

# STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

No. 1 December 1999

### MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR NATURAL AREAS

A suggestion was made at the general meeting of SAPAA in Red Deer on 6 Nov 1999, that Stewards would be in a stronger position to protect their Natural Area if they had a Management Plan either already established, or in draft form. By having a Management Plan available at this time, it would demonstrate the viability and importance of the area and the Steward's commitment to its protection. It would also provide a solid foundation for any requirements under future regulations or legislation. When the new Natural Heritage Act comes into effect, all Areas will eventually have to have such a Plan.

- For those of you who do not have a Management Plan, it might be useful for you (or your group) to draw up a preliminary draft plan at this time.
- As there is some urgency in promoting the importance of protection of our Natural Areas, it would be advisable to have your preliminary outlines developed by the beginning of February 2000. This procedure could provide Government with a basis for legislation for a new category of Protected Area.

We outline some suggestions for the format and content of such a Management Plan in the attachment with this Newsletter. We have highlighted some of the important elements required under current directions, in line with other Government plans. It does not need to be a complicated document as it is better to keep your initial draft simple while focusing on the essentials. Details can always be filled in later.

- If you already have a Management Plan in place for your Area, it would be useful to let one of the steering committee know, and if you were willing, you could perhaps offer advice or help to another Steward in your region with their Plans. SAPAA's primary objective, as agreed at the Red Deer meeting, is to "establish a network of Volunteer Stewards to exchange information and expertise and to provide mutual assistance and support". This is a real opportunity for everyone!

Some of the information which you may require should be on the Site Fact Sheet which you should have received with your original documentation. If you have a brochure this may also be helpful.

- You should emphasize the category for potential re-classification, e.g. a new Protected Areas class of 'Conservation Area,' if this is what most meets your objectives of Preservation and Natural Heritage Appreciation. This would be primarily for smaller areas, intermediate in protection between Ecological Reserves and Provincial Parks. Natural Recreation Area designation may only be appropriate if there is more emphasis on non-motorized recreation. Larger Areas could be re-classified into one of the other categories of Protected Areas. The attached table is our clarification of the different classes, based on the recent Natural Heritage Act Summary Report
- Completed plans should be sent to the Natural Resources Area Manager for your region. You should request that they provide you with the necessary correspondence for approval and sign-off of the Plan, so that action can be seen to be taken.
- As the current situation regarding the protection of Natural Areas is in a state of flux, you may want to send a second copy directly to Morley Barrett, Assistant Deputy Minister for Natural Resources Service, who is ultimately responsible for approving all Management Plans. His address is 10th. Floor Petroleum Plaza, South Tower, 9715 108 St., Edmonton T5K 2G8.

If you want more information, phone one of the steering committee members below:

Alison Dinwoodie 437 - 7183

John Woitenko 459 - 0475

Beth Jenkins 458 - 1794

Note from the temporary 'Editor'

This 'Newsletter' is the first of our communications (see primary objective above), which we would like to develop on a regular basis. Any offers for a permanent editor? The Minutes of the recent meeting in Red Deer will be sent out later, but we always seem to have more urgent matters to deal with and this Natural Heritage Act has rather stolen the scene!

A.D.

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF NATURAL HERITAGE CATEGORIES AND USES		PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS					RECREATION AREA CATEGORIES					
ACTIVITY		Ecological Reserve	Wilderness Reserve	Heritage Rangeland	Conservation Area *	Wildland Park	Provincial Park	Natural Recreation	Regional Recreation	Special Recreation	Access Site	Wayside Site
Recreational Uses & Facilities												
Non-mechanized Use	Foot Access	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Fishing			(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Backcountry Camping		Y	(Y) D		Y	(Y)	(Y)		Y		
	Horse Use			(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)
	Recreational Hunting			(Y)	M	(Y)	M	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Cycling			(Y) D		(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Facilities	Camping						Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
	Recreation Facilities					(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mechanized Use	Power Boats						(Y)		Y	Y	Y	NA
	OHV / Snowmobiles					D			(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	NA
	Float Plane					(Y) D	(Y) D		(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Motor Vehicle Access			M		M						
	Helicopter Landing								(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Golf						E		(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Skiing						E		(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
Consumptive Use	Cultivation / Logging											
	Mining / Surface Mining											
	Communication Towers			E	E	E	E	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Oil / Gas Pipelines			E	E	E	E	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Resource Roads			E	E		(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)
Management Use	Grazing			(Y)	M		M	(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA
	Trapping			(Y)	M	(Y) E		(Y)	(Y)	(Y)	NA	NA

Y = permitted use; (Y) = conditional use, depending on management plan

E = existing dispositions (issued before designation) may be honored

Blank = Use incompatible with intent of designation

M = use(s) permitted for management purposes only

NA = opportunity not generally available because of site limitations (e.g. size)

D = through management plan, use restricted to designated areas (lakes, rivers, trails, etc.) identified at time of establishment

\*note: *Conservation Area* is a proposed designation for those areas of significant interest for educational purposes, and natural heritage value, similar to ecological reserves, but of a smaller size, or with existing uses, or more management uses

## MANAGEMENT PLAN POSSIBLE FORMAT FOR NATURAL AREAS

### INTRODUCTION

- Environmental significance of Natural Area. Give a brief description of the general location, size and its importance.
- Natural Region. Under the Alberta land classification system for Protected Areas, there are 6 Natural Regions and 20 Sub-regions, further divided into Levels 1, 2 and 3 Natural History themes.\* If you know the official region and sub-region designation, it is worth identifying it, particularly if it is under-represented (e.g Grassland or Parkland).
- History. Give the date of recommendation for protection, establishment of PNT or OC, and its NA key number, for the record. Also note if it was designated as a Conservation, Education or Recreation Natural Area, as this would partially define its degree of protection. (This information should be on your fact sheet). Detail your history of Stewardship, noting any special initiatives.

Note: - Conservation Natural Areas (CNA) are 'scenic, contain diverse or interesting biological or geological features and/or important plant and animal habitats', with 'the emphasis placed on protection of the site's features'.

- Educational Natural Areas (ENA) are 'conserved and managed for environmental education purposes,' ... ' in natural undeveloped landscapes'.

- Recreational Natural Areas (RNA) 'provide a relatively natural, undeveloped landscape for informal and low-intensity recreation activities'.(No mention of OHVs!)

### OBJECTIVES

Alberta's four objectives for Protected Areas are Preservation, Heritage Appreciation, Outdoor Recreation, and Tourism \*. Identify objectives under each heading:

- Preservation. Identify particular features for preservation, e.g. significant geographic features, number and type of flora and fauna species, if known, and note any particularly rare or locally uncommon varieties, large or small. Your own observations are useful here.
- Heritage Appreciation. Specify opportunities for education, formal or self-instruction, nature appreciation or research. (These first two objectives are

probably the most important objectives for most Natural Areas, so make the most of them!)

- Outdoor Recreation. Identify opportunities for the type and intensity of activities which you feel are compatible with maintaining the Natural Area. (For small or other sensitive areas, recreation opportunities will probably be low-key, foot access only. Stress 'permitted' activities - the 'not-permitted' ones will come later!)
- Tourism. This is not a high priority for many Natural Areas, as their carrying capacity is too small and it would jeopardize the first two objectives.

### MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- Preservation. Identify actions to maintain, enhance or restore significant features. e.g. production of inventories to identify the diversity of vegetation features and wildlife habitat and actions to protect them. You should specify actions required for particular areas of concern, such as uncontrolled grazing, fencing.
- Heritage Appreciation. Development of brochures, signs, maps, etc. for public education. (Stewards could help or be responsible for this?). Identify where interpretive or access signs might be useful. Indicate previous or potential research projects, if any.
- Outdoor Recreation. (This is a very important section for determining the future viability of the Area !) Specify clearly those activities which should be permitted or not permitted in your area, and any restrictions on permitted activities. (e.g. Low intensity cross-country skiing may be permitted in winter, but trail widening and high intensity training or racing circuits would not, if it interferes with preservation and heritage appreciation objectives).
  - Mountain biking should be identified as either not permitted, or permitted only on defined trails, depending on sensitivity of soil, vegetation etc.
  - Mechanized recreational activities (OHVs and snowmobiles) should be prohibited by law in all Protected Areas and Natural Recreation Areas - emphasize this as an essential provision in the new Heritage Act! Specify solutions for compliance or requirement for enforcement. If your Area is primarily for OHV use, it should be re-classified as a General or Specific Recreation Area, with appropriate management plans to encourage and control such use

- Camping, if included, should specify designated sites, special permits or 'no impact' random camping.
- Hunting, if permitted, should be managed to conserve wildlife populations, but in smaller Areas, public safety must also be considered.
- Horse use, if permitted, should be on designated trails only, and these should be managed under the general access terms.
- Access. Identify current and preferred access routes. A good large scale, accurate map should be included. Maintain, close or re-route trails where necessary to prevent erosion or undue impacts. See above for Recreational Activities.

#### OIL/GAS AND OTHER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.

- This is a tricky one ! Practically all Natural Areas have some form of oil/gas commitments. Objectives should be to work with industry to eliminate unused leases, by land swaps, tax credits etc. (Hopefully the new Heritage Act will support this in all Protected Areas.) Existing dispositions should be altered where possible to 'no surface access', and no new dispositions granted. Otherwise, specify that 'access limitations and site-specific restrictions will be applied on sensitive sites on leases'. Also specify that any new surface access or development must be available for review by management, including Stewards, prior to approval, to minimize or prevent disturbances.
- Cultivation, commercial logging, surface mining would all be prohibited under the new Heritage Act.
- Existing grazing and trapping may be permitted, for management purposes. Resource roads or communications towers should not be permitted under the new Act (emphasize this!). It is important that Stewards work with the MDs or industry to resolve these issues.

#### ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

- Indicate the Government contact and department in charge of local management.
- Volunteer Stewards should be active partners in the on-going management of the Area.
- Specify communications, particularly if new proposals or ground disturbances are likely, to provide input before damage is done and to minimize or prevent impacts.
- Develop yearly operational plans, identifying priority actions.

## CLASSIFICATION

Based on the above descriptions and activities, give your preferred designation under the new Heritage Act.

Note: Recreation Areas are stated to be 'primarily for delivery of outdoor recreation opportunities', and they 'make minor contributions to the preservation goal' and 'heritage appreciation opportunities will be limited'.

- Natural Recreation Area designation may only be appropriate if there is more emphasis on non-mechanized recreation.
- If your Natural Area was designated as a Conservation or Education NA, it obviously does not classify as a Recreation Area.
- If it is not significant or protected enough for an Ecological Reserve and too small for the other Protected Areas (Wilderness, Wildland, Rangeland, Provincial Park), then it should come under a new class of Protected Area, a 'Conservation Area'. This would be primarily for smaller areas, intermediate in protection between Ecological Reserves and Provincial Parks. Stress the need for this new designation, to allow the proper management for a majority of the existing Natural Areas.

A.D. Nov.1999