

April 2026 SAPAA Updates



In this 'mini-newsletter', we welcome to SAPAA's distribution list Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The content includes the 2025 Minister's Report on Protected Areas and updating you on the May 9th field trip, and the SIR-SAPAA site inspection application.

Welcome MLAs

On [March 20, 2026](#), rural MLAs were invited to a briefing on Alberta's Protected Areas and SAPAA. Timing was challenging but many wanted to know more and be kept up to date on these topics. Thus, SAPAA welcomes the Rural MLAs to its email distribution list.

Why Are Protected Areas Important to MLAs?

Protected Areas are critical to the '*rural lifestyle*'. The wetland on a site recharges a farmer's well. The parkland provides animal habitat for hunting. The site 'down the road' is where families teach their children about caring for the land.

Why Monitoring Protected Areas is Important to MLAs?

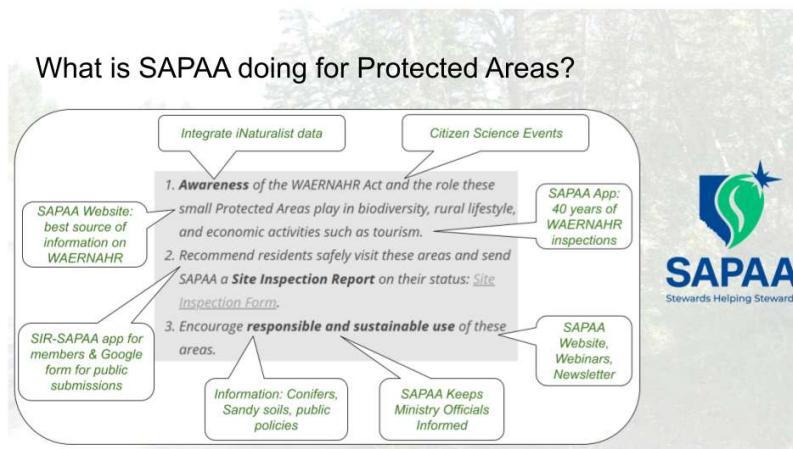
Idyllic rural living hides a darker truth. Rural residents are twice as likely to be a victim of crime. The isolated Crown Land attracts unlawful and destructive behaviour. Monitoring on the state of these sites helps to make rural living safer and more enjoyable. It is a small and actionable part of a larger solution.

What Can Rural MLAs Do to Help Protected Areas?

The following graphic was part of the March 20 presentation. SAPAA asked Rural MLAs for three things: **Awareness** of the sites, Encourage Site Inspection **Reports**, and encourage **Responsible and Sustainable Use** of the sites. The bubbles around these three actions are what SAPAA is doing in respect to these action items using volunteer (and student) resources **without any cost** to the province.

The Start of a Conversation about Conservation

Thank you to the MLAs who showed interest in the March 20 session. SAPAA will keep all rural MLAs informed of its activities and how it is helping to support the rural lifestyle.



2025 Minister's Report

**Stewards of Alberta's
Protected Areas Association
(SAPAA)**

2025 (Rolling 3-Year)
Site Inspection Results

The third annual Minister's report was released on [April 20, 2026](#). It is based on the 135 Site Inspection Reports submitted between June 2023 and January 2026, covering 83 distinct protected areas. For the first time, [iNaturalist.ca](#) was included in the analysis.

Key Findings & Site Conditions noted in the report included the following:

- **Overall Health:** Approximately 80-85% of inspected sites maintained a "Good" or better naturalness score, indicating they remain largely undisturbed.
- **Degraded Sites:** Roughly 15–20% of the sites showed significant disturbance.
- The Redwater River Natural Area is the most degraded of the visited sites, plagued by illegal shooting ranges, bush parties, and severe Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) damage.

Primary Pressures: The most frequent human-caused disturbances include:

- **OHV Misuse:** The leading cause of soil erosion, vegetation loss, and trail braiding.
- **Infrastructure:** Legacy pipelines, roads, and wells facilitate unauthorized access.
- **Human Activity:** Garbage dumping, vandalism, and bush parties.
- **Biological Threats:** Invasive plants and animals.

2025 Minister Letter

Accompanying the report was a [letter to the Minister](#). The letter noted that most of the logistical, volunteer, and technological challenges identified by the province, and articulated in the [2022 Miistakis Report](#), SAPAA has resolved. For example, SAPAA has a best in class Volunteer Safety Program ready to go. Technology such as [iNaturalist.ca](#) can provide better data metrics about the site. Data collection inefficiencies are being addresses through the SIR-SAPAA application (see the story below).

SAPAA is missing two things to further leverage these initiatives, a clear mandate from the province and resources. This is where SAPAA needs the Minister's help, in providing:

1. **Official recognition** of the role SAPAA plays in monitoring these sites, and,
2. **Letters of support** if SAPAA applies for grants and other funding to carry out its work.

SAPAA is meeting with Ministry officials in May and is cautiously optimistic we can move forward.

May 9th Field Trip - Moved to NW of Bruderheim



Burned tree standing 12 years after the 2009 fire, 2021-03-18, NW of Bruderheim NA, P. Potter.

Looking out your window, you may have noticed a very late Spring. As a result, we are moving our May 9th field trip to [Northwest of Bruderheim Natural Area](#). Long time Steward, Hubert Taube will be on hand to provide 30+ years of reflections on this site.

The original plan was to visit [Mount Butte Natural Area](#). Unfortunately, the site will be muddy whereas the sandy soils of [Northwest of Bruderheim](#) are better drained. As a bonus, prairie crocuses may still be blooming! This NA has an East and West parcel and we will visit both as time and interest permit. The meeting location will be emailed to all registered participants.

If you are unfamiliar with the ecology of the Northern Alberta sand dunes, be sure to read Patsy Cotterill's excellent article from the February 2026 Newsletter (see: [The Sand Dune Natural Areas](#)).

Final details will be sent to all of those who have registered for the trip, working details are as follows:

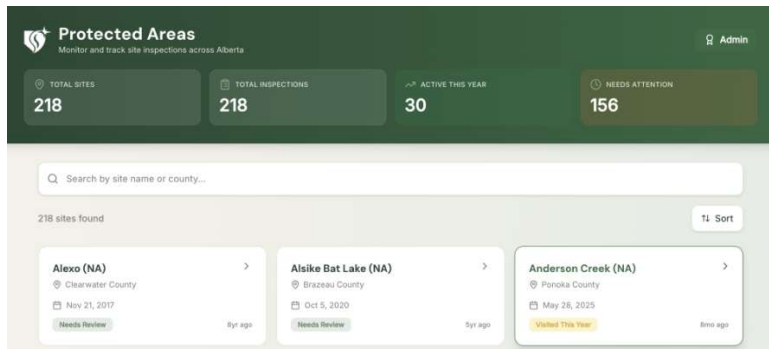
- **Where:** [Northwest of Bruderheim](#), Northwest of Edmonton.
- **When:** May 9, 2026. An all-day trip, we will meet at the staging area at 11 a.m.
- **Who:** Everyone interested in this Natural Area, or who wants to at least go for a nice walk!
- **What:** The NA is sandy soil and a mix of forest and lowlands. As of writing, the two parcels have [267 iNaturalist observations](#).

Hopefully we will see you on May 9th, be sure to **submit a Site Inspection Report** on your visit!

Hopefully we will see you on May 9th, be sure to **submit a Site Inspection Report** on your visit!

[Register - May 9th SAPAA
Field Trip](#)

SIR-SAPAA Application Update



SAPAA's new Site Inspection Report tool, is launching on May 9, 2026. The system allows members to log in, report recent visits, review past inspections, and upload images. Access must be requested.

SAPAA's new Site Inspection Report tool, is launching on May 9, 2026. The system allows members to log in, report recent visits, review past inspections, and upload images. Access must be requested.

Collecting information on Alberta's Protected Areas is a cornerstone activity of SAPAA. Over the past two years, the organization has been developing its [Site Inspection Report \(SIR\)](#) capacity. Key features of v1.0 of SIR-SAPAA include:

- Controlled Access to the Tool for security and privacy reasons.
- Online reporting of recent visits.
- Uploading images from a visit.
- If there is a data connection, reporting real time while in the field.
- Review past visits from other SAPAA Members and contributors.

If you are a current SAPAA member or an invited guest, [you can request access](#). If you are none of these, feel free to become a [SAPAA member](#).

See You in the Field!

Thank you for your ongoing support of SAPAA. Be sure to get out and visit Alberta's Protected Areas and send us a Site Inspection Report. Looking forward to your contributions, see you in the field!

Frank Potter, FCPA (ret.), MBA; President, SAPAA