees were in attendance at all sessions and former members of the SSRP RAC dropped in on several sessions in an unofficial capacity.

In total, 682 people participated in the 20 Community Conversations. Turnout was particularly high in the three larger cities in the region; Lethbridge (118), Calgary (105) and Medicine Hat (61). Many of the participants identified their affiliation with stakeholder groups when they signed in. These groups included municipal government and administration, industry, environmental organizations, non-government organizations, irrigation districts, agricultural organizations, economic development authorities and landowners.



The dates and corresponding communities for the 20 sessions were as follows:

Date	Session Location(s)	
Tuesday, November 6	Cardston	Red Deer
Wednesday, November 7	Taber	
Thursday, November 8	Vulcan	
Tuesday, November 13	Calgary	
Thursday, November 15	Edmonton	
Tuesday, November 20	Airdrie	Pincher Creek
Wednesday, November 21	Canmore	Milk River
Thursday, November 22	Cochrane	Brooks
Tuesday, November 27	Claresholm	
Wednesday, November 28	Okotoks	
Thursday, November 29	Strathmore	
Tuesday, December 4	Drumheller	Crowsnest Pass
Wednesday, December 5	Medicine Hat	Foremost
Thursday, December 6	Lethbridge	

In addition, 295 people provided a written submission. Almost 150 of the 295 written submissions were from people who forwarded an identical letter asking for the SSRP to enable the following five outcomes:

- Protect the Castle watershed.
- Create additional provincial parks to protect headwaters and core grizzly habitat on public lands.
- Make Highway 3 safer for people and wildlife by building overpasses and underpasses at high-collision zones.
- Implement the recommendations of the Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan, especially with respect to limiting motorized access.
- Create a permanent, protected, effective wildlife corridor within Canmore's Bow River valley.



A further 63 people sent in letters to oppose paid access for hunting and urge that it not be included with any forthcoming suite of conservation and stewardship tools designed to protect private property rights. A variety of other issues were addressed in the remaining 85 submissions.

This report provides an overview of the key themes advanced during the Community Conversation sessions and through written submissions. The report is organized according to RAC advice topic areas as follows:

1. Vision and Strategic Land-Use Principles
2. Healthy Economy
3. Healthy Ecosystems and Environment
4. Healthy Communities
5. Land-Use Direction and Management Intent

Additional comments beyond the scope of the public sessions were also recorded and are included in this summary.



Vision and Strategic Land-Use Principles

The RAC proposed the following vision statement and land-use principles for the South Saskatchewan Region. It describes a desired future in 50 years.

Southern Alberta is a diverse, healthy, vibrant and prosperous region where the natural beauty of the mountains, foothills, farmlands and the subtle beauty of the prairies are managed and celebrated so that future generations remain connected to the land and its history. The region prizes its natural and economic capital, and uses an integrated approach to effectively manage social, economic and environmental interaction. The principles of personal freedom, responsibility and property rights are respected, while the quality and ecological integrity of the landscape is sustained through the use of traditional aboriginal and community knowledge, sound science, innovative thinking and accommodation of rights and interests of all Albertans.

Plan for water

It is essential to determine the feasibility of all water conservation, supply and storage options. Because the supply and quality of water is so important, demand is likely to increase and supply may be challenged in the region under any scenario. Headwater and source water protection and the need to manage land use to sustain water production and water quality are critically important.

Respecting private land ownership

The Government of Alberta must be guided by the principle of respecting private property rights. To acknowledge this, regional planning identifies common outcomes for private and public lands and offers implementation tools for both.

Developing conservation and stewardship tools

Conservation and stewardship tools are critical to the success of future land-use planning in the region. It is imperative that the Government of Alberta develop an enhanced suite of conservation and stewardship tools (economic and market-based incentives, conservation easements, transferable development credits, mitigation banking, etc.). New tools, when developed, must be easily accessible, well understood and applicable.

Accommodating multiple users

The South Saskatchewan Region has a history of multiple users sharing the landscape. The focus for planning should not be primarily on “if” but on “how” and under “what” conditions an activity can be allowed on the land base. Conservation and sustainable development can co-exist, and land-use planning needs to be based on triple bottom line principles and the use of market-based conservation tools.



Integrated planning

Land-use planning needs to progress to outcomes based on integrated local and regional planning that uses triple bottom line principles, incorporates multiple objectives, multiple stakeholders, and involves market-based conservation and stewardship tools. Consideration should be given to reducing planning overlaps and redundancies while respecting the rights of affected jurisdictions in a collaborative approach to land-use decisions.

Regulatory streamlining and efficiency

The SSRP should lead other government initiatives to promote regulatory streamlining, harmonization and reduce levels of bureaucracy. Policies need to be integrated between departments and ministries. Regulations should be made more efficient by providing clear policy direction on key issues. Clear policy is also necessary for empowering local and provincial decision-making to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

First Nations' issues

First Nations' land-use issues need to be dealt with in a clear, provincial government-led process.

Economic opportunity

The success of the region will be dependent on the economic opportunities available in the region. This plan would provide more certainty and clarity regarding constraints to development.

Support for RAC's advice and why**What follows is a representative sample of comments from the public sessions:**

- Support for the continuation of the regional planning process and the inherent concept to use land efficiently in the face of a growing population.
- RAC advice balanced conservation initiatives with development sectors.
- Support for the voluntary and mandatory land management conservation approach to both private and public lands, respectively.
- Vision and principles are “hard to disagree with” but need specifics on development priorities and cumulative effects.
- Vision captures the issues the public supports, but there is the perception that it will not be implemented.
- Support for Plan for Water principle and its recognition of water supply, demand, need for proper management and protection of the region's headwaters.



You told us:

Support for inherent concept to use land effectively in the face of a growing population



You told us:

Private property rights need to be respected



What are the concerns and why

- Vision statement is too long, too all-encompassing and should be simpler and shorter to be effective.
- Principles are too heavily weighted toward private rights and interests, accommodating multiple users and promoting regulatory efficiency and economic development.
- Principles of “integrated planning” and “accommodating multiple users” do not consider implementation and the reality that costs and compromise may determine certain activities to be inappropriate for the region.
- Land uses and activities should be reconciled with land capacity because water restrictions will override the other principles and the proper management of the watershed will be critical to growth.
- Exempting the region’s headwaters from its boundaries is inconsistent.
- Water storage options may not be efficient and some solutions, such as reservoirs, quickly lose their original development intent and become recreational amenities.
- Implementation and enforcement must be priorities.
- Conservation tools are needed to advise objectives and should be defined prior to the adoption of the SSRP.
- Transferable development credits may be perceived as a right or privilege.
- Streamline regulatory processes.
- Streamlining process will be ineffective if separate government departments do not work closely together.
- First Nation’s issues are under federal jurisdiction and their incorporation into the provincial planning level only complicates matters.
- Triple bottom line principle should have more emphasis.
- A balance between social, economic and environmental factors is unachievable.
- In gauging the success of the region, too much emphasis is placed on economic opportunities and not enough on land conservation.
- Private property rights need to be respected.
- The rules governing property rights must be clear and provide certainty to ensure regional competitiveness.

What is missing

- Missing from the vision and principles:
 - accountability
 - enforcement
 - infrastructure
 - cumulative effects
 - public education
 - scope of the SSRP
 - provision for further public consultation.
- Advice ignores existing management plans and groups that would guide management and improve the economic viability of areas.
- Regional plans may be a way to amend or override existing policy documents that are viewed as limiting economic development and land stewardship.
- Groundwater supply and storage issues should be elevated in the document as a principle.
- Recognize federal management areas in the draft plan to provide clarity.
- Lands of international importance should be recognized in the draft plan.
- Vision and principles should have made explicit reference to recreation, oil and wind energy, and the significance of grazing lands.
- Failure to include and understand recreation's social importance and economic value.
- Community members identified the need for balancing recreation with conservation and the reconciliation of opposing views of sustainable resource management.



You told us:

Community members identified the need for balancing recreation with conservation



Healthy Economy

Economic development outcome statements for the South Saskatchewan Region are as follows:

- A healthy economy supported by our land and resources.
- A prosperous, resilient, competitive and diversified economy is sustained.
- The economic viability and competitiveness of the energy industry is maintained, while ensuring exploration and development are done in ways that respect the integrity of agriculture, observe sensitive habitats and protect water resources.
- Economic sectors are valued for their contributions to other land values (that is, ecosystem functions, biodiversity, tourism and water supply).
- Cost-effective infrastructure supports economic growth and diversification.
- The value of ecological goods and services becomes a significant element of the regional economy.
- The economic viability and competitiveness of industry is enhanced.

Support for RAC's advice and why

- Streamline regulations.
- Support a regional economic growth strategy.
- Connect the agriculture industry to water conservation and land stewardship.
- Encourage the minimization and monitoring of agricultural land fragmentation.
- Multi-use corridors would support recreation and tourism goals, improve infrastructure efficiencies and support high-speed rail development
- Protect headwaters.
- Allow selective logging in an economic context.
- Opposition to clear-cutting practices.
- Identify and develop water storage options and improve irrigation infrastructure efficiencies.
- Water storage benefits tourism, recreation and agriculture (through irrigation), and tourism groups support utilizing existing water storage areas.



You told us:

Connect the agriculture industry to water conservation and land stewardship



What are the concerns and why?

- Not all economic priorities can be achieved and these priorities will take precedence over environmental and social objectives.
- Conservation should be more of a priority; a healthy economy is based on a healthy environment.
- Develop strategy for the government to acquire significant lands under private ownership with the intent to preserve them.
- Opposed to the sale of public lands for private or industrial use.
- Will not be able to integrate the tourism, energy and forestry industries on the same land base.
- Concern about what is meant by “iconic” infrastructure and the implications for the development of the region.
- RAC advice does not align with tourism values of the Canadian Badlands shareholders.
- Public land might be viewed as a “free-for-all” under the proposed management strategy.
- Headwater areas should be fully protected from forestry and other industrial practices.
- Industrial use of water, particularly for hydraulic fracturing, is of concern.
- Advice should be more direct and offer more recommendations about how SSRP will support smaller communities that are experiencing population loss and are not participating in the growing Alberta economy.
- It is a negative development that large factory farms could be the future of southern Alberta agriculture.
- Fragmentation of agricultural land and urban sprawl would limit access of farmers and their equipment to productive lands.
- Promote alternative crops and small-scale farms.
- Rural communities need more population to be healthy, but large corporate farms are a threat to rural life.
- Resource development will take precedence over other land uses.
- Access management plans are needed to provide clarity and certainty for industry.
- Place more limits on high-impact recreationists.
- Restrictions, however, may cause recreationists to leave one area and over use another.
- Design infrastructure corridors to limit impacts on environmental lands and lands appropriate for industry use.



You told us:

Headwaters should be fully protected from forestry and other industrial practices



- Clear-cut logging is an unsustainable practice.
- Do not promote coal as an energy resource in light of the region's renewable resources.
- Consider the impact of infrastructure on views.
- More mountain areas should be fully protected under proposed conservation management areas (CMAs).
- Conservation tools are critical to regional objectives and need to be finalized.
- CMAs should fully protect the areas.

What is missing

- All industries are looking for regulatory clarity and clear direction from the province.
- Cumulative effects are missing.
- Small-scale agriculture should be included as a type of economic development.
- Urban sprawl should include acreage developments in rural areas, not just on the fringe of major population centres.
- A discussion of renewable energy sectors was missing, specifically about resource potential, existing associated infrastructure and the potential cumulative effects.
- Encourage First Nations involvement.
- More public information, or understanding, on topics including ecological goods and services, developmental impacts on agriculture and land fragmentation.
- Emphasize researching opportunities for value-added industries and eco-tourism based on zero-impact principles.
- Management and recreation definitions are missing.
- No funding available to "manage" lands.
- Institute a user-pay system for hunters accessing private lands.
- Greater commitment to expand and protect lands south of Cypress Hills and east of Manyberries.
- Preserve suitable not just significant habitat, with the understanding that severe seasonal weather variations (that is, long period of drought) may destroy the only remaining habitat in conserved areas.
- Wildflowers should be protected under the SSRP.



You told us:

*Encourage
First Nations
involvement*



Healthy Ecosystems and Environment

Environmental outcome statements for the South Saskatchewan Region are as follows:

- The health of ecosystems, which consists of water, land, air and biodiversity, is valued by Albertans and needs to be sustained or improved through responsible stewardship.
- The biodiversity and ecosystem health and quality of forests, grasslands, parklands, aquatic environments, Badlands and dunes are sustained through responsible stewardship and are valued by Albertans.

Support for RAC's advice and why

- Promote tourism on an international scale by protecting historic and environmentally significant areas, including the Castle.
- Promote the region's eco-tourism appeal to national and international visitors.
- Implement the Bow River Majorville Upland Corridor conservation management area Low-lying farmland was identified as an integral part of the ecosystem filtration system.
- Develop and approve a new provincial wetlands policy.
- Value headwater policies that promote collaboration between watershed groups (WPACs), councils, and advisory committees for access and resource management in headwater areas.
- Legislation and resource funding will create baseline data for the watershed.
- Stewardship tools for land management conservation should be accessible from an easy-to-understand "central depository of information" that provides context for regional issues and factors.

What are the concerns and why

- The draft plan needs to be clear on what is meant by conservation and the impact to industry.
- CMAs will increase industry standards and reduce competitiveness.
- Concern for the conservation of the Eastern Slopes and Castle.
- CMAs will be less effective due to intermittent private land ownership and limited wildlife connections identified and proposed to be protected between them.
- Sage grouse requires specific protection from industry intrusion in habitat.



You told us:

Promote the region's eco-tourism appeal to national and international visitors



You told us:

Leaseholders want certainty on how the plan will impact their lands and grazing practices if CMAs are implemented

- Land exchange between private/public ownership for conservation and economic development was a concern.
- Leaseholders want certainty on how the plan will impact their lands and grazing practices if CMAs are implemented.
- Develop incentives to reflect different land values based on their location within the region.
- Concern that if environmental off-sets and transferable development credits are used that they will not remain within the region.
- Leaseholders would like recognition for their stewardship work which is the reason a number of leased lands have been identified for conservation.
- Ten miles east of Medicine Hat, the river basin is largely undistributed and it was suggested this be identified for conservation and zero-impact eco-tourism.
- A full-system approach including headwaters, groundwater and surface water is needed.
- Provide appropriate buffers to water sources and enforcement.
- Landowners want more options for reclaiming and restoring wetland and riparian areas on their own land.
- How to compensate landowners if wetlands policy means removal of land from private ownership.
- First determine baseline data.
- Domestic water uses should be prioritized over water use for recreation.
- The cumulative effects of contaminants from agriculture practices need to be addressed.
- Air quality is lacking and needs more clarity regarding classification, monitoring and management.

What is missing

- Comprehensive concept to address issues related to biodiversity is required.
- Develop tools to help private landowners deal with biodiversity.
- Wildlife parks managed in collaboration with landowners and leaseholders, who would be compensated for their efforts, is a potential development tool to preserve biodiversity and manage and enforce environmentally sensitive areas.



- Identify connective corridors between Conservation Management Areas (CMAs) for wildlife movement, particularly in the central grassland area, where oil and gas infrastructure is perceived to be causing corridor fragmentation with little requirement for reclamation.
- Industry and government accountability absent in this section.
- Bird hunting seasons should be re-evaluated and restricted.
- Season has been extended this year, but there is a dwindling population of many species (pheasants, etc.) and the government hasn't undertaken a proper population assessment since 1993.
- A threatened designation is a possibility in the near future which is a huge loss for biodiversity in the region.
- Intent and impact of the CMAs missing.
- Direction on how land stewardship would occur on private lands.
- An easily accessible repository of best management practices is needed.
- Create more opportunities, perhaps through land trusts, to allow various groups (not just Ducks Unlimited) to implement conservation offsets.
- Develop water monitoring and management systems and better identification of streams and rivers on the maps.
- Establish a target for water quantity with a supportive rationale.
- Establish a CMA in the Wintering Hills and the Red Deer River Valley areas southeast of Drumheller, to benefit an area that is critical to link to the Hand Hills area.
- RAC advice failed to identify Kananaskis Country, population growth areas, a number of recreation areas.
- Identify and designate specific areas for high-impact recreation activities, such as "mud bogging" in McLean Creek.
- Lack of solutions identified to protect recreational trails.
- No connection of water quality to human or wildlife health.



You told us:

Develop tools to help private landowners deal with biodiversity



Healthy Communities

Regional healthy communities' outcome statements for the South Saskatchewan Region are as follows:

- The region is home to healthy people and healthy communities.
- Citizens in the region enjoy a high quality of life in communities that embrace active living and recreation.
- Community development needs are anticipated and accommodated.
- Land-use decisions consider cultural heritage and historical resources.
- The recreational preferences of the region's residents and visitors are met with a diversity of recreation opportunities.
- Aboriginal perspectives and aboriginal traditional land uses are respected.
- Recreational and tourism use of public land respect disposition, tenure and rights holders.



You told us:

Need integration between government and industry on different recreation opportunities

Support for RAC's advice and why

- Strong support for the idea of Healthy Communities, including the need for complete and interconnected communities supportive of active lifestyles and, ultimately, long-term community sustainability.
- Promote collaboration between communities to accommodate future population growth.
- Community, not municipalities, should be the focus of efforts to accommodate future growth.
- Motorized recreation should be regulated, monitored and enforced.

What are the concerns and why

- Explain annexation.
- Provide better tools for municipalities to manage and fulfill their roles.
- Need integration between government and industry on different recreation opportunities, including trails and water-based recreation activities.
- Agricultural fragmentation policies will impact municipal subdivisions.
- Municipalities are not equipped for monitoring land fragmentation and the associated cumulative effects.
- Consideration for funding, costs and determination of who is responsible.
- More reservoirs will serve an important storage need and are also multi use for recreational purposes.
- Insufficient attention paid to health care issues in RAC's advice.



- Rising population growth in the region is an issue of greater importance.
- Significant part of the population is also aging (the 65-plus age group in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat is proportionately higher than the rest of the province).
- Health care, particularly in the smaller communities and the rural areas, needs to be addressed in the regional plan, including long-term care, home care and access to medical personnel and emergency care.
- Young people are leaving the area and there is a shrinking number of young families taking over the farms and ranches, a troubling trend for smaller or rural communities.
- The ability of government and industry to manage and support tourism while conserving the landscape is a challenge.
- Better access management in CMAs is required.
- ESRD needs some way to police the areas.
- First Nation issues are not as prominent as they should be in the advice.
- Some specific treaty language was used to explain where the advice was weak. It was noted that aboriginal communities have limited capacity to deal with all the processes they are asked to deal with.
- Heritage sites are not properly managed or protected, or even being recognized.
- Recreation and tourism not represented on the RAC.
- Bragg Creek and Kananaskis Outdoor Recreation and Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance representatives were not invited to sit on the RAC.
- In Kinbrook Island Provincial Park, residential homes are occupied in the park year round. This is supposed to be a summer village, and the owners occupy their “summer homes” which makes the park unwelcoming to visitors because the residential owners believe the park is their own personal backyard.
- Ghost Waiparous needs to be better managed considering the popularity of the area for use by ATV and off-highway vehicle users.
- Consider infrastructure remnants based on type of recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that all users contribute to costs.
- Ensure “Special Places” are considered and then included for consideration in the region.
- Ensure urban community development needs are considered.
- Ensure there is a more significant focus on the types of uses allowed within the nodes.



You told us:

Ghost Waiparous needs to be better managed considering the popularity of the area for use by ATV and off-highway vehicle users



You told us:

Link the idea of healthy communities with healthy ecosystems and sustainability

- Off-road amphibious vehicles should not be permitted in sensitive areas.
- Keep ATVs and AATVs (amphibious) off and out of sensitive lands, steep slopes, wetlands, bogs, fens and creeks as they are prone to cause significant erosion and mud holes.
- It is very difficult to keep Level 3 water operators.
- Expertise in rural urban concerns is a must.
- It is difficult to achieve “sovereign status” (with respects to Section 6.3.2.1 pg 42 RAC Advice document).
- There is an overall shortage of medical facilities.
- Key is the attraction of medical specialists to the region.
- There is a need to define the concept of health culture and how it links to our current system.
- Low-cost housing attracts lower-income families which leads to more social problems.
- First Nations population is growing and land per person is going down.
- There should be more opportunities for “urban aboriginals”.
- Interaction is key; socializing economic benefits and jobs will keep younger people in rural areas.
- Keep timber harvesting in the Castle to ensure a variety of age classes of trees and grizzly bear health.
- People don’t have to manage nature.
- Use logging as a tool to change and create wildlife habitat.
- The Crown of the Continent should not be logged.
- Many age classes of trees are required.
- Need recognition of natural forest disturbance in the maintenance of ecosystems. Some method of disturbance is necessary, like prescribed fire or a certain degree of forest harvesting.
- Existing provincial highways should be upgraded to four lanes and speed should be reduced to 90 -km/h only.
- The inclinations, observations and research embedded in the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Comments regarding RAC Advice to Government of Alberta for the SSRP is very well done and should be adopted.
- Participants questioned whether the trail should be there in the first place (regarding 6.4.4.10, pg 44, RAC Advice document).
- Plan should have fewer roads and include reclamation initiatives.



- Large corporate farms are taking over smaller ones and there is no alignment between these corporate entities with the cultural heritage of agriculture.
- SSRP is a public land strategy imposed on an area that is mostly privately held, thus superimposing perspectives on public lands.
- Cities can grow but they need to earn the right with high densities.
- Anything on the urban fringe is at probable risk of being expropriated.
- As farms get bigger there are fewer people in rural communities.
- With declining population in rural areas, there is no longer the density to support rural communities.
- There was significant opposition to user-pay systems for hunting and other recreation activities (regards to 6.4.4.8, pg 44, RAC Advice document).
- Majorville Cairn area should not be included as a tourist node due to limited capacity, access, and resources available to enforce sanctions against illegal activity.
- Oil and gas development should not be allowed in this area.

What is Missing

- Need a comprehensive biodiversity concept, water monitoring and management system and more development tool options, other than transferable development credits, including non-monetary incentives.
- Recreational groups independent of government were not represented on the RAC or in the advice.
- More focus on recreation because of its importance in developing healthy communities.
- The SSRP is the appropriate process to move the special places program forward.
- The regional plan should consider and integrate previous management and stewardship programs for the ghost forest region.
- Active living should be supported by promoting recreational activities requiring little-to-no infrastructure investment.
- More consideration given to issues related to growth, such as identifying the infrastructure needs of smaller urban centres, including maintenance of existing infrastructure and their limited capacity to address decreases in population.



You told us:

Constant expansion is not supported and limits should be identified



You told us:

The lack of a regional transportation system (rail) is one factor contributing to dwindling rural communities

- To achieve adequate housing supply in the region (6.2.5, page 39, RAC advice) and to promote collaboration among municipalities to accommodate future population growth (6.2.6, same as above), consider the use of density triggers as a mechanism to reduce urban sprawl.
- RAC advice failed to specifically consider the housing needs of seniors and the requirements and subsidies to keep older Albertans integrated into communities.
- Citizens feel they are forced out of rural areas due to limited access to community resources and economic opportunities.
- The lack of a regional transportation system (that is, rail) is one factor contributing to dwindling rural communities.
- The absence of a public consultation process for making changes to existing road right-of-ways can be detrimental and result in roads on the grid system cutting through environmentally sensitive areas.
- The balance between public and private ownership is missing.
- Questions about what the government's approach would be if an area of private land was identified as containing a feature that is in the public good and if public land is identified as having no social value.
- Does the province intend to buy and sell land based on what is identified in the regional plan?
- Educating newcomers to communities should be an initiative of the plan and accountability should fall on cultural leaders. This included educating Albertans who move into more country residential areas expecting urban living standards.
- Moving forward with future regional plans, constituents would appreciate biographies identifying RAC member interests and expertise.



Land-Use Direction and Management Intent

Support for RAC's advice and why

- Support for recent ALSA amendments.
- The implementation of CMAs using a local management system supported by user-fees and operating on a multi-use activity level will support conservation.
- Uncertainty about the intent of the CMAs.
- No support for CMAs without clarification about intent.
- Language was appropriate and well suited to such a high-level document.
- Support for the provision of multi-use recreation facilities, as long as they are balanced with the health of the environment.
- Develop recreation and tourism nodes – especially in the Castle region.
- Partner with the ski resort to promote year-round land management while simultaneously supporting the local economy by allowing mountain biking in summer, and the use of snow machines in winter.
- More enforcement by providing the sheriffs greater authority.
- Increase the organization of land use.
- Landowners want to see growth directed to appropriate areas.
- Do not allow access to riparian areas.
- Separate approaches to conservation on private land were considered appropriate.
- Motorized access to the CMAs was generally discouraged, but access for people with disabilities was supported.

What are the concerns and why

- Respect and protection of property rights is a priority.
- Need clarity on energy use in the classification.
- Additional detail needed to bring clarity to this section.
- Plan needs to consider all lands that contribute to different land objectives.
- Need more stewardship opportunities.
- Conservation areas need defined boundaries.
- Question about the process for changing land-use designations under SSRP.



You told us:

No support for CMAs without clarification about intent



You told us:

*Good science
should inform
decisions*

- Questions about the implications for designated recreation areas.
- Poll Haven is a significant grazing area, but also designated for recreation. How will that land use impact the grazing operations and how will it be protected against misuse of recreation privileges?
- Not enough recreation and tourism emphasis for public lands, namely revenue for conservation.
- Motorized opportunities were skimmed over and not represented as a stakeholder group.
- Sub-regional plans may be required. Closing of corridors and non-motorized access into Ghost access management plan area.
- Differentiation p.46 – there is an expectation of closure of access points by virtue of the non-motorized trails and huts.
- Existing infrastructure liabilities on crown land. Clarification on map page 46 regarding access into Ghost. Trail system was impacted by logging.
- Will they contemplate large-scale movement of water throughout the province?
- Motorized access corridors are different than using the corridor for motorized activities.
- Balanced between conservation and industry; ask the “how”.
- All industries and recreation activities can be done in a balanced and sustainable way.
- Confirm if the land use-map follows existing boundaries. During management plan formation; how are they going to be composed, where will the input come from?
- Camping restrictions can create a disconnect with nature.
- Regulations pertaining to camping should come from a broader perspective, not just one government department.
- Ensure that there is responsibility for the completion of regional plans.
- Need decision on what are compatible uses of public recreation.
- Multiple users principle seems exclusionary.
- Extend conservation area management area 7- north. Expand on existing parks.
- Define what is recreation and what is conservation.
- Define non-motorized trails and hut systems.
- Pro-designated trails management.
- 6.4.4.10 (page 44, RAC advice document) reads as if someone is discriminating against responsible motorized vehicles.



- A system needs to be designated for motorized and all other use trails.
- McLean Creek is the only one for these users. This would maximize their use; no working system currently.
- Engage user groups for optimum location of their needs.
- Only select logging, not clear cutting.
- Concern about recreation and tourism.
- Absence of industry representation on RAC.
- Motorized recreation users fear that SSRP will further limit access to recreation areas.
- Concern about why motorized recreation users are being singled out for attention in a high-level document.
- Question about what powers the government has on private lands.
- The government will take away land and the landowner has no rights.
- 5.3.14.2 (page 30, RAC advice document) is a major concern.
- There should be no paid hunting in Alberta.
- Remove reference to paid hunting from the recommendations.
- Paid hunting is against the law in Alberta and is contrary to the province's *Wildlife Act*.
- Consultation with the military concerning potential changes to land use surrounding the military base must occur before changing land-use classification.
- Clarify management and land-uses in the conservation areas.
- Clarify differences between conservation areas and recreation areas.
- Land use map is too vague.
- The mixed-use forest could end up being too lightly regulated.
- Question about recreation and tourism identification areas. Question about why some reservoirs are identified and others are not.
- Priorities that are coloured orange; recommend use what is there already.
- Irrigation reservoirs should allow recreational boating to keep folks closer to home.
- Sector brings in money but thresholds on services need to be set, too; for instance, emergency services or policing.
- Recommend that land uses show no projections for growth – how will the areas develop as they grow?
- Fees cannot be turned into general revenue; need to go to back to directed services.



You told us:

A system needs to be designated for motorized and all other use trails



You told us:

Off-highway recreation areas for motorized access that were managed have been closed; forces users to over use other areas and increase the damage

- Urban needs must be addressed; MD of Foothills development, City of Calgary.
- Random camping is causing issues because there are no facilities.
- Concern industry use will overshadow recreation and public use.
- Don't agree with limiting access to areas because of forestry industry.
- Current recreation areas are badly managed.
- Support user fees to fund enforcement and management of areas.
- Registration fees and fuel taxes could help.
- Little-to-no single-track recreation trails for bikes exist – Castle area has approved single-track trails, but they are ruined by four-wheel vehicles.
- Concerned Castle area will turn into Kananaskis Country area – gas developments, logging and higher restrictions on recreation, which seems biased when a year later it's clear-cut .
- Concern that hunting is already limited in CMAs.
- Disagree with paying to use public lands, unless funds go towards management of the lands.
- Disagree with backcountry designation on the Wild Horse Plains CMA – it's grazed.
- Concern about phrasing of question and targeting our response. There are engineered solutions, designated pathways and areas (pg 48 - 10 A, J, C, RAC advice document).
- Questions are trying to solicit a targeted response.
- Money associated with rallies goes back to the maintenance and stewardship of the areas. Specifically McLean Creek, Ghost Indian Graves area single track.
- Government must clearly outline the business and Acts as they apply to the regional planning process.
- Coulees have been overlooked, particularly those that empty into the Sheep River.
- Conservation can affect public water on private land and should be addressed through the *Public Lands Act* and provincial wetland and water policies.
- RAC creates premise that conservation can only occur on public land.
- Crown water (Sec. 3 of *Public Lands Act*) flows over private land as well.
- To some, conservation should not be a public versus private debate.
- Mitigation of costs for voluntary stewardship will lead to more beneficial arrangements (pg 51 of RAC advice document).



- Create incentives.
- More and more people are moving to the population centres, so there's more wildlife than ever. Some animals need the land over-grazed; that is, burrowing owls.
- Controlled burns may be an effective tool for weed control in certain areas.
- Use-conflict resolution process needs mechanism to appeal decisions and to receive compensation.
- Leaseholders are concerned about impact of any change in policy; might affect their leases.

What is Missing

- Missing topics included the following:
 - details about future consultation
 - enforcement considerations
 - possible education initiatives
 - the incorporation of existing management plans and groups
 - accountability of stewardship and conservation management areas
 - the delineation of jurisdiction between levels of government.
- Question about the level of support and involvement of the federal government in the regional plan.
- Little discussion regarding cumulative effects and the big picture.
- Head-Smashed-in Buffalo Jump not identified as tourism destination.
- South Porcupine Hills and North Castle areas should be considered as a tenth CMA.
- Recognize valued landscapes on private lands and protect lands from resource development, and map significant wetland and riparian areas.
- Not enough integration of upstream and downstream development impacts and how or if compensation between them could occur.
- Clearly define what is meant by market-based incentives and the criteria that will be considered when determining values for decision making.
- Explain CMAs more thoroughly.



You told us:

To some, conversation should not be a public versus private debate



You told us:

Need to understand where we came from to understand where we are going

Additional Comments

- SSRP public engagement events have been poorly advertised and communicated.
- People are not aware of the SSRP or the timeline.
- How does the public comment on the draft plan?
- Need clarity on hierarchy of plans and priorities.
- Need to understand where we came from to understand where we are going.
- Suggest adding page numbers in the presentation and make the sessions better by providing advice on the focus of the event.
- Concern the plan will be prescriptive [limiting].
- LARP considered too vague with policies.
- Concern there will be “losers and winners”.
- LARP program in place to manage effects; who is doing this and how?
- Question about how consultation will translate to SSRP.
- Positive comments about the ALSA amendments.
- Can Nature Conservancy buy grazing leases? Would like to jump to the front of the queue?
- There was no representation for recreational groups on the RAC.
- Make it clear online that you only need to fill out sections that are relevant or important to the reader and not the whole workbook in order to provide input.
- Workbook is “leading” – (page 50, 37.3) contains two points in one question and marking one answer like, “somewhat agree” doesn’t provide accurate input.
- Workbook question (page 50, 37.2) good question, but where is the opposite (counter) question?
- Concerns that existing water, land, and property rights are going to change.
- Province is not going to listen; the government wants to know how much opposition it will have.
- Engagement sessions are an exercise in futility.
- Government did not listen to the public on the first phase of SSRP.
- Missing from RAC is someone from the recreation and tourism industry.
- Not quite aligned with major watershed.



- How did the North Saskatchewan River basin end up with all of the South Saskatchewan portion of Banff National Park?
- Concern that government won't listen to feedback.
- On what basis was the decision made to log the Castle region? Were there consultations?
- It would be helpful to see the triple bottom line maps overlaid on one another.
- This could show areas of high conflict for the economic, environmental, and social goals.
- Who makes the decisions on conflicting issues, especially when it comes to regional and municipal plans?
- Who will pay for arbitration and decision-making when conflicts arise?
- It is quite obvious that implementing this plan would be very costly.
- From the viewpoint of someone who has been involved in the Calgary Regional Airshed Zone, a majority of their funding has been very difficult to attain in recent years.
- How much is it estimated that this plan will cost?
- The visual impact of windmills is not addressed in this plan.
- While renewable energy is very important for Alberta's future, this plan should address how the residents are affected by the windmills.
- Best management practices should be used more.
- Question about government's agenda with the regional plans.
- What is the optimal goal of regional plans?
- Trade-off considerations have not been considered.
- Stakeholders must know what trade-offs will be made, and have access to all tools used when considering.
- Regarding the RAC – NGOs do not seem to be represented on the RAC.
- Explore awareness and input from education institutions, cultural groups, and others to make conservation and environment common over time.
- Land-use principles – idea of "triple-bottom line" is not clear.
- There are too many buzz words in the advice – such as "sustainability".
- Is it really sustainable?
- What is the context?
- Calgary is the elephant of this project.
- Small businesses do benefit from development of local community.



You told us:

Concern that government won't listen to feedback



You told us:

Government must stand behind any decisions



You told us:

Agriculture is important

- CPAWS “comments” response to advice ...” covers the ground and is well done.
- Fracking should not be allowed anywhere until more research is available.
- Licence or entry fees can help with maintenance costs in managed parks and wildlands.
- Less fragmentation of land.
- Raise taxes on land taken out of agricultural use.
- What is meant by sound science?
- Agriculture is important.
- The best “land stewards” are farmers and ranchers.
- If you take our “control rights” away, where are you going to get your groceries as we may as well quit.
- We are the food producers of the world.
- Right-to-farm legislation.
- Your explanations are just a lot of the same big words that mean the government and its hired bureaucrats want control at any cost.
- The landowners (ranchers and farmers) might as well quit.
- We need water to grow our crops and livestock.
- Limit the amount of water the urbanites can use.
- Everyday Albertans do not seem to be aware of the plan or the process.
- Advertise in local papers.
- Makes no sense to have a 50-year plan with no money to back it.
- No safeguards are in place to limit a vocal minority from dominating the public review process; three months is inadequate to incorporate public comments.
- Conserve land near and around the Elbow River west of Tsuu Tina.
- Are the principles listed in priority? If so, aboriginal peoples should not be one of the last bullets.
- Alberta Land-use Framework – the priorities should be listed as environment first and economy second.
- Support sustainable recreation.
- Conserve the west side of the SSRP.
- Protection and enforcement of the headwaters.
- Honour non-motorized recreation.
- Recreation-specific areas – payment and insurance to use ATVs.



- There should be no motorized activity on the Eastern Slopes.
- Suggest the GOA work with recreation clubs to develop sustainable trails and forest management trail designation areas for ATV recreation as follows:
 - Ghost
 - Castle
 - Waterston Porcupine/ Rangeland
 - Indian Graves
 - McLean Creek.
- Accommodating multiple users is a concern.
- ATV use disrupts wildlife.
- The GOA regulates some topics to death, yet there is no regulation for ATV use.
- Would like to conserve the area west of Stony, east of the forestry trunk road, northeast of Bar C ranch – there is a large wetland and diverse forest.
- There is no mention of the visual impact of wind farms and transmission lines.
- The Ghost/Don Getty Park is abused; there is a need for enforcement.
- There should be sub-regions in the SSRP, similar to LARP, categorized by healthy eco-regions.
- There is a need for grassland parks in the eastern portion of the SSRP.
- Area D is considered prime landscape for winter range elk.
- There is no land management or capacity since the merger of SRD and Environment.
- Support all conservation areas.
- RAC should be able to vet draft plan before going public. This was turned down.
- Would like to see phase four before approval by Cabinet.
- RAC should review the draft plan.
- Want to provide input on both private and public lands.
- Learning from other plans should be implemented in real time; don't wait five years.
- Boundary needs to carry up to Banff.
- Need to move to the ridge for watershed boundaries.



You told us:

*Support all
conservation
areas*



You told us:

Two-year approval process is too long

- Mapping watershed harmonious all the way through.
- Definitions are required for certain terms and respect the implications of their use (that is, the term management).
- How is this plan going to be different than that from the '80s?
- Outcomes appear to be ordered according to importance.
- Would like to see the government using recycled paper or other more sustainable resources.
- Need financial compensation when there are impacts/changes to water rights.
- Should be a hierarchy of use – residential and domestic first followed by industry and agriculture.
- Net after tax, direct tax and cost of conforming to government regulations; government delay in decision making has costs.
- Two-year approval process is too long.
- RAC advice is too general to assess.
- Perception that the general population won't be heard – need to simplify out the "fluff".
- All landowners just want to know "how will this affect me".
- Premature to put Bills 36 and 2 through before frameworks are ready.
- Need policies to inform the process.
- Unclear which authority does what in the plan; that is, I want to build a gravel pit, and will this document help me or hinder me?
- Need cost benefit analysis for the plan and its implementation.
- Property Advocate should not be government appointed.
- Too much power with government; can't ignore property rights.
- Advertisements too vague or missing.
- Disagree with Bill 2; need to have due process and accountability.
- RAC members may not have been the best/most involved representatives in the region.
- Open houses are not helpful.
- Would like a panel discussion with table brainstorming.
- Would like more media attention.
- Feel like the Land Steward Advocate is bypassing rights
- Who will be looking at all the submissions – decision-makers or others?



- Question why LARP cost benefit analysis wasn't open to the public.
- Need to review the terminology used; seems outdated, political.
- Please define natural capital.

