

**The attached report, *'A Plan for Recreation and Conservation of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area'*, is background to the current proposal. It is for information only.**

The report was prepared by a consultant, O2 Planning and Design, hired by the County of Grande Prairie in 2012 to develop a plan for recreation and conservation at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. In preparation for the plan, the public provided input through a web-based survey, open houses, and two stakeholder sessions. The O2 report was accepted by the County of Grande Prairie in February 2013.

Since then the County of Grande Prairie and Alberta Parks have collaborated to develop the current proposal for Saskatoon Mountain, which you are invited to comment on. Thank you for your interest.



# A Plan for Recreation and Conservation at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

September 2012  
County of Grande Prairie

Cover Photo Credit: Garry Lock

# CONTENT

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>			
1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Plan	5		
1.2 Planning Process	6		
1.3 Public and Stakeholder Engagement	6		
<b>2. CONTEXT</b>			
2.1 Location + Access	7		
2.2 Historical Context	9		
2.3 Current Use	10		
2.4 Natural Regions Context	10		
2.5 Legislative and Policy Context	11		
2.6 Zoning Context	13		
<b>3. SITE INVENTORY + ANALYSIS</b>			
3.1 Ecological + Historic Resources	15		
3.2 Recreational Resources	22		
3.3 Non-Recreational Land Use Resources	25		
<b>4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT... WHAT WE HEARD</b>			
4.1 Summary of Phase One Public Engagement	29		
4.2 Summary of Phase Two Public Engagement	31		
<b>5. SUMMARY OF ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>			
5.1 Issues and Constraints	33		
5.2 Opportunities	34		
<b>6. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE</b>			
6.1 Vision	35		
6.2 Management Principles	36		
6.3 Goals	36		
<b>7. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES</b>			
7.1 Area Classification and Management Zones	38		
7.2 Recreation Facilities + Trail Management	41		
7.3 Management Partnerships, Collaboration + Stewardship	43		
7.4 Education + Branding	43		
7.5 Enforcement + Compliance	44		
7.6 Monitoring of Visitor Experience + Environmental Impacts	46		
<b>8. IMPLEMENTATION</b>			
8.1 Priority Actions	48		
<b>Appendix A Significant Vascular Plants Found in Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area</b>			
<b>Appendix B What We Heard Summary</b>			
<b>Appendix C Comments on Draft Plan and Summary of Changes to the Draft Plan</b>			

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Regional Context	8
Figure 2. Zoning Map   Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Management Plan (1992)	14
Figure 3. Slopes	16
Figure 4. Natural Features	18
Figure 5. Cultural + Historical Features	20
Figure 6. Recreation Features	24
Figure 7. Land Ownership and Tenure	26
Figure 8. Dispositions	27
Figure 9. Management Zones Exercise	31
Figure 10. Trail + Recreation Facilities Exercise	32
Figure 11. Integrated Management Approach	38
Figure 12. Draft Management Zones	40
Figure 13. Example of Potential Campground at Saskatoon Mountain	41

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Planning Process	6
Table 2 Timeline of Key Activities at Saskatoon Mountain	9
Table 3 Policy Context Summary	12
Table 4 Phase One Public Engagement Activities	30
Table 5 Stakeholder Workshop Activities	31
Table 6 Issues and Constraints at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area	34
Table 7 Opportunities at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area	34
Table 8 Plan Strategies and Objectives	37
Table 9 Priority Actions	48

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is located nearly 30 km west of the city of Grande Prairie in northwestern Alberta. It is the highest point in the area and it offers stunning panoramic views of agriculture lands with the Rocky Mountains in background. The 722.6 ha site is a popular destination for a wide range of recreational users such as recreationists, hikers, picnickers, and bowhunters. The site is also a destination for informal motorized use by Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV).

The Natural Area is currently under the management of Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation (ATPR) and a day use area is under a lease with the County of Grande Prairie. In 2009, ATPR proposed to re-designate the Natural Area as a Provincial Park, but the proposition did not get the support of the public. In response of this rejection, ATPR decided to continue the status quo until the development of the Upper Peace Regional Plan part of the Land Use Framework.

The status quo resulted in an increase in uncontrolled use of OHV and degradation of the site and other inappropriate uses such as littering and vandalism. The County of Grande Prairie recognizes that the status quo is no

longer acceptable and took the initiative of developing in a collaborative way a plan for recreation and conservation that will address these issues. The County will then submit the recommendations included in the plan to Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation for consideration.

## 1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Plan

The primary objective of the project was to reach consensus with the wide range of users and stakeholders about the recreation and conservation management at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area through an intensive public engagement process. The Plan for Recreation and Conservation at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area that resulted of this collaborative process provides management strategies and priority actions that will address issues regarding recreation and conservation. The plan considers the lands designated as a Natural Area and three quarters of adjacent land identified under a protective notation for inclusion in the Natural Area by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation. (see Figure 7 for a map of the study boundary).



Photo Credit: Garry Lock

## 1.2 Planning Process

The planning process transitioned through three distinct stages, each with established phases and tasks – **UNDERSTAND**, **EXPLORE** and **CONFIRM**.

Through the **UNDERSTAND** stage, all relevant policy, legislation, and background information was reviewed and synthesized. Site assessments and desktop analysis were undertaken to orient the planning team and the community to the site’s values, current uses, management issues, constraints and opportunities. Visitors, residents and stakeholders were encouraged to share their stories, opinions, concerns and ideas about the area, its future and priorities the plan needed to address. Collectively, this information provided a sound orientation to Saskatoon Mountain and a strong starting point to build the plan.

During the **EXPLORE** stage, stakeholders explored a range of potential futures for Saskatoon Mountain and collaboratively generated a new vision for the area. Opportunities to advance the site towards the desired vision and options to address management issues were openly discussed. Preferred solutions emerged and a draft plan was formulated.

During the **CONFIRM** stage, the draft plan will be evaluated by the community. Ideas and opportunities to improve the draft will be shared and the final plan for recreation and conservation will respond to these proposed improvements to the draft. This stage is expected to take place in September 2012.

## 1.3 Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Every effort was made to meaningfully engage users, residents, partners and stakeholders early and often throughout the planning process. Meaningful public participation was a key component of the **UNDERSTAND**, **EXPLORE** and **CONFIRM** stages. Innovative, yet practical, engagement techniques were implemented to provide interested participants with multiple convenient entry points into the planning process. The purpose, dates and applied techniques for each stage of engagement are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Planning Process

STAGE	PURPOSE	TECHNIQUES
<b>UNDERSTAND</b> Issues + Opportunities Identification – Community Visioning  April – May 2012	» Generate awareness + inspire participation » Understand current perceptions, priorities, issues + needs	» Interactive Online Mapping » Online Survey » Two Open Houses » Ten Interviews
<b>EXPLORE</b> Working Group  July 2012	» Review environmental, recreational, and cultural features » Review issues, constraints and opportunities » Review summary of What We Heard from Stage #1 engagement activities » Obtain consensus on the vision, goals, principles and recommended management strategies	» Stakeholder Workshop
<b>CONFIRM</b> Draft Plan Review  August 2012	» Input on draft Plan	» Website Posting » Draft Plan Distribution » Online Survey
Final Plan  September 2012 (expected date)	» Release the final Plan	» Website Posting + Update

**“Involving citizens is about creating ideas that have a better chance of working for them” (Bason, 2011).**

## 2. CONTEXT

The current and future management of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area occurs within existing policy and legislative frameworks. In preparing this plan, efforts have been made to align the plan with the priorities established in provincial and municipal policy, legislation and bylaws and to understand and consider the implications of the site's historical evolution, population change and ecological, cultural and recreational context. Understanding the origins of the natural area and the current planning context is fundamental to determining how Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is to be successfully managed into the future.

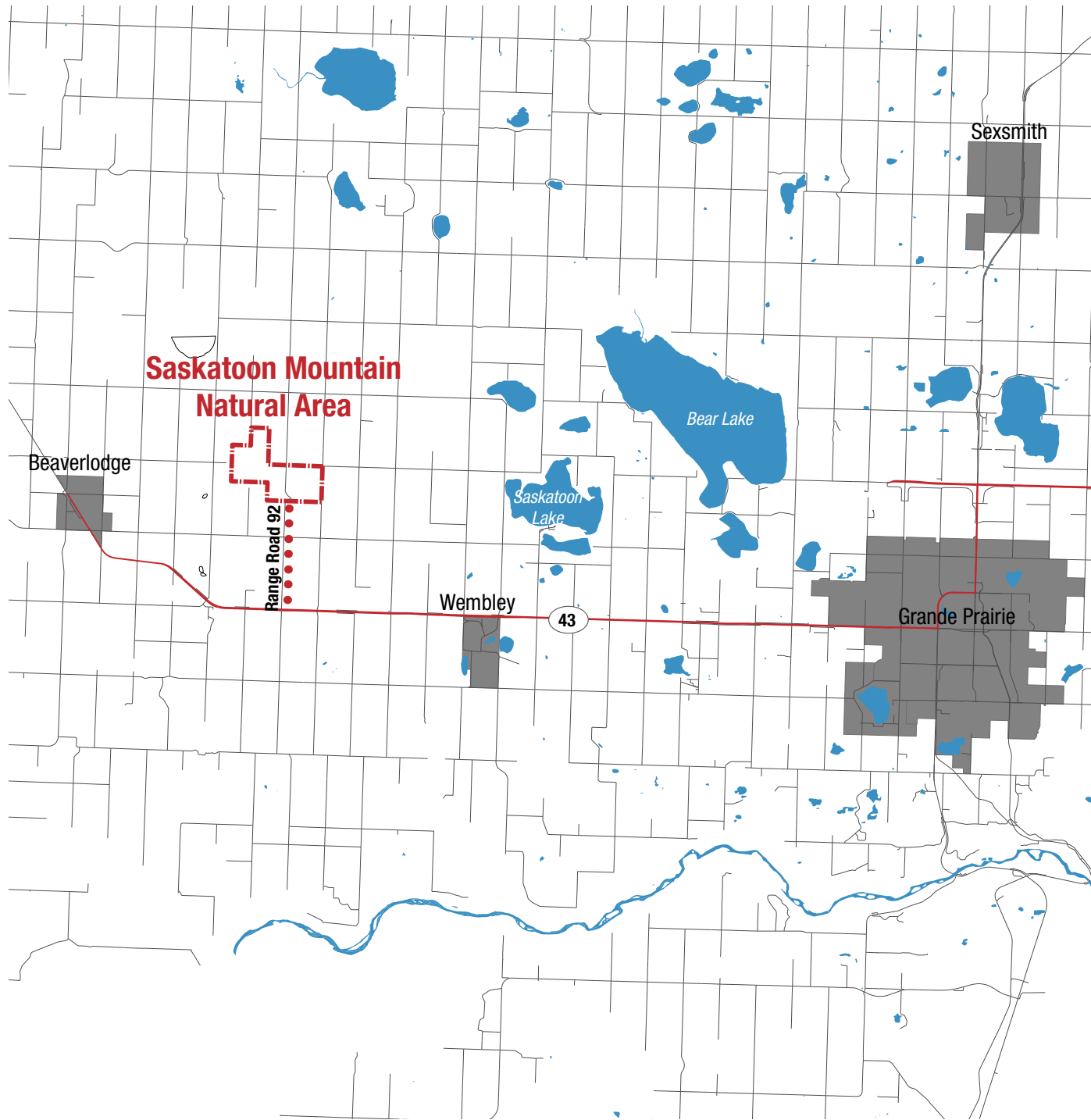
### 2.1 Location + Access

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is located nearly 30 km west of the city of Grande Prairie in northwestern Alberta. The nearest communities are Wembley and Beaverlodge. The Natural Area can be accessed by vehicle by turning north on Range Road 92 from Highway 43. A paved access road leads from Range Road to the day use site in the Natural Area (Figure 1).

The site measures 722.63 ha and is situated at the top of the highest point of land in the area. This elevation provides a panoramic view of land to the south and west as far as the Rocky Mountains. Saskatoon Mountain is a remnant of foothills boreal forest surrounded by agricultural land. The stunning views, unique natural features and proximity to Grande Prairie, the largest urban centre in Northern Alberta, make Saskatoon Mountain a destination for a wide range of recreational users.













# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

Regional Context

## Legend

-  Saskatoon Mountain Park Boundary
-  Municipalities
- Roads
  -  Arterial
  -  Collector
  -  Highway
  -  Access Road from Highway 43

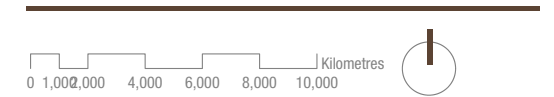


Figure 1. Regional Context

## 2.2 Historical Context

Saskatoon Mountain was designated a Natural Area in 1995, following just over 30 years as a military base. Since the 1990s, recreation has been an important activity at the site. Table 2 summarizes key dates and events that inform the evolution of Saskatoon Mountain as a recreation destination.



Canadian Forces Station Beaverlodge

Table 2 Timeline of Key Activities at Saskatoon Mountain

TIMELINE	DESCRIPTION OF RELEVANT ACTIVITY
1928	Saskatoon Mountain was designated as a Provincial Park and was used as a community gathering place for picnicking and berry picking (Chenier, 1988).
1952	The United States Air Force established a radar base at the summit of Saskatoon Mountain and the site was closed to the public.
1955	The Provincial Park designation was rescinded (Chenier, 1988).
1963	The base was turned over to the Canadian Government, becoming Canadian Forces Station Beaverlodge.
1963 - 1985	Informal recreation use of the site by base personnel, including the creation of hiking and cross country skiing trails.
1985	Canadian Forces Station Beaverlodge was closed in 1985. The surrounding communities of Grande Prairie, Wembley and Beaverlodge indicated a strong desire to designate Saskatoon Mountain as a destination for nature appreciation and wilderness preservation.
1988	The base was closed permanently in August.
1989	Reclamation of the site was conducted, including the removal of the base structures and ground surface seeded with grasses.
1992	The site was returned to the Province and a Management Plan was developed. The intent of the Management Plan was to maintain ecological diversity and natural processes, protect rare and significant natural features, and permit research and recreation activities where compatible with the primary intent of protection.
1995	On July 26 <sup>th</sup> , Saskatoon Mountain was designated a Natural Area.
2009	Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation proposed to re-designate the site as a provincial park. (camping, day use, trails and interpretation facilities). Following extensive public consultations, it was determined that re-designation was not supported by the community. Specifically, concerns were raised about the loss of motorized recreation and hunting opportunities should the Natural Area be re-designated as a provincial park. Based on public feedback, the Ministry deferred decision making to the Upper Peace Regional Plan.

## 2.3 Current Use

Saskatoon Mountain is currently used as a recreation destination for the surrounding communities of Grande Prairie, Wembley and Beaverlodge. The site is predominantly used for low-impact recreation activities, including:

- » Nature appreciation
- » Scenic viewing
- » Hiking
- » Family outing
- » Picnicking
- » Photography and fine arts

The site is characterized by a number of amenities that support these recreation activities. A day use site, managed by the County of Grande Prairie, is located on a plateau on the top of the mountain and includes picnic tables, firepits, a single toilet and trash bins. There are two viewpoints as well as a network of informal trails throughout the site. The trails are not maintained through any formal trail management arrangement. An access road and parking lot provide vehicular access to the site.

Saskatoon Mountain is also a destination for informal motorized use by Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV). There is evidence of site degradation resulting from this use, especially from 4X4 trucks, as well as from inappropriate uses such as drinking, partying and vandalism. These user conflicts have contributed to the degradation of overall visitor experience.



## 2.4 Natural Regions Context

A significant focus of the Alberta Parks system is the preservation of landscapes, features and processes that represent Alberta's natural diversity. To classify the province's natural diversity, Alberta has developed the Natural Regions Framework. The framework is based on a coarse and fine filter approach to conservation systems planning. The framework includes the delineation of Natural Regions, Natural Sub-regions and Levels 1, 2 and 3 Natural History Themes. Natural Regions are broad landscape classifications based on consistent landform, hydrology, geology, climate, soils and vegetation. Alberta consists of six Natural Regions – Boreal Forest, Rocky Mountain, Canadian Shield, Foothills, Parkland and Grassland. Each Natural Region contains a number of refined and smaller scale Sub-region classifications.

Each Sub-region is further classified by Level 1 Natural History Themes which are visible landforms and/or ecosystem complexes; Level 2 themes which are broad habitat/vegetation types; and Level 3 themes which are specific geological features, plant communities, species or micro habitats. When taken together, the framework provides an effective means to evaluate how well the parks system represents the natural diversity of the province and to prioritize the establishment of new parks.

The Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is located in the Boreal Forest Natural Region and, more specifically, the Dry Mixedwood Sub-region. This sub-region is the only Boreal Forest sub-region that does not have excellent representation within Alberta's parks and protected areas network. There are still significant shortfalls in the glacial lakebed, ground moraine, sand Bellis North Natural Areaplain and sand dune natural history themes. In light of this limited representation of the sub-region, the ecological significance of the Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is evident.

## 2.5 Legislative and Policy Context

### 2.5.1 Legislative Context

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is one of over 500 sites in the provincial parks system. Under its current designation, the site is classified as a Natural Area and administered under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act*. The regulation of activities at Saskatoon Mountain is further subject to provisions contained in other provincial statutes and County of Grande Prairie Bylaws. Provincial and municipal policies provide additional regulatory direction.

#### 2.5.1.1 Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act

The *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* defines classes of protected lands and preserves these lands from development.

In accordance with the Act, Natural Areas:

- » “protect sensitive or scenic public land or natural features on public land from disturbance”, and
- » “maintain that land or those features in a natural state for use by the public for conservation, nature appreciation, low intensity outdoor recreation or education, or for any combination of those purposes” (Province of Alberta, 2000, p. 5).
- » The Act specifies that regulations may be developed with regards to the management, operation, use and protection of a natural area. No regulations have been developed to date.

#### 2.5.1.2 Wildlife Act and Wildlife Regulations

The *Wildlife Act* governs hunting and related activities. Wildlife Regulation 143/1997 provides a detailed description of the hunting allowances and restrictions for Wildlife Management Units (WMU).

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is in WMU 357 (Government of Alberta). Under current hunting regulations, Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is designated as a Primitive Weapons Area where only shotguns, muzzle loaders and archery equipment may be used to hunt big game.

The Regulation further defines the licensing requirements for primitive weapons as “a recreational licence that has “Primitive Weapons Only” written on its face is valid in and only in an open season that is restricted to hunting only with a bow and arrow, a shotgun, a cross-bow or a muzzle loading firearm of .44 calibre or greater.”

#### 2.5.1.3 County of Grande Prairie Parks Bylaw No. 2811

The County of Grande Prairie Parks Bylaw 2811 regulates activities in County Parks and identifies enforcement processes for Bylaw violation, including fines. The Bylaw applies to the day use area managed by the County of Grande Prairie that is currently under recreation lease from Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

#### 2.5.1.4 County of Grande Prairie Bylaw No. 2600

The County of Grande Prairie Bylaw No. 2600 regulates Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use in the County. OHV use is prohibited in County Parks, including the day use area managed by the County of Grande Prairie that is currently under recreation lease from Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

#### 2.5.1.5 County of Grande Prairie Bylaw No. 2630

The County of Grande Prairie Bylaw No. 2630 regulates discharge of weapons in the County. The bylaw permits the discharge of shotguns, muzzle loaders, and bows and arrows in the Saskatoon Mountain Primitive Weapons Area.

### 2.5.2 Policy Context

A number of provincial and municipal policies provide strategic direction for the planning and management of recreation and conservation resources in Alberta. Relevant policies are identified and summarized in Table 3, including a description of implications for Saskatoon Mountain.

Table 3 Policy Context Summary

POLICY	DIRECTION	IMPLICATIONS
PROVINCIAL		
Active Alberta	Defines outcomes that guide the Government of Alberta and its partners as they design programs, deliver services and make investments in recreation, active living and sport.	Support desired outcomes by enabling sustainable, accessible and collaborative outdoor recreation opportunities.
Land Use Framework	Establishes a formal regional planning system to implement Alberta’s growth management policy. The planning system defines seven regions for planning at a landscape level.  Saskatoon Mountain is located in the proposed Upper Peace Region. The Upper Peace Regional Plan had not been undertaken at the time this document was prepared.	Ensure future management decisions for Saskatoon Mountain reflect policies and goals of the future Upper Peace Regional Plan.
Alberta Plan for Parks	Defines recreation and conservation as primary objectives for Alberta’s parks and protected areas system.  Outlines a strategy for reclassifying existing protected areas to “help fill conservation, recreation, and tourism gaps in the current parks system” (Government of Alberta, 2011c).	Provides policy direction and process support for the potential reclassification of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area.
Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Management Plan	Identifies the management intent, goals, and strategies pertaining to the Natural Area, focusing on maintaining ecological diversity and natural processes, protecting rare and significant natural features, and permitting research and recreation activities where compatible with the “primary intent of protection.”	Maintain the intent of managing the site to balance the provision of recreation opportunities and the protection of ecological values.

POLICY	DIRECTION	IMPLICATIONS
<b>MUNICIPAL</b>		
Grande Prairie Region Parks Draft Management Plan	Developed a strategy outlining expansion opportunities and management actions to regulate activities at Saskatoon Mountain such as hunting and motorized recreation.  Proposed the reclassification of the Natural Area to a Provincial Park.	Build on the input already received through previous planning processes to achieve a collaborative and consensus-based plan for managing a balance of recreation and conservation values.
City of Grande Prairie Municipal Development Plan	Values the conservation of environmental and cultural values, the development of recreational opportunities and the development of cooperative relationships between rural and urban neighbours as important elements in building a strong Region.	Leverage the strong rationale and local planning framework that is committed to working with rural and urban areas to achieve desired conservation and recreation outcomes.
Integrated Community Sustainability Plan for the County of Grande Prairie, 2009-2013	Establishes a vision to “provide a leading role in the planning process of protecting green space, and expanding park and recreational facilities” (County of Grande Prairie, 2008).  Relevant strategies include: » Explore opportunities for recreational facilities on a regional basis » Encourage new tourism initiatives in the County » Invest in new community facilities	Provides important local planning context for how Saskatoon Mountain is managed considering local demands for recreation opportunities and in protecting its natural and cultural values.

## 2.6 Zoning Context

The 1992 Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Management Plan establishes two management zones in the Natural Area (Figure 2).

### Zone A

The lands in Zone A are designated as Natural Area. These lands largely consist of native vegetation cover and remain relatively undisturbed from human impacts. These lands are free from surface dispositions.

The management intent for this zone is low-impact recreation activities with no additional facility development. OHV use is permitted on existing trails.

### Zone B

The lands in Zone B are placed under reservation for potential future inclusion in the Natural Area designation. These lands include:

- » The portion of lands that are under existing disposition
- » Lands previously leased to the Department of National Defence
- » Three freehold parcels within the Natural Area boundary (Government of Alberta, 1992).

The management intent for this zone is to provide for the operation of lands under lease and dispositions, while allowing some additional recreation activities. No additional facility development is proposed in this zone.

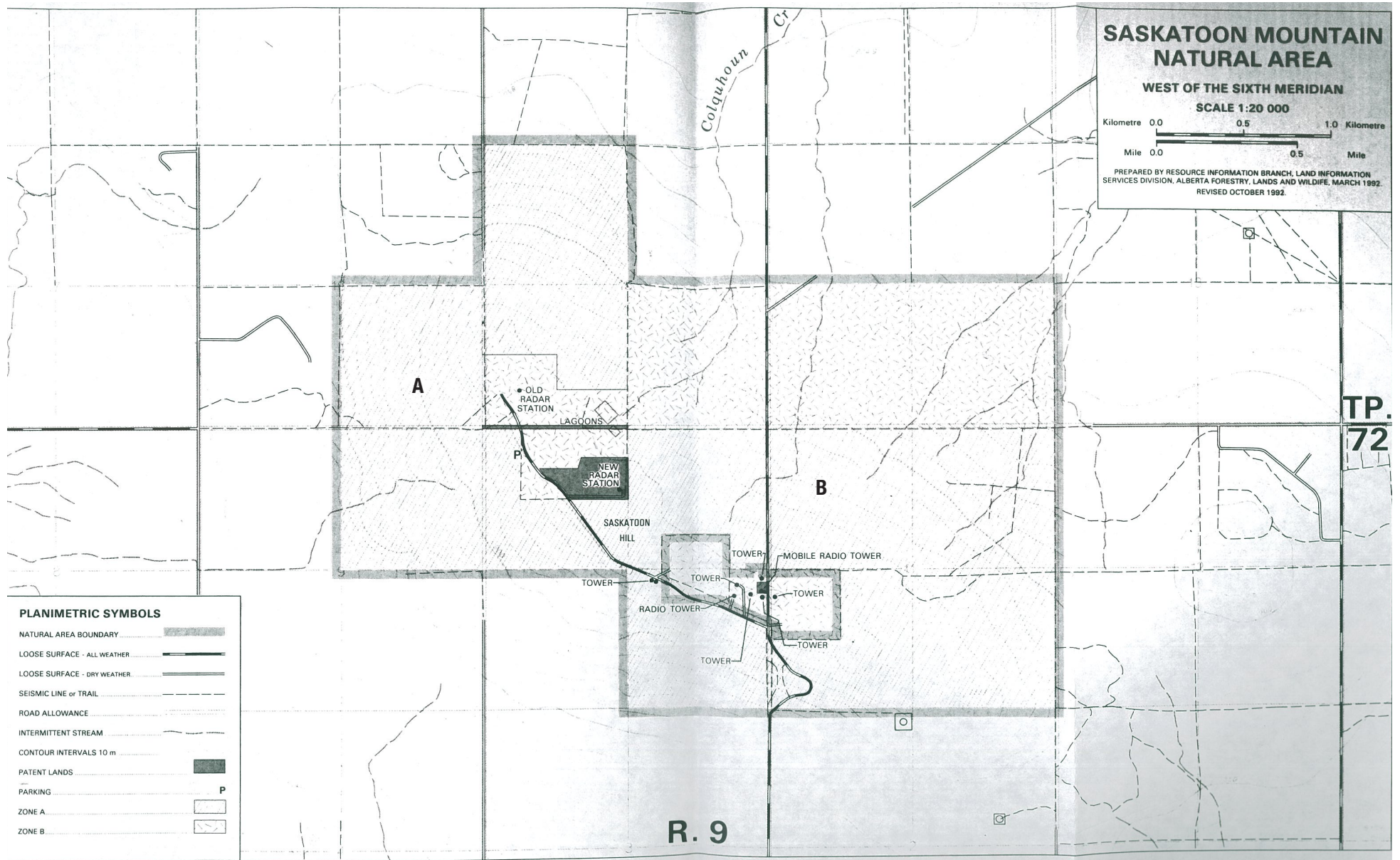


Figure 2. Zoning Map I Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Management Plan (1992)

# 3. SITE INVENTORY + ANALYSIS

Studying the site’s ecological, historic and recreational resources, facilities, infrastructure, land use and management issues is an important element of the **UNDERSTAND** phase. A detailed site assessment, desktop analysis and literature review was therefore undertaken, and issues and opportunities were identified.\*

## 3.1 Ecological + Historic Resources

### 3.1.1 Geomorphology, Soils, Slopes + Drainage

The core geological assets of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area are associated with its geography and landscape context. Saskatoon Mountain is a 150 m high hill rising out of a landscape characterized by a gently rolling topography. The maximum elevation is 940 m and is the highest elevation point west of Grande Prairie. The hill features both steep and gradual slopes and is topped by a relatively flat plateau.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the slopes rise most steeply to the west and south. Slopes to the north and east are generally more gentle.

Watercourses generally drain from the upper reaches of the slopes down into the surrounding prairie landscape beyond the Natural Area boundary. There are no identified permanent streams or rivers on the site. Most watercourses are located on the north slope. In addition, groundwater is abundant throughout the site and surface flows are augmented by minor groundwater discharge (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). Areas on the site that feature a high water table are vulnerable to reduced conditions for several months of the year.

Bedrock on the site is of the late Cretaceous Wapiti Formation- grey, feldspathic, clayey sandstone; grey betonitic mudstone; bentonite; scattered coal; and non-marine. Small outcrops of bedrock are present on the west slope. A thin layer of till covers most of the bedrock.

Soils on the site are substantially different from the surrounding landscape, which is predominantly characterized by soils on glacio-lacustrine materials. The soils of the plateau and upper slopes of the hill are generally characterized by modal soils of loam and clay loam that are slightly calcareous. Sandy loam and loam Brunisolic soils developed from sandstone have been identified on the steep slopes (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982).



\*Detail field work analysis was beyond scope of work.



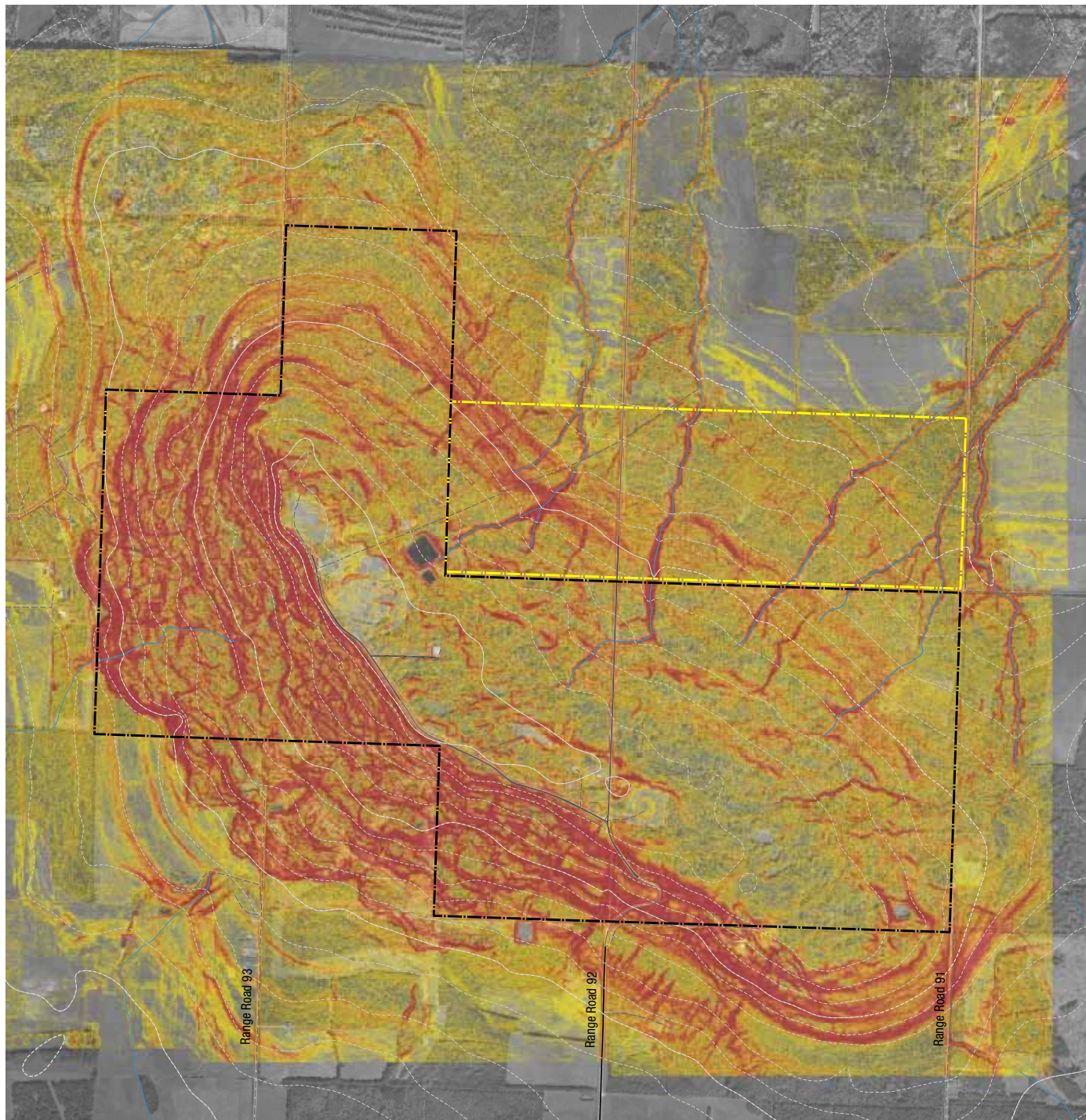


Image Credit: Barry Lock

# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

## Slopes

### Legend

- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Boundary
- PPA Protected Area
- Slope Classes
  - 5-10 %
  - 10-15 %
  - > 15 %

April 9 | 2012



**Figure 3. Slopes**

### 3.1.2 Wildlife + Vegetation

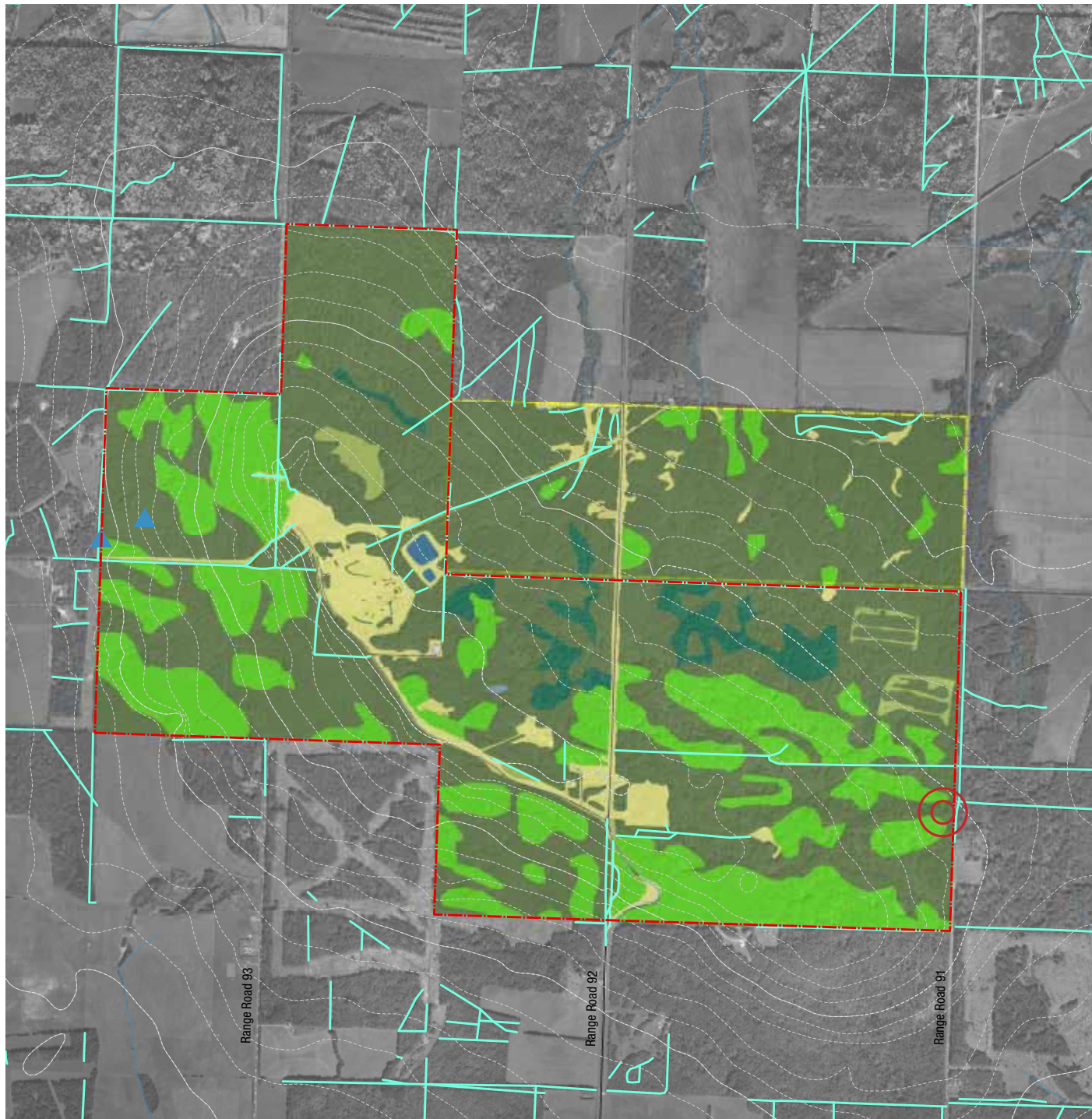
Mixed-wood forests of aspen, balsam poplar, white spruce, and birch species are interspersed with alder-willow shrubland, wetlands and small sloughs (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). Numerous woodland wildflowers are found on Saskatoon Mountain. A list of significant vascular plants found in the Natural Area is provided in Appendix A. Significant species are located in most parts of the plateau and over much of the slopes (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). Figure 4 illustrates the broad vegetation types on the site.

A sewage lagoon developed as part of the CFS Beaverlodge radar base was reclaimed and maintained for a period of time by Ducks Unlimited (Chenier, 1988). The former lagoon site provides habitat similar to naturally occurring wetlands on the site.

Over 50 species of birds visit or reside in the area including warblers, tanagers and thrushes (Hervieux, 2005; Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). The site is also characterized by a variety of mammals including the red squirrel, mice, shrews, mule deer, moose, snowshoe hare and coyote (Hervieux, 2005; Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). Other mammals observed at Saskatoon Mountain include elk, black bear and cougar (Hervieux, 2005). Chorus frogs, wood frogs, and western toads breed in the wetlands in the spring before moving into wooded habitats (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). Over 30 species of butterflies as well as dragonflies, spiders, beetles, and other insects are also found on the site (Hervieux, 2005). There are no provincially rare species present at Saskatoon Mountain, however, four bird species are “noteworthy”, including the Philadelphia Vireo, Canada Warbler, Fox Sparrow and Northern Goshawk (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982).

The 1992 Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Management Plan provides a detailed description of the range of vegetation and wildlife found on the site.





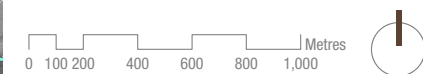
# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

## Natural Features

### Legend

- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Boundary
- Water Wells
- Cutlines
- Landcover Classes**
- Forest - Deciduous
- Forest - Mixed
- Forest - Coniferous
- Grass
- Open Water
- Shrub
- Wetland
- PPA Protected Area
- Carex mertensii* (provincially imperilled species)

April 27 | 2012



**Figure 4. Natural Features**

### 3.1.3 Historic + Cultural Values

Ancient human occupation at Saskatoon Mountain is estimated to date from 9,000-10,000 BC, following the retreat of ice sheets at the end of the ice age (Wright, 1990). Saskatoon Mountain is believed to be one of the first ice-free landforms in the area. A large preglacial lake was likely formed around Saskatoon Mountain as the ice began to retreat, creating an island in an inland sea. The site was a part of the overland route facilitating migration across the western corridor extending from Alaska southwards down the east slope of the Rocky Mountains. The site is of international archaeological significance because of its role in the overland route (Government of Alberta, 1992). Furthermore, Saskatoon Mountain showed some of the earliest occupation by humans in the Peace River Region since the end of the last glaciation (Town of Beaverlodge, n.d.).

An archaeological investigation of the Saskatoon Mountain site started in 1988 (Wright, 1990). Excavations at Saskatoon Mountain (GhQt-4) have revealed components “containing abundant debitage, cores and conjoinable pieces below a charcoal-bearing horizon dated at 8,000 years ago. Palaeoenvironmental data indicate that the site area would have been inhabitable prior to 13,000 years ago” (Canadian Archaeological Association, 1991).

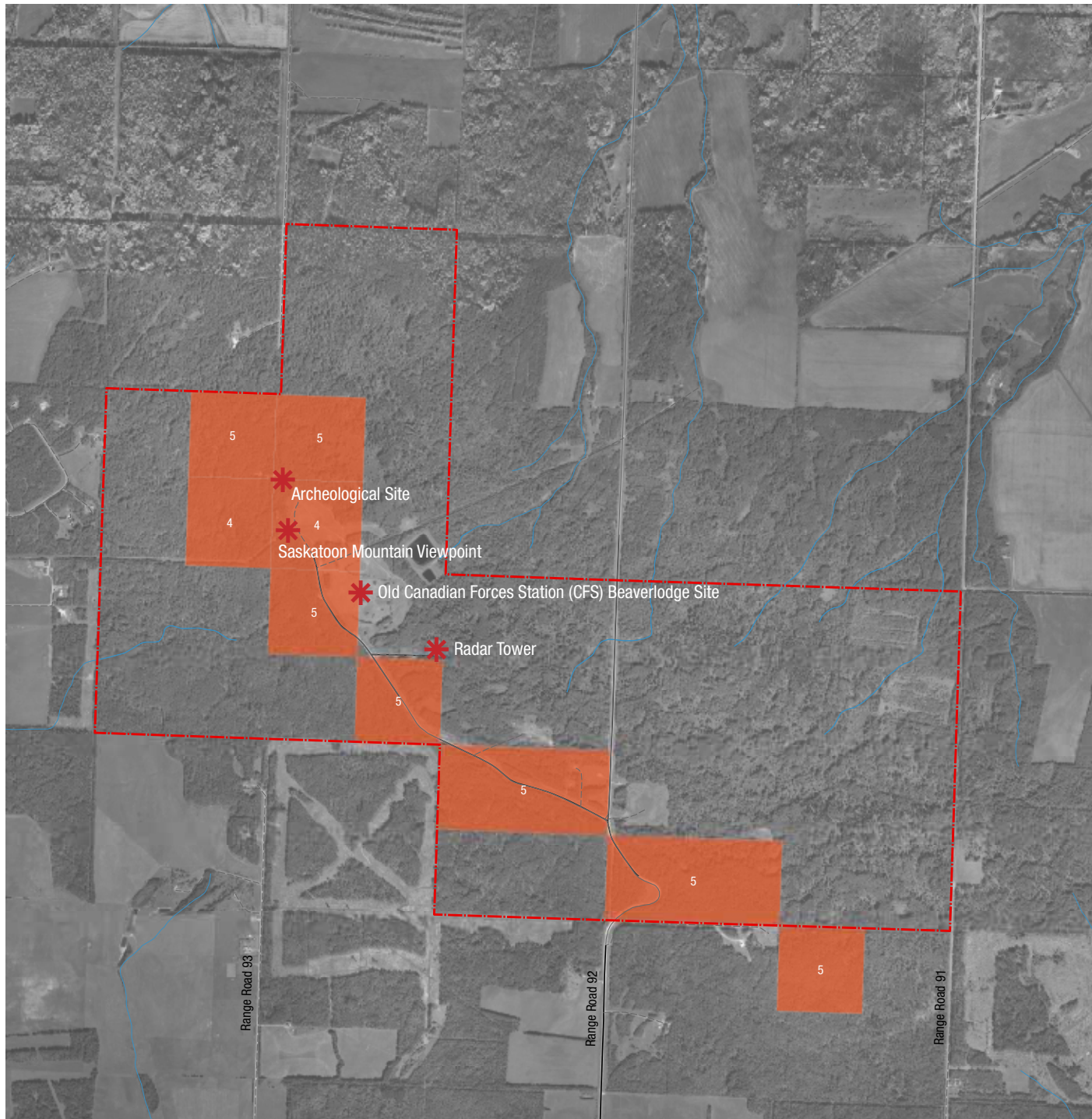


Saskatoon Mountain is in the traditional territory of the Beaver First Nation (Wright, 1992). Harvesting and hunting practices took place on the site and in surrounding areas. The natural springs around the mountain are known to contain stone tools and bison bones, suggesting ambush or surround hunting techniques employed by the Beaver Indians to hunt for Wood and Plains Bison (Wright, 1992).

A number of homesteads were developed on Saskatoon Mountain in the early 1900s. The first homestead registered on the site was owned by Mr. Fred Grier (Chenier, 1988; Hervieux, 2005). Homesteads that once existed on the site have been abandoned or removed as their land titles were cancelled. Range improvements were undertaken on previous leases.

The site's modern cultural history is defined by its use as a radar base, first by the US Air Force and then as Canadian Forces Station Beaverlodge. Disturbances from the development and operation of the radar base constitute the most significant area of disruption on the site (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982). At full operation of the radar base, approximately 70 buildings and a broad range of facilities were located on site (Hervieux, 2005). Several powerline right-of-ways and cutlines traversed the site.





**Figure 5. Cultural + Historical Features**



**Cultural + Historical Features**



Top | Postcard of Saskatoon Mountain Viewpoint (1940)  
Left | Painting of Saskatoon Mountain Viewpoint (Unknown Artist)

**Legend**

- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Boundary
- Historic Resources Value (HRV)
  - HRV 4 - May require avoidance
  - HRV 5 - No significance
- Cultural | Historical Feature

April 9 | 2012



Image Credit: Garry Lock

In addition to the structures supporting the station, a number of informal recreational hiking and cross-country skiing trails were developed and used by base personnel. The CFS Beaverlodge site was reclaimed in 1989, including the removal of the base structures and ground surface seeding.

Remnants of these previous uses, including evidence of a homestead, the first Alberta Forest Service Tower in the region, and the original landfill from the early radar base were discovered on the site. These remains were placed under consultative notation by Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism in the early 1990s to ensure long-term management of the region's historical resource base.

Historical resource values (HRVs), including archaeological features, are shown in Figure 5.



Facilities at the former Canadian Forces Station Beaverlodge

## 3.2 Recreational Resources

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is a popular destination for a diversity of active and passive recreational activities. Limited facilities currently support these activities. Based on an analysis of public and stakeholder input, interest in the Natural Area is predominantly oriented toward nature appreciation and environmental protection.

### 3.2.1 Recreation Activities

A detailed site assessment and intensive community engagement activities were undertaken to identify the range and frequency of activities enjoyed at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. The six most popular activities identified by users of the Natural Area were predominantly passive and family-oriented. These activities include:

- » Nature appreciation
- » Scenic viewing
- » Hiking
- » Family outing
- » Picnicking
- » Photography and fine arts

Other activities enjoyed by visitors to the Natural Area include:

- » Horseback riding
- » Bowhunting
- » Off-leash dog walking
- » Cross-country skiing
- » Snowshoeing
- » Trail Running
- » On-leash dog walking
- » Mountain biking
- » Driving an ATV
- » Snowmobiling
- » Driving an off-road motorcycle
- » Tobogganing
- » Geocaching
- » Kite flying
- » Star gazing
- » Viewing the northern lights
- » Birdwatching
- » Aboriginal cultural/spiritual practice



\* Generic photos not taken from Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

### 3.2.2 Recreation Features, Facilities + Infrastructure

Recreation features are the natural and built features that facilitate a recreation activity. An inventory of recreation features at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area was conducted through site visits and in consultation with members of the public. Recreation features are shown in Figure 6.

#### Day Use Site

The day use site is located on the plateau in the northwest section of the Natural Area. The site includes picnic tables, firepits, a single toilet and trash bins. The day use site is generally characterized by signs of vandalism, including graffiti and litter, as well as by erosion caused by OHV access. Firewood is provided at the day use site, however there is evidence of trees being cut for firewood.

Members of the public have indicated that improvements should focus on attracting families to the site by formalizing the day use site, improving washroom facilities and providing wayfinding and interpretive signage. A day use shelter and wood stove would improve year-round site access.

#### Informal Trails and linear access features (i.e. cutlines)

A network of informal trails exists throughout the site, with most trails concentrated in the western portion of the Natural Area. The trails are a mix of former Nordic trails maintained by base personnel from CFS Beaverlodge and informal trails created through the use of service rights-of-way and cutlines. The trails are not maintained through any formal trail management arrangement.

The trails are used for both motorized and non-motorized recreation activities, including OHV use, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, some mountain biking, horseback riding and dog walking. User conflicts, specifically between motorized and non-motorized users, have been reported and result in impacts to overall trail condition and to the surrounding natural environment. The trails exhibit signs of erosion, which has been accelerated due to OHV use on steep slopes. It is recognized that a small portion of 4X4 trucks users create major damage throughout open areas, especially by the day use area and along the access road.

Members of the public suggested that trail improvements, regular maintenance and the creation of additional trails would improve the recreation and conservation values of the Natural Area.

#### Access Road

Vehicular access to the Natural Area is provided by a paved access road leading from Range Road 92 northwesterly to the day use site.

#### Parking Lot

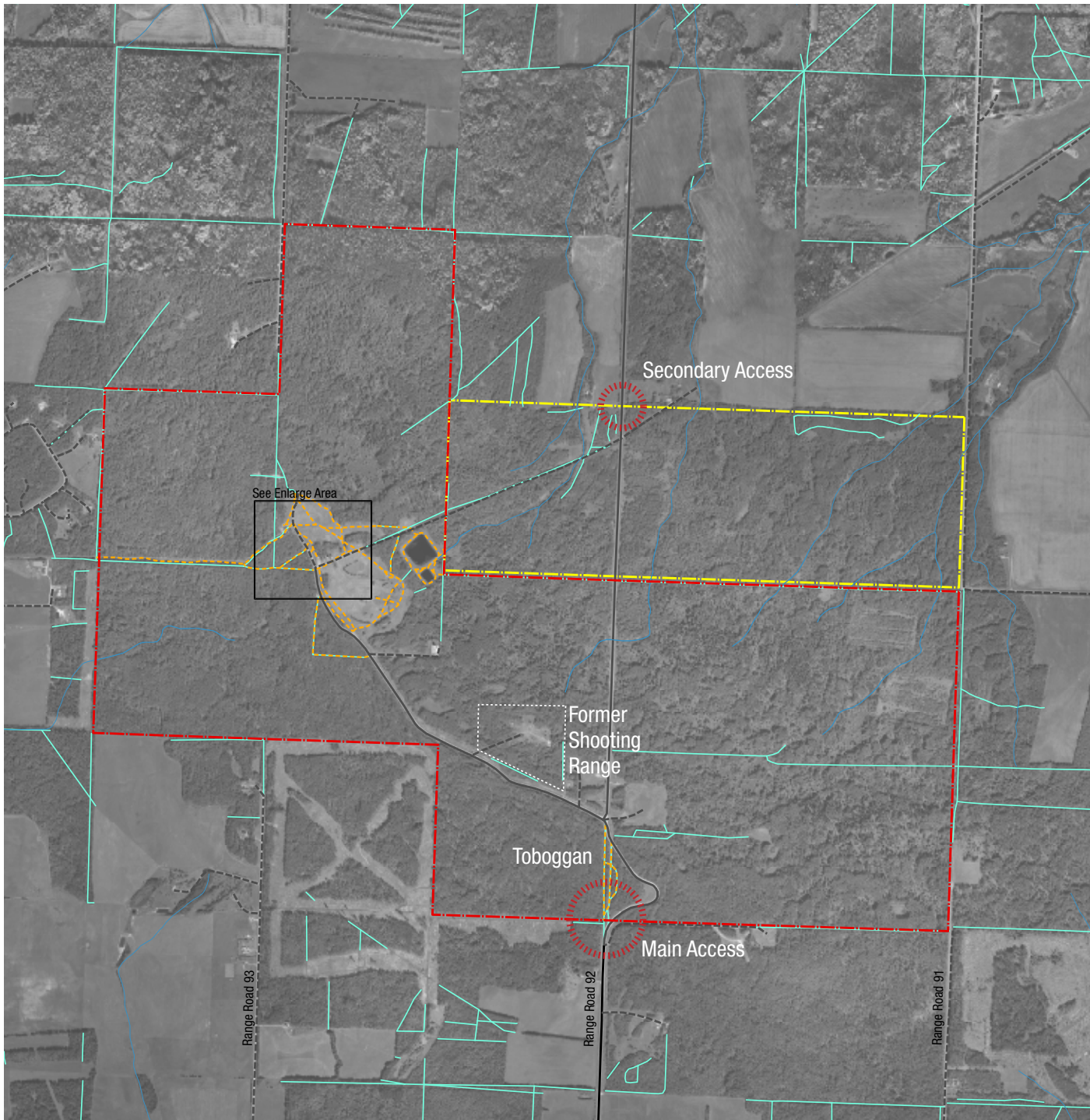
An informal gravel parking lot provides parking facilities to the day use site. The parking lot is currently located in an area with identified historical resource values.

#### Viewpoints

There are viewpoints at two locations on the site. The viewpoints afford scenic vistas of the Rocky Mountains to the west and expansive views of the surrounding agricultural landscape. Some benches are provided. As scenic viewing is a popular motivation of visitors to the site, additional benches and trash bins are required to meet current user needs.

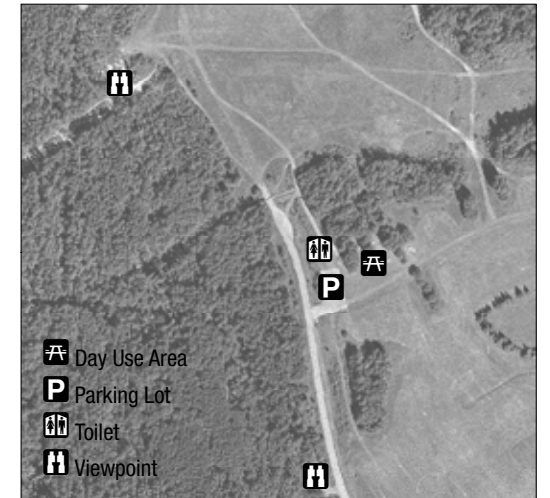






# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

## Recreation Features



### Legend

- Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Boundary
- Protective Notation (PNT)
- Roads
  - Gravel Road
  - Paved Road
  - Unimproved Road
  - Informal Trails
  - Cutlines
- Day Use Area
- Parking Lot
- Toilet
- Viewpoint

April 9 | 2012



**Figure 6. Recreation Features**

Image Credit: Barry Lock

### 3.3 Non-Recreational Land Use Resources

A number of non-recreational land uses occur in the Natural Area. Figure 7 and Figure 8 provide an overview of the approved land ownership, tenure and disposition types and locations.

#### 3.3.1 Crown Land Reservations and Dispositions

The following current Crown land reservations and dispositions are relevant to this Plan:

##### **Protective Notation (PNT) 790947**

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation have a reservation on the site for “educational natural area potential”. The three quarters under a PNT (SE Sec 15, SE and SW Sec 14) are Crown land managed by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD). These land parcels were previously under grazing leases, but AESRD removed the grazing leases with the intent that they be included in the Natural Area through an Order in Council (OIC). This OIC has not been completed.

##### **Pipeline Agreement (PLA) 840649**

A pipeline (disposition PLA840649) was constructed to transport water from Bear Lake in the northwest to service the Canadian Forces base. Overlaying the pipeline was a road and a power line. Both the pipeline and the power line have been removed.

##### **Easement (EZE) 3298, 3299, 890003, 790141, 930345**

Easements registered for power lines are present throughout the site.

##### **Easement (EZE) 1650**

An easement for the Canadian National Railway is registered on the site. It is understood that there may have been plans for a rail supply line when the site was a Canadian Forces base.

##### **Miscellaneous Leases (MLL)**

All of the MLLs are for communications towers. The areas around the towers are fenced off and gated to prohibit public access.

##### **Disposition Reservation (DRS) 860146**

This reservation is registered to Transport Canada, administered by AESRD. This reservation does not expire until June 2016.

##### **Protective Notation (PNT) 900009**

This reservation is registered to Transport Canada, administered by AESRD. It expired in January 2010.

##### **Registered Roadway (RRD) 9924800**

This is a registered road allowance.

##### **Provisional Roadway (RDS) 940028**

This is a road reservation for the County of Grande Prairie.

##### **Recreation Lease (REC) 950004**

This recreation lease is administered by the County of Grande Prairie for a day use site.

#### 3.3.2 Private Land

There is only one private parcel located on Range Road 92. Most of the land surrounding the Natural Area is under cultivation or used for livestock grazing. There is a residential subdivision to the west of the site and a number of rural residential developments nearby. Low-density development could potentially occur at the edges of the natural area.

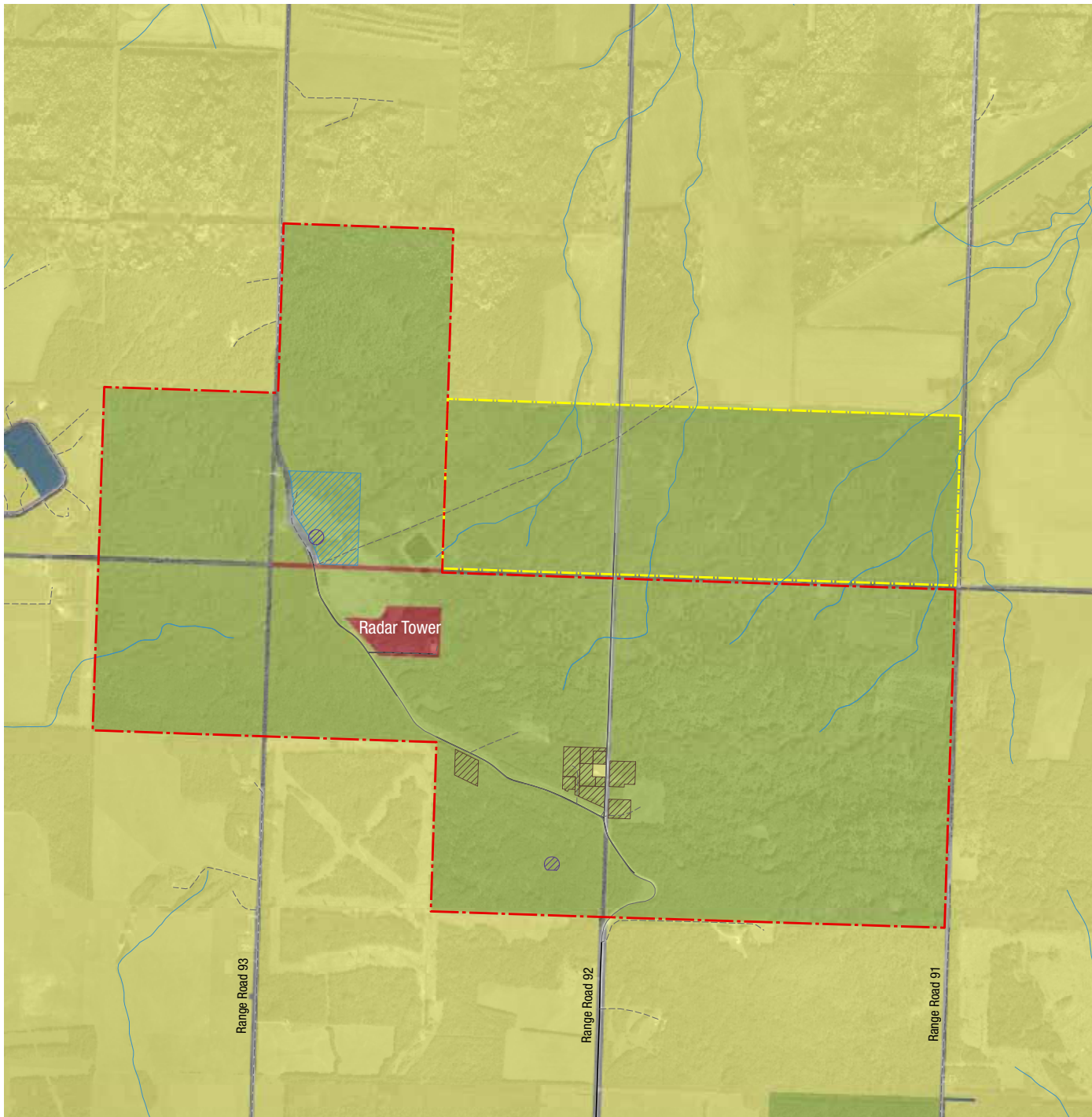


Image Credit: Barry Lock

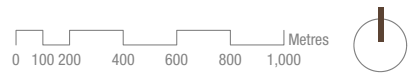
# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

## Land Ownership + Tenure

### Legend

- - - Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Boundary
- - - Protective Notation (PNT)  
Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation | Educational Natural Area Potential
- Land Ownership**
- Federal
- Provincial
- Municipal
- Private
- Land Tenure**
- ▨ Industrial
- ▨ Miscellaneous Leases (MLL)
- ▨ Recreation Lease | County of Grande Prairie

April 9 | 2012



**Figure 7. Land Ownership and Tenure**

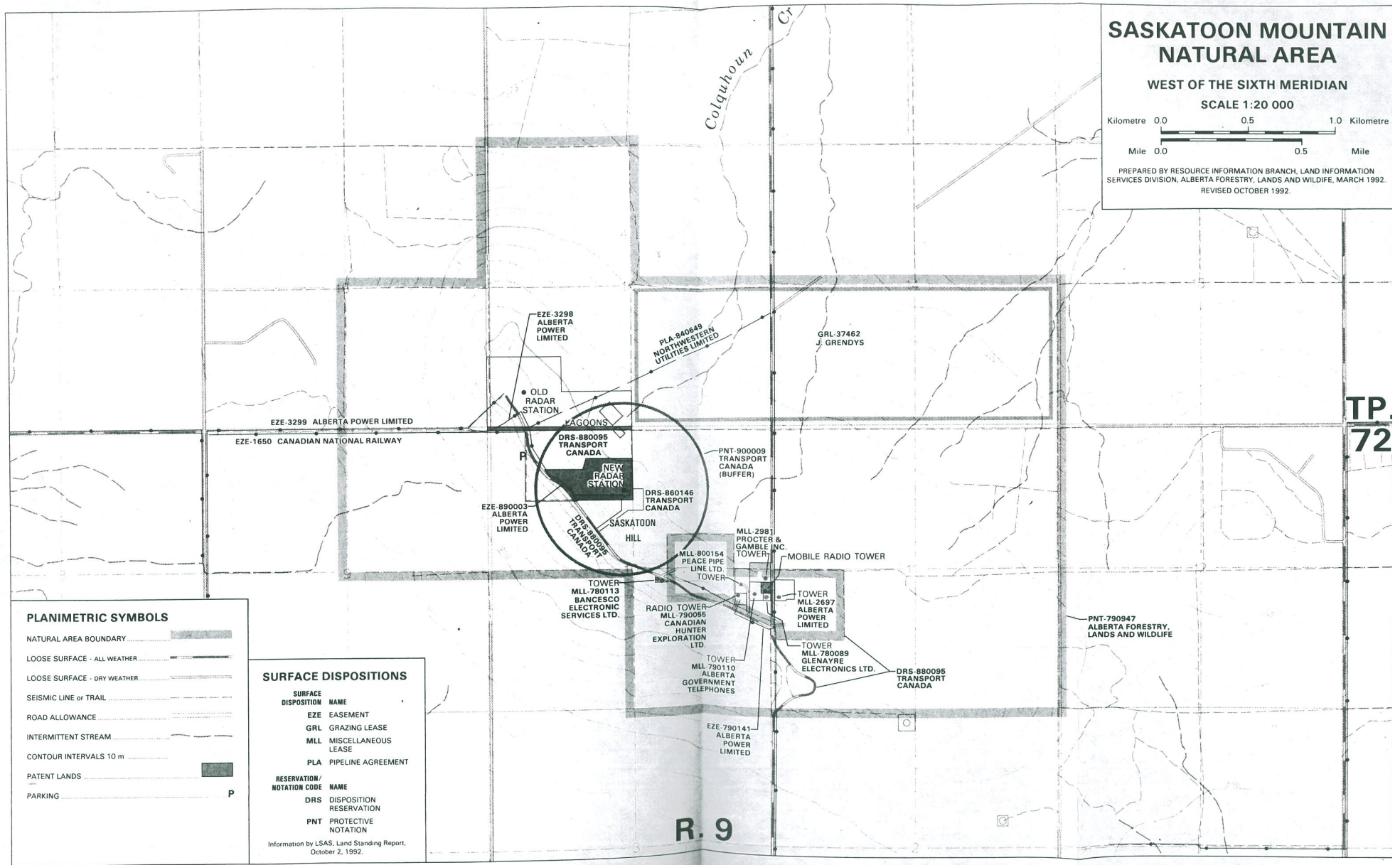


Figure 8. Dispositions

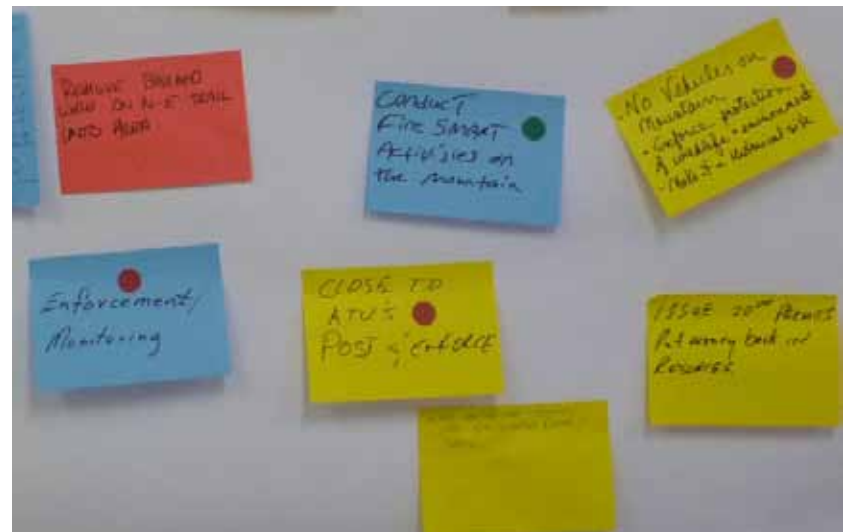
What are the main issues and concerns associated with recreation and conservation at Saskatoon Mountain?



Provide key words that you feel should be included in a vision statement for Saskatoon Mountain



What changes would most improve the quality and management of recreation at Saskatoon Mountain?



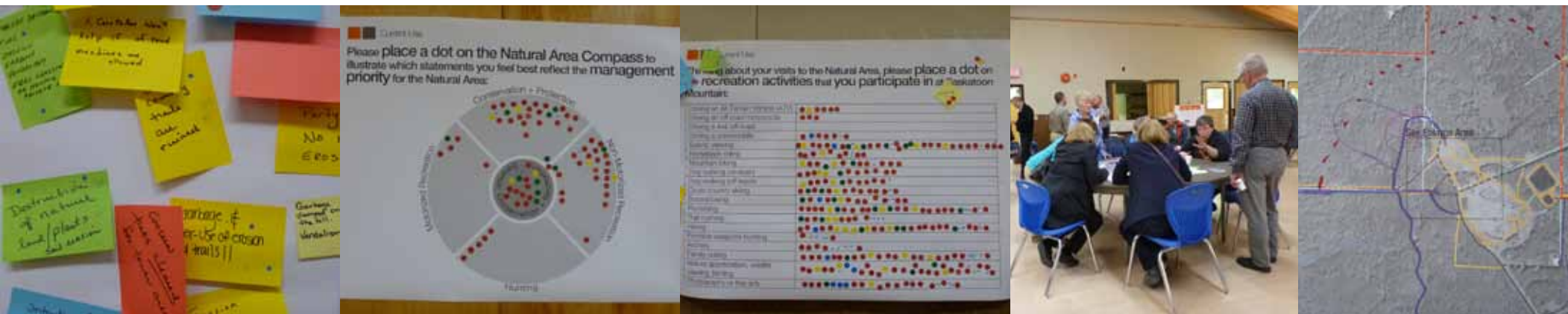
# 4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT...

## WHAT WE HEARD

Public and stakeholder engagement was an integral part of the development of this plan. Multiple opportunities were provided to allow the public to share concerns and their vision for the area during the first phase of public engagement. The second phase gathered key stakeholders with diverging interests to elaborate on recommendations to address issues. The process and results of the public engagement efforts are summarized in this section. More detail is found in Appendix B.

### 4.1 Summary of Phase One Public Engagement

The first set of community and stakeholder engagement activities was held to obtain input, information, and ideas on current uses of the Natural Area, preferred management direction and an overall vision for the Natural Area. This input confirmed and elaborated background research on existing uses of the Natural Area and informed the development of a vision for the Natural Area and its strategic management framework. Activities included two open houses, an online survey, an interactive mapping application and stakeholder interviews, summarized in Table 4.



**Table 4 Phase One Public Engagement Activities**

ACTIVITY	LOCATION
Open Houses	May 8, 2012 (7:00 – 9:00 pm) Beaverlodge Community Centre May 9, 2012 (7:00 – 9:00 pm) Saskatoon Lake Hall
Surveys	Available online from April 24 to May 20, 2012
Interactive Mapping Application	Available online from April 24 to May 20, 2012
Interviews	Telephone interviews lasting 25-40 minutes conducted in April 2012

Stakeholders and members of the public were asked to provide input on the following four themes:

- » Current uses of the Natural Area
- » Management issues (e.g. concerns, issues, opportunities, constraints, priorities)
- » Appropriate activities, amenities, services, and facilities for the Natural Area
- » Vision for the Natural Area

Information gathered from the public engagement activities was analyzed in detail and documented in a What We Heard Summary report. The report is available under separate cover in Appendix B. Four key messages were heard through the first phase of public and stakeholder engagement activities.

**Nature Appreciation**

We heard that visitors go to the Natural Area to appreciate the natural environment through activities such as scenic viewing, birding, wildlife viewing and hiking. The Natural Area enjoys 4-season use, including tobogganing and cross country skiing in the winter. Its natural setting is popular among families and provides an enjoyable picnic destination.

**Degraded Visitor Experience and a Need for Enforcement**

We heard that motorized activities and inappropriate uses of the Natural Area have led to conflicts between visitors, resulting in a degraded visitor experience. Motorized activities are reported to cause noise and safety concerns. These activities also adversely impact the trails and natural landscape. Littering, vandalism, drinking and partying are a significant concern and contribute to an atmosphere that is becoming undesirable for visitors. More “eyes on the site” were also recommended in the form of a permanent caretaker position or partnership with RCMP, bylaw officers or stewardship group patrols. Many people commented on the current lack of effective enforcement.

**Site Improvements**

Management priorities should focus on two key site improvements: managed motorized uses and upgraded recreation facilities. We heard that management interventions such as motorized use zoning and user-designated trail systems could help address user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. Self-regulation through Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) clubs and trail stewardship initiatives could also be implemented to resolve conflicts and build better relationships between Natural Area users. We also heard that upgraded facilities such as trail improvement and maintenance, wayfinding and enhanced amenities (e.g. washroom facilities, benches, waste bins, parking) could help improve the site.

**Ideas for a Vision for the Natural Area**

Responsible recreation that conserves and protects the Natural Area. The site will emphasize enjoyment, peace and respect among visitors and the natural environment. A visit to the site should promote education and community stewardship through partnerships.

## 4.2 Summary of Phase Two Public Engagement

The purpose of phase two of public engagement was to achieve consensus on the recommendations. A stakeholder workshop was held on July 11, 2012. Twenty participants with different and conflicting interests collaborated on the vision, principles and management strategies. The stakeholder workshop activities are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 Stakeholder Workshop Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Vision + Principles Review	A draft vision and principles was presented and the participants were asked to give feedback individually.
Management Zones Exercise	A draft management zone map was presented and the participants were asked to review the zoning typologies and boundaries in groups.
Trails + Recreation Facilities Exercise	Participants were asked to identify potential trails and uses as well as recreation facilities in groups.

Results of the stakeholder workshop exercises are presented in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

Recommendations that gained consensus from all participants are listed below:

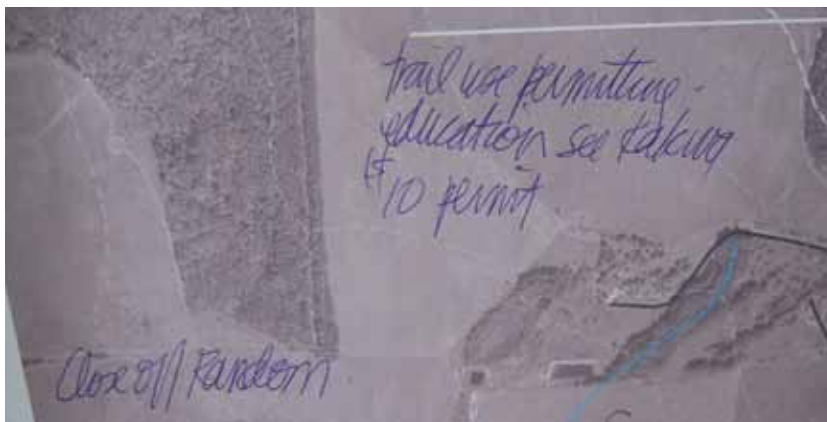
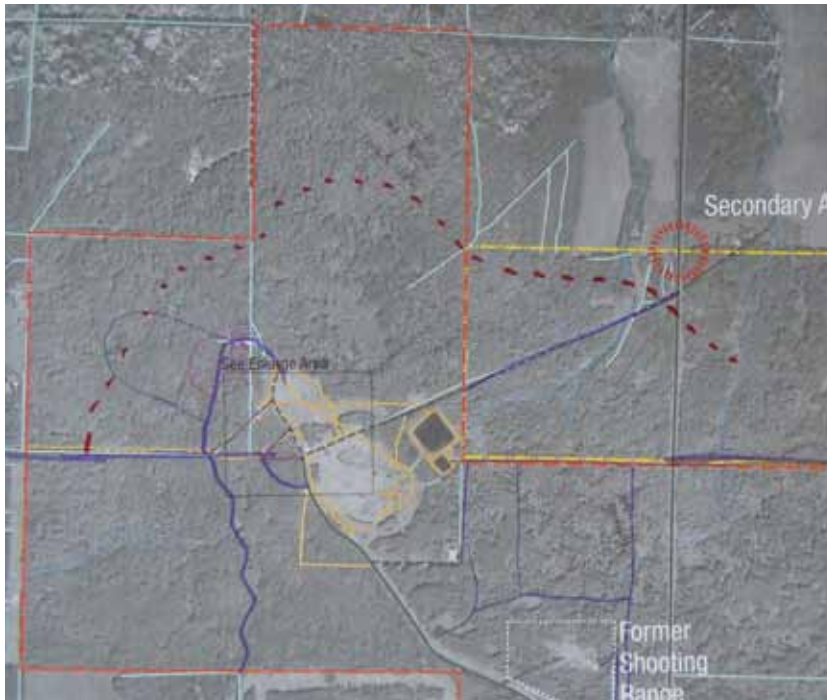
- » Define a clear entity that governs the site and enforce restriction
- » Implement a steering committee or advisory board that advise on the management of the area and that have sufficient support from the County of Grande Prairie and Alberta Parks, Recreation and Tourism
- » Develop a dynamic approach to management where issues are addressed as they arise
- » Restrict the use of primitive weapons to bow hunting only within the area
- » Restrict the use of motorized activities to designated trails and areas on the east side of the site
- » Develop a staging area outside the site to eliminate trespassing on private land on the west side

Figure 9. Management Zones Exercise





Figure 10. Trail + Recreation Facilities Exercise



# 5. SUMMARY OF ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area contains a number of ecological, historic, recreational and land use resources. These resources inform visitor use and contribute to the Natural Area's distinct sense of place. Careful analyses of the resources and the first phase of public engagement have identified a number of constraints and opportunities to be addressed by the Plan for Recreation and Conservation at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area.

## 5.1 Issues and Constraints

The primary issues and constraints at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area are related to impacts affecting the recreational use values of the site. Issues and constraints are summarized in Table 6. Negative impacts to the quality of visitor experience result primarily from user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized activities and inappropriate uses of the site such as partying and drinking. These impacts are compounded by the lack of clear management and enforcement responsibility for activities undertaken at Saskatoon Mountain.



Damage caused by OHVs



Vandalism



Trail Erosion Caused by OHVs



Littering



Erosion Caused by OHVs

**Table 6 Issues and Constraints at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area**

ISSUE + CONSTRAINT	IMPACT/EFFECT
Lack of clear management and enforcement responsibility	No enforcement or compliance regime
	Some users have the feeling that all behaviours are permitted
Irresponsible use of OHVs (especially 4X4 trucks)	Trail degradation and erosion
	Destruction of vegetation and habitat
	Disruptions to wildlife viewing
User conflict between motorized and non-motorized uses	Noise
	Safety concerns
Inappropriate use of site (vandalism, littering, drinking, and partying)	Degraded quality of visitor experience
	Reduction of visitors
	Safety concerns
	Fire hazard
	Additional maintenance requirements
Poor quality and insufficient facilities and amenities	Degraded quality of visitor experience
	Reduction of visitors



Damage Caused by OHVs



## 5.2 Opportunities

The current use patterns and user profiles of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area suggest a number of opportunities for improved, ongoing conservation and recreation activities. Positive impacts such as the provision of recreation amenities, environmental learning, programming initiatives and collaborative management have been identified. Taking advantage of these opportunities will not only improve visitor experience at the Natural Area, but will also meet policy direction provided in provincial and municipal plans.

Opportunities are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7 Opportunities at Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area**

OPPORTUNITY	IMPACT/EFFECT
Conservation	Protects boreal forest natural region, associated vegetation and wildlife, as well as historical values.
	Include PNT lands (SE Sec 15, SE and SW Sec 14) as part of the Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area boundary.
Recreation	Environmental learning
	Provision of recreation amenities to support Grande Prairie's growing population
	Improved community health and wellness associated with outdoor activities
	Year-round, thematic programming initiatives (e.g. skies and solar systems theme organized around star gazing and northern lights viewing; flora and fauna theme organized around hiking and cross-country skiing; family themes organized around picnicking and tobogganning)
Collaboration, Partnership and Stewardship	Collaborative management of Natural Area with community members, stewardship and users groups
	Positive community support for on-going operation and maintenance of the Natural Area and self-policing

## 6. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Management decisions need to be guided by a shared long-term vision for the future of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. The vision statement clearly establishes this vision and is the foundation for the management approach of the Natural Area in the short- and long-term. The management principles and management goals inform the strategies required to achieve the vision. The vision and management principles have been developed in collaboration with community stakeholders and reflect the shared aspirations for the Natural Area.

### 6.1 Vision

The following vision statement was developed based on comments received from stakeholders:

*“Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is a destination for residents, families and visitors of all ages to enjoy. The site’s unique ecological features, native biodiversity, history and archaeological significance are wisely stewarded and interpreted. Enhanced trails, view points, day use area, and information and interpretive signs support both desired recreational experiences and the protection of conservation values.*

*Previously disturbed areas within the park are reclaimed and impacts from activities are mitigated or avoided. Responsible motorized recreation is permitted in designated areas and impacts are managed. Recreation activities and uses are regularly monitored and enforced.*

*Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area operates in partnership with the County of Grande Prairie and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Community input from a stewardship advisory committee, research and educational institutions, as well as local organized recreation user groups supports all management activities.”*

## 6.2 Management Principles

Five guiding management principles have been established to inform the management strategies:

### **Environmental Protection**

Recognize the ecological significance of the site and ensure the long term protection of its ecological and cultural values.

### **Community and Visitor Learning**

Facilitate enhanced community and visitor appreciation of the site's historical and archaeological significance through interpretive, educational and experiential learning opportunities.

### **Stewardship**

Plan and implement education, management, regulation, enforcement and monitoring activities with support from a stewardship advisory committee.

### **Healthy, Active and Enriched Living**

Provide a range of recreational experiences that promote healthy, active lifestyles, balance user needs, and avoid negative impacts to natural and historic resource values.

### **Dynamic and Informed Management**

Respond to management and enforcement issues as they arise. Make management decisions on best available information and best management practices.

## 6.3 Goals

The Plan for Recreation and Conservation at Saskatoon Mountain aim to achieve the following goals:

- » Provide a diversity of motorized, non-motorized, active and passive recreation opportunities.
- » Protect environmentally sensitive areas, ecological features and ecosystem functions.
- » Preserve cultural, historic and archaeological values.
- » Proactively manage visitor use to minimize ecological impacts and visitor conflicts.
- » Employ a collaborative and dynamic management framework.

# 7. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Recreation activities are currently managed through a day-use lease administered by the County of Grande Prairie with little other control. It is clear from the extensive degradation of the trails, soils and vegetation of the area, that additional management of activities and their associated impacts is required. This chapter recommends six overarching management strategies for recreation and conservation at Saskatoon Mountain. It further recommends additional initiatives and policies to support the strategies.

Table 8 presents the management strategies and identifies general objectives. Both direct and indirect strategies are included. Direct management techniques include zoning, the regulation of activities, and enforcement. Indirect management techniques include infrastructure design as well as information and education programming.

The management strategies are dependent upon each other for the successful achievement of the plan objectives and should be implemented in an integrated manner. For instance, education and branding initiatives are closely tied to enforcement and compliance initiatives. Recreation and trail management is linked to partnerships and zoning. Figure 11 illustrates the integrated approach.

**Table 8 Plan Strategies and Objectives**

STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES
Management Zoning for Sustainable Recreation and Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Establish land use zones where use, activity and management policies apply. Clearly communicate the management objectives for each of the defined zones.</li> <li>» Ensure that policies and implementation actions protect and improve the condition of natural and cultural resources and prevent further degradation.</li> </ul>
Recreation + Trail Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Ensure that recreation and resource values are managed to improve ecological integrity, enable sustainable recreation use and enhance visitor experience.</li> </ul>
Partnerships, Collaboration + Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Actively engage community and user groups to advise on and participate in the management of the area.</li> <li>» Build community and user support for the responsible collaborative management of recreational use within the context of conservation of natural and cultural values.</li> </ul>
Education + Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Create awareness about the importance of Saskatoon Mountain, and its unique ecological, cultural and recreational resources.</li> <li>» Connect with visitors and user groups to communicate important area management messages.</li> </ul>
Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Clearly communicate area rules and regulations</li> <li>» Prohibit and prevent unsustainable uses and activities</li> <li>» Vigorously ensure regulatory and management intent compliance.</li> </ul>
Visitor Experience + Environmental Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Use monitoring of both visitor satisfaction and resource condition to inform management directed at the continuous improvement of recreation experiences and ecological / cultural values.</li> </ul>



**Figure 11. Integrated Management Approach**

## 7.1 Area Classification and Management Zones

Appropriate designation of the area will provide the regulatory authority to designate management zones as well as permitted uses and activities within those zones. The following sections provide recommendations for reclassification of the area and the identification of management zones.

### 7.1.1 Proposed Site Classification and Legislative Framework

It is recommended that the vision and goals for Saskatoon Mountain can be best achieved through the reclassification of the area to a **Provincial Recreation Area** that provides a modest amount of facilities and designated trails within the context of a healthy natural landscape. To aid in both management continuity, as well as clarity of public understanding, it is recommended the current natural area and the adjacent expired grazing leases on public lands be amalgamated and both receive this designation.

Provincial Recreation Areas:

- » Support a range of outdoor activities in natural, modified and man-made settings.
- » Are managed with outdoor recreation as the primary objective.
- » Vary in their level of development; some are intensively developed while others remain largely undeveloped.

The reclassification to a **Provincial Recreation Area** will enable more comprehensive management and enforcement of OHV use in accordance with the Provincial Parks (General) Regulation AR102/85. This regulation specifies that off-highway vehicles are only permitted on trails or areas that have been designated for OHV use by conveyance. The regulation enables park managers to create specific rules about where OHV use is permitted. Should OHV use be permitted at Saskatoon Mountain, an amendment to the County of Grande Prairie Parks Bylaw No. 2811 would be required for the leased area on Saskatoon Mountain.

Firearm possession and discharge in Provincial Recreation Areas is also regulated through Regulation AR102/85. A permit is required to carry and discharge a firearm in any Provincial Recreation Area.

Following the feedback from workshops, it is recommended that no firearms of any type be permitted within Saskatoon Mountain. Continued bow hunting is recommended as wildlife management objectives allow.

### 7.1.2 Management Zones

Reclassification of the area and the designation of **management zones** with associated permitted and non-permitted uses, including a clearly **designated trail system** for any ATV use, will afford greater protection of the ecological, cultural and historical/archaeological values of the area. The following are the recommendations related to classification and zoning:

- » Reclassify the Natural Area into a Provincial Recreation Area so as to better manage motorized and non-motorized recreation uses.
- » Include PNT lands (SE Sec 15, SE and SW Sec 14) as part of the Saskatoon Mountain site.

Four management zones, consistent with the Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation zoning framework, are identified. The zones are based upon: underlying biophysical characteristics, historical/cultural considerations, recreation potential and likely response to management. (see Figure 12. Draft Management Zones) They are used to indicate the type and nature of activities, uses and facilities that are appropriate for different areas on Saskatoon Mountain.

The intent for each of the four zones is listed below:

#### **Historical/Cultural Zone**

- » Preserve known significant heritage, prehistoric or archaeological features.
- » Stabilize and restore historical features and structures within the zone.

#### **Natural Environment Zone**

- » All Natural Environment Zones - Promote ecological recovery and conservation of natural elements and processes. (Bow hunting is restricted to this area.)
- » Zone A - Provide low-impact non-motorized outdoor recreation, education, and interpretive opportunities for appreciation and enjoyment of natural heritage values.
- » Zone B - Provide limited motorized vehicle access in designated areas and on designated trails only.

#### **Visitor Services + Facility Zone**

- » Provide facilities and visitor services that support both day use and overnight accommodation.

#### **Access Zone**

- » Provide safe and convenient access to the site through facilities such as access routes, parking areas and staging areas.
- » Designate motorized trail corridors to manage motorized trail use.
- » Provide information, interpretation and education programs that orient the public to facilities, services, recreational opportunities and management objectives.





**Figure 12. Draft Management Zones**

# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

## Draft Management Zones

### Legend

- Saskatoon Mountain Park Boundary
- Protective Notation (PNT)\*
- Management Zones\*\*
- Historical/Cultural
- Natural Environment (A) Non-motorized Recreation
- Natural Environment (B) Motorized Recreation (Designated Trails and Areas)
- Visitor Services + Facility
- Access
- Lease

\*Crown land managed by Alberta ESRD. Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation has a reservation on the site for "educational natural area potential".

\*\*Based on Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation Land Use Zoning

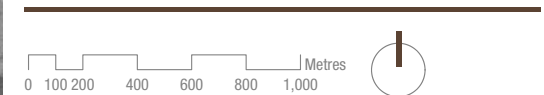


Image Credit: Garry Lock

## 7.2 Recreation Facilities + Trail Management

Activities at the day use site and on trails at Saskatoon Mountain will be managed to improve ecological integrity, enable sustainable recreational use and enhance visitor experience. Improved recreation facilities such as day use area facilities, designated parking areas, staging areas, viewpoints, designated trails, way-finding and interpretive signage will be provided. The provision of quality, well-designed facilities and signage, together with the restoration of damaged areas is essential to providing a new starting point for the management of the area. Suitable and well-maintained facilities tend to engender respect amongst users, particularly if actions to the contrary are vigorously discouraged.

The following are the recommendations related to facilities and trails:

### Improve and Develop Site Amenities

- » Establish consistent design guidelines for all facilities and signage in Saskatoon Mountain.
- » Improve the existing day use area by providing new or rehabilitated washrooms, picnic tables, firepits, garbage and recycling bins, dog waste bag dispensers, and clearly designated parking areas.
- » Enhance and formalize parking at the day use staging area.
- » Improve and enhance key viewing points by providing benches for viewing in key locations. Consider a small covered viewing shelter for use in inclement weather. Repair existing viewpoints and rehabilitate the damage done by vehicles.
- » Ensure pedestrian access to at least one viewpoint is available to those who are mobility challenged.
- » Provide day use or staging areas for non-motorized activities such as picnics, star-gazing, group bonfires, and tobogganing.
- » Develop a staging area for motorized designated trail use in the natural environment zone B.
- » Provide wayfinding, regulatory, and interpretive signage at entry points and other key locations.

- » Explore opportunities for overnight accommodations (small overnight campground with trailer, RV and tent sites. Consider the appointment of a campground host. (see Figure 13)
- » Consider the development of a non-motorized (walk in / ride in) campsite.
- » Address impacts associated with past vandalism and motorized activities, including erosion and other impacts to sensitive habitat and visitor experience. Develop a reforestation and ecosystem recovery plan for those areas where active rehabilitation is required.



**Figure 13. Example of Potential Campground at Saskatoon Mountain**

*\*The campground is shown as a potential activity. Further studies and detailed design plans are required to ensure the suitability of the site for the development of a campground.*

### Trail Plan

- » Inventory all informal trails and design a designated trail plan of interconnected loops for specific activities such as hiking, XC skiing, equestrian use and mountain biking. Trails should avoid sensitive areas to lessen impacts and minimize the potential for user conflicts.
- » Conduct a baseline biophysical inventory to inform the development of the trail plan prior to develop any trails in the Natural Environment Zone B.
- » Designate the majority of trails as multipurpose but provide for single use trails where conflicts between users may arise.
- » Initiate a pilot program of ATV use on designated trails only and monitor activities and impacts. If use and compliance with regulations creates unacceptable impacts, discontinue ATV use of the area. Ensure this provision is clearly communicated to the ATV community.
- » Allow motorized ATV use on designated trails but only small ATVs such as quads and motorcycles. During winter season, snowmobiles could be allowed on designated trails.
- » Due to excessive potential for damage, prohibit 4x4 truck use on any trails in Saskatoon Mountain.
- » Develop a self-guided interpretive trail in the vicinity of the day use area that focuses on the history of the military use of the site.
- » Develop a self-guided trail focusing on the ecological aspects of the site with a least one short loop of the trail accessible to those who are mobility challenged.
- » Use provincial trail standards to design the trail system.
- » Work collaboratively with partners, user groups and the Stewardship Advisory Committee to develop the trail plan.
- » Develop a cost estimate for all potential interventions. Prioritize trail and facility development and develop a funding strategy that includes partnerships with user groups and the provincial government.

### Trail Management Program

- » Develop a trail management program that identifies potential impacts to trails and recommends mitigation measures.

- » Consider a trail use permit system (at a nominal cost) whereby ATV users must acquire a permit that is accompanied by information on acceptable use.
- » Use impact mitigation measures as required such as:
  - » Seasonal trail closures (e.g. no ATVs in wet spring seasons)
  - » Establishing trail use policies complete with clear information signage
  - » Consider fencing or other closure techniques in areas of closure and rehabilitation.
- » Identify trail maintenance standards and responsibilities such as:
  - » Active trail rehabilitation requirements where necessary.
  - » Cross-country ski trail grooming by local clubs
  - » ATV trail maintenance by local clubs and user groups.

### Visitor Management + Public Safety

- » Work with the local Fire Department, RCMP, Emergency Medical Services and conservation officers to develop an Emergency Response Plan complete with clear policies and best practices to respond to anticipated emergencies (e.g. fire, wildlife encounters, severe weather events, as well as lost or injured visitors).
- » Avoid trespass on private property by creating staging areas within Saskatoon Mountain for ATV users, hikers and horseback riders.



## 7.3 Management Partnerships, Collaboration + Stewardship

The County of Grande Prairie and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation need to actively work with provincial and local government agencies, community champions, organized recreational user groups, research organizations, and educational institutions to improve, develop, and maintain site amenities and activities. Visitor stewardship encourages wise use of the Natural Area and creates a sense of ownership, pride and belonging at the site.

### Community Stewardship

- » Work with area users, volunteers, organized recreational user groups, research organizations and educational institutions to establish a Saskatoon Mountain Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee should meet once a year, at a minimum, to review management activities and success in achieving management objectives.
- » The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to advise the County of Grande Prairie, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation on the overall management of the area. This includes identifying

opportunities and needs to educate, manage, regulate, monitor and obtain compliance. These include (among others):

- » Ecosystem recovery initiatives (e.g., tree planting, invasive species control, closed access reclamation etc.)
- » Facility and trail development and maintenance
- » Responsible recreation outreach
- » Site clean-up
- » Enforcement success and requirements

### Events

- » Organize events throughout the year to encourage responsible use of the site, promote community support and attract visitors to ensure year-round use.
- » Events may include, among others:
  - » Trail running races
  - » Cross-country, orienteering and ski races
  - » Family celebrations (e.g. star-gazing camp-outs, annual berry picking, winter festival with toboggan races)
  - » Artistic programs / events (e.g. photographic, painting) to promote understanding and appreciation of the area.



## 7.4 Education + Branding

Convey the message that Saskatoon Mountain is a regional destination and community resource, focusing on the unique natural, recreational, and heritage/prehistoric values that make it a special place.

### Communication Plan

- » Improve public perception of Saskatoon Mountain by developing a communication plan using traditional and new media such as brochures, print advertisements in newspapers, websites, or other internet-based media forums, social media to provide additional information.
- » Develop a comprehensive signage and smart phone code strategy for interpretive and wayfinding signs, including a graphic logo identity.
- » Key messages may include:
  - » Saskatoon Mountain deserves respectful sustainable use;
  - » Saskatoon Mountain is family-oriented;
  - » Saskatoon Mountain is not a party place.
  - » Exciting recreation opportunities are available to explore the significant ecological, heritage, archaeological and prehistoric values on the site.

- » Recreation activities are primarily nature-based and low-impact.
- » Use and enjoyment of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is community supported.
- » Responsible ATV use on designated trails is permitted but non-compliance will not be tolerated and may result in the complete discontinuance of ATV use.

### Education/Outreach Plan

- » Develop an education/outreach plan, including site programming, to promote the values of the Natural Area and demonstrate the regional and provincial significance of the site.
- » Educational outreach themes may include:
  - » Prehistoric/archaeological values
  - » First Nations cultural values
  - » Local ecology values
  - » Healthy and active living values



## 7.5 Enforcement + Compliance

Regulation, enforcement and compliance activities are essential to ensure that visitor rules are implemented and unsustainable site uses are mitigated or stopped. The public has expressed their dissatisfaction with current enforcement. If the plan is to succeed, then enforcement of regulations will be critically important. Several initiatives are required including regulatory, collaborative efforts to enforcement and making sure there are “eyes on the mountain”.

### Regulation

- » Identify regulated activities on the site in accordance with County of Grande Prairie Bylaw No. 2811. Create management zones to provide separate areas for activities that may result in user conflict.
- » Communicate regulated activities and appropriate behaviour using signage, brochures, social media and other techniques.

### Collaborative Enforcement + Compliance

- » Work with organized user groups, adjacent landowners and the Stewardship Advisory Committee to self-monitor activities on the site and to report non-compliance. Consider requiring ATV users who wish to use trails on the mountain to join a Saskatoon Mountain ATV user group.

- » Work with provincial and local authorities (Alberta Parks, County of Grande Prairie, RCMP), to enforce the regulated activities on the site and surrounding Saskatoon Mountain. Consider extending enforcement schedule to ensure presence during evenings when some inappropriate activities are occurring.

### Eyes on the Mountain

- » Promote “Eyes on the Mountain” through continuous on-site presence (e.g. area host or caretaker), year-round use of the area.
- » Consider concealed or armoured CCT video monitoring of entry points.
- » Explore the possibility of formalizing limited overnight accommodation (campground) to dissuade inappropriate activities and attract more responsible visitors. This initiative would require new facilities such as:
  - » RV sites and/or tent sites
  - » Group ATV camp sites



## 7.6 Monitoring of Visitor Experience + Environmental Impacts

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting is critical to enabling site managers, and partners to carryout effective plan implementation, evaluate and track progress, and adaptively manage the area. Precise monitoring methods and relevant performance indicators will be developed as part of a collaborative process with partners, the Stewardship Advisory Committee, the County of Grande Prairies and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

### Visitor Experience

- » Work with partners such as the Stewardship Advisory Committee and organized user groups to monitor visitor satisfaction and user trends.
- » Monitoring methods may include:
  - » Gather user comments and feedback through a suggestion box, dedicated e-mail, or web-based forum.
  - » Administer a survey to collect information on specific management issues.
  - » Request that organized user groups gather feedback from members.
  - » Host yearly community forums or public meetings.
- » Performance indicators may include:
  - » Condition of trails and usability by different user groups
  - » User conflicts
  - » Condition of facilities
  - » Do the facilities support desired recreation experience
  - » Accessibility of facilities
  - » Site cleanliness
  - » Site safety including number of incidents
  - » Regulatory compliance issues

### Ecological Values

- » Conduct a baseline biophysical inventory to identify significant environmental features at Saskatoon Mountain.
- » Develop an environmental monitoring program with partners, research organizations, and educational institutions to monitor use impacts on the natural environment and on wildlife.
- » The program may identify and monitor indicators related to:
  - » Species diversity
  - » Ecosystem functions (e.g. succession/regression, productivity)
  - » Trail condition and soil erosion
  - » Vegetation and habitat degradation
  - » Extent of litter/waste issues

### Report on Progress

- » For each management strategy, identify whether actions and policies have been implemented and evaluate whether management objectives have been met. Information produced will help determine the success of the management approach in achieving the future vision for Saskatoon Mountain.
- » Present findings in a yearly report brought forward by the Stewardship Advisory Committee to the County of Grande Prairie and Alberta TPR.



# 8. IMPLEMENTATION

The management and use of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area requires an effective implementation strategy that is feasible and cost-effective. A phased implementation strategy, presented in Table 9, recommends planning, capital cost, operational and action items required to implement the Plan. The implementation strategy is phased according to high, medium and long-term priorities. Some items, such as enforcement and maintenance, are ongoing.

As the management of Saskatoon Mountain is meant to be a collaborative process, multiple parties are responsible for plan implementation:

- » County of Grande Prairie (County)
- » Alberta Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation (ATPR)
- » Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD)
- » Saskatoon Mountain Stewardship Advisory Committee (SAC)
- » Organized Recreational Groups (ORG)
- » Volunteers
- » Adjacent Landowners
- » Others, as specified in the implementation strategy.





## 8.1 Priority Actions

Table 9 Priority Actions

ACTION	MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY
<b>High Priority (1-2 years)</b>		
Establish a Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area Stewardship Advisory Committee.	Partnerships, Collaboration + Stewardship	County, ATPR, ORG, community champions, volunteers, research organizations and educational institutions
Include PNT lands (SE Sec 15, SE and SW Sec 14) as part of the Saskatoon Mountain site.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR
Reclassify the Natural Area into a Provincial Recreation Area.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR
Inventory all existing trails (location, conditions and uses).	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, SAC, ORG, and volunteers
Conduct a baseline biophysical inventory for the site. Begin with Natural Environment Zone B to inform the development of the trail plan and to confirm permitted activities in the management zones.	Visitor Experience + Environmental Monitoring	County, ATPR
Regulate activities in each management zone by specifying permitted and prohibited uses.	Management Zoning	County, ATPR and SAC
Develop a trail plan for the Natural Area.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, SAC and ORG
Develop and implement a trail management program that identifies potential impacts and recommends mitigation measures.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, SAC and ORG
Develop and implement a communication plan using traditional and new media.	Education + Branding	County, ATPR and SAC
Organize an event such as a picnic to launch the communication plan.	Education + Branding	County, ATPR, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Develop and implement a comprehensive signage strategy for interpretive and wayfinding signs, including an identifiable logo (subject to ATPR standards).	Education + Branding	County, ATPR and SAC
Communicate regulated activities and appropriate behaviour using signage and displays.	Education + Branding	County, ATPR and SAC
Develop and implement a responsible recreation outreach program.	Partnerships, Collaboration + Stewardship	County, SAC and ORG
Create an enforcement task force, including compliance checks and a tip hotline, to ensure visitor compliance with regulated activities.	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	County, ATPR, SAC, and RCMP
Create staging area on the west side of the site for hikers and horseback riders.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR and SAC

ACTION	MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY
Develop staging area for motorized use in the Natural Environment Zone B.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Fence areas and/or block access to trails which are restricted to non-motorized use.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Maintain existing trails and develop new trails.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Develop an Emergency Response Plan.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, ATPR, Fire Department, RCMP, Emergency Medical Services and conservation officers
<b>Medium Priority (3-5 years)</b>		
Undertake reforestation and ecosystem recovery to address issues associated with vandalism, erosion, wide-open motorized activities, and impacts to sensitive habitat and visitor experience.		
Ecosystem recovery may include tree planting, invasive species control or closed access reclamation.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, SAC and volunteers
Enhance key viewing points. Add benches and/or viewing shelter.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Enhance day-use area by formalizing parking lot and improving facilities. Prepare detailed design for day use areas.	Recreation + Trail Management	County, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Enhance wayfinding, regulatory and interpretive signage and displays.	Education + Branding	County, ATPR, SAC, ORG and volunteers
Develop an education/outreach plan to guide site programming and interpretive activities.	Education + Branding	County, SAC
Develop interpretive content program and/or panels.	Education + Branding	County, SAC
Explore opportunities to formalize overnight accommodation (RV and/or tent sites).	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	County, ATPR
Explore opportunities to maintain continuous on-site presence through an area host or caretaker.	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	County, ATPR
Explore opportunities to monitor entry points with CCTV.	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	County, ATPR

ACTION	MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Low Priority (5-10 years)</b>		
Monitor visitor satisfaction.	Visitor Experience + Environmental Monitoring	County, ATPR, SAC and ORG
<b>Ongoing</b>		
Encourage visitors and users to provide comments and feedback about the Natural Area.	Visitor Experience + Environmental Monitoring	County, SAC and ORG
Develop and implement an environmental monitoring program.	Visitor Experience + Environmental Monitoring	County, research organizations and educational institutions
Report visitor non-compliance.	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	ORG, visitors and adjacent land owners
Self-monitor activities and behaviour on the site.	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	SAC, ORG and adjacent landowners
Identify and evaluate plan implementation progress and present findings in a yearly report.	Regulation, Enforcement + Compliance	SAC, County and ATPR
Host bi-yearly site clean-up days.	Partnerships, Collaboration + Stewardship	County, SAC, ORG and volunteers

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# APPENDICES



# Appendix A

## SIGNIFICANT VASCULAR PLANTS FOUND IN SASKATOON MOUNTAIN NATURAL AREA

Plant Species	Notes
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> var. <i>Sitchense</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>	Local in this part of Alberta
<i>Pinus contorta</i> var. <i>Latifolia</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Cinna latifolia</i>	Local in Alberta
<i>Phleum alpinum</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Carex macloviana</i> var. <i>Microptera</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Carex mertensii</i>	Cordilleran. Very rare in Alberta, only two collections. Significant rare extension.
<i>Eriophorum russeolum</i> var. <i>Albidum</i>	Uncommon in Alberta
<i>Smilacina racemosa</i> var. <i>Amplexicaulis</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Streptopus amplexifolius</i> var. <i>Americanus</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Corallorhiza striata</i>	Uncommon in Alberta
<i>Corallorhiza maculate</i>	Uncommon in Alberta
<i>Alnus crispa</i> ssp. <i>Sinuate</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Urtica dioica</i> var. <i>Lyalii</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Clematis verticellaris</i> var. <i>Columbiana</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Thalictrum occidentale</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Parnassia palustris</i> var. <i>Montanensis</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	Cordilleran. Local in this part of Alberta
<i>Sorbus scopulina</i>	Cordilleran. Local in Alberta
<i>Spiraea betulifolia</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Impatens capensis</i>	Uncommon in Alberta
<i>Viola selkirkii</i>	Rare in Alberta
<i>Circaea alpine</i> var. <i>Pacifica</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Angelica genuflexa</i>	Cordilleran. Uncommon in Alberta
<i>Osmorhiza chilensis</i>	Cordilleran. Local in Alberta
<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>	Local in Alberta
<i>Arnica cordifolia</i>	Cordilleran
<i>Cirsium foliosum</i>	Cordilleran. Local in Alberta
<i>Senecio eremophilus</i>	Local in Alberta

Source: (Cottonwood Consultants, 1982)





# Appendix B

## WHAT WE HEARD SUMMARY



# Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area A Plan for Recreation and Conservation

## **What We Heard Summary** Stage 1 Engagement Activities

June 4, 2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Background and Purpose .....	1
2.	Detailed Findings.....	2
2.1	About the survey respondents .....	2
2.2	Current use of the natural area.....	3
2.3	Management issues and concerns .....	7
2.4	Potential changes suggested for improving the management of the site’s recreation and conservation values .....	10
2.5	Desired future for the Natural Area .....	11
3.	Appendix A: Online Public Survey .....	15
4.	Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	22

## 1. Background and Purpose

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is located 30 km west of the City of Grand Prairie in Northern Alberta. It is currently a destination for local motorized and non-motorized recreationalists, primitive hunting and naturalists. A plan for managing recreation and conservation values is currently being developed to address impacts to the site's ecological and historic resources.

Community and stakeholder engagement is key to the development of a recreation management plan for the Natural Area. Two public and stakeholder engagement sessions have been planned for the project. Input received at these sessions will help inform the development of a recreation management plan that reflects park user needs, values and interests.

The first engagement session gathered public and stakeholder input, information, and ideas on three themes:

- Current uses of the Natural Area,
- Management topics (concerns, issues, opportunities, constraints, priorities), and
- Respondents' vision for the future of the Natural Area.

The first session included two open houses, an online survey and telephone interviews with key stakeholders.

The open houses were held at Beaverlodge Community Centre on May 8 and Saskatoon Lake Hall on May 9, 2012 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. The County of Grande Prairie advertised the open houses in local media and on the County website. Attendees were invited to review display material, provide interactive comments on their use of the park and participate in guided discussion sessions led by open house facilitators. Display material included a set of maps to provide attendees with a better understanding of current recreational features, adjacent land uses, ecological, cultural and heritage characteristics, and slope gradients of the Natural Area. Key questions were displayed to help guide discussions between the open house facilitators and the public.



The online survey and interactive mapping application were available online from April 24 to May 20, 2012. A link from the County website directed people to the survey and mapping application, which could be submitted electronically. A total of 126 completed survey responses were submitted. The survey is included in Appendix A. A total of 8 individual entries were submitted through the interactive mapping application.

Interviews with key stakeholders were conducted by telephone on April, 2012 and ran for 20 to 40 minutes. The County and Alberta Parks provided O2 with a list of potential stakeholders. Of those stakeholders contacted, 11 responded and participated in the interviews. The interview guide is included in Appendix B.

## 2. Detailed Findings

The following outlines in detail the common themes and key findings related to public and stakeholder perspectives on the issues and opportunities for the management of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area.

### 2.1 About the survey respondents

Figure 1 shows that a range of age groups responded to the online survey. It should be noted that input from respondents under the age of 25 is limited. Figure 2 shows that 41% of survey respondents reside in Beaverlodge, 33% live in Grande Prairie, 7% reside in Wembley, and 17% live elsewhere, mostly in the County near Saskatoon Mountain.

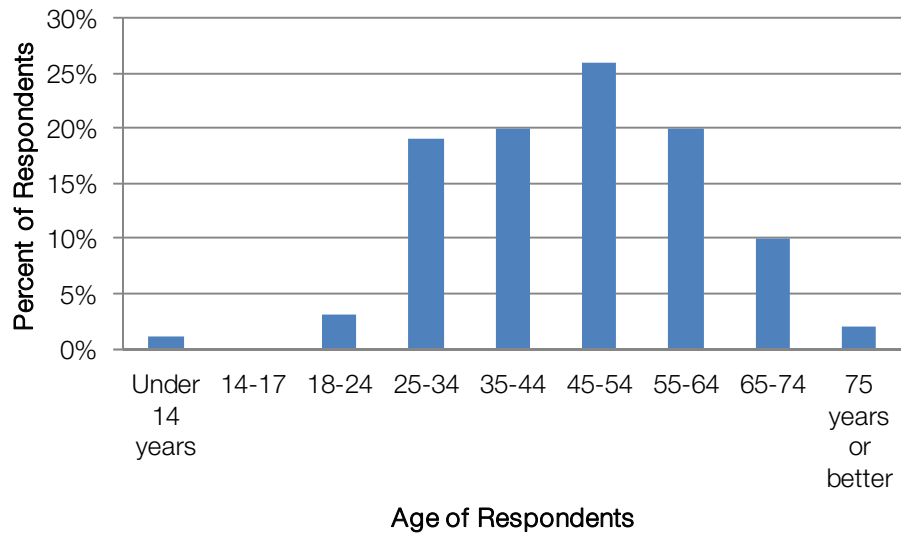


Figure 1. Age of survey respondents

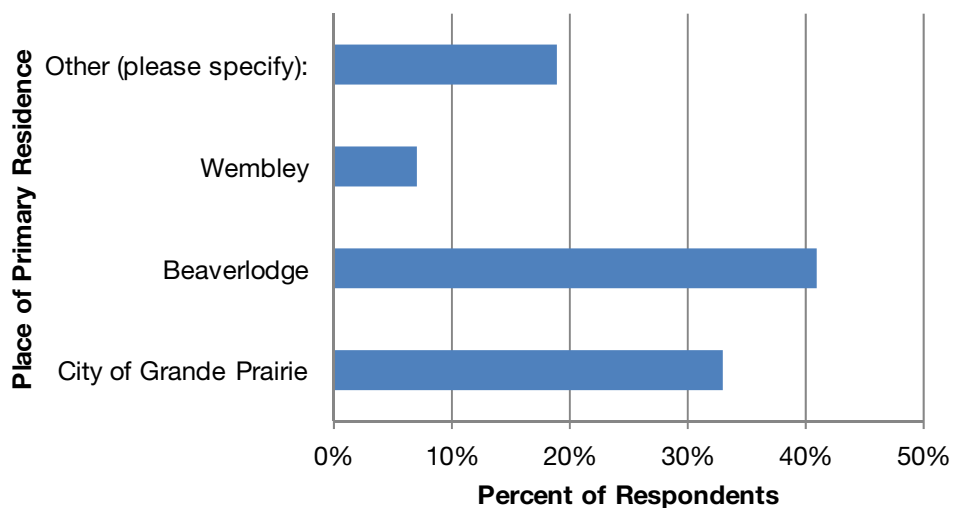
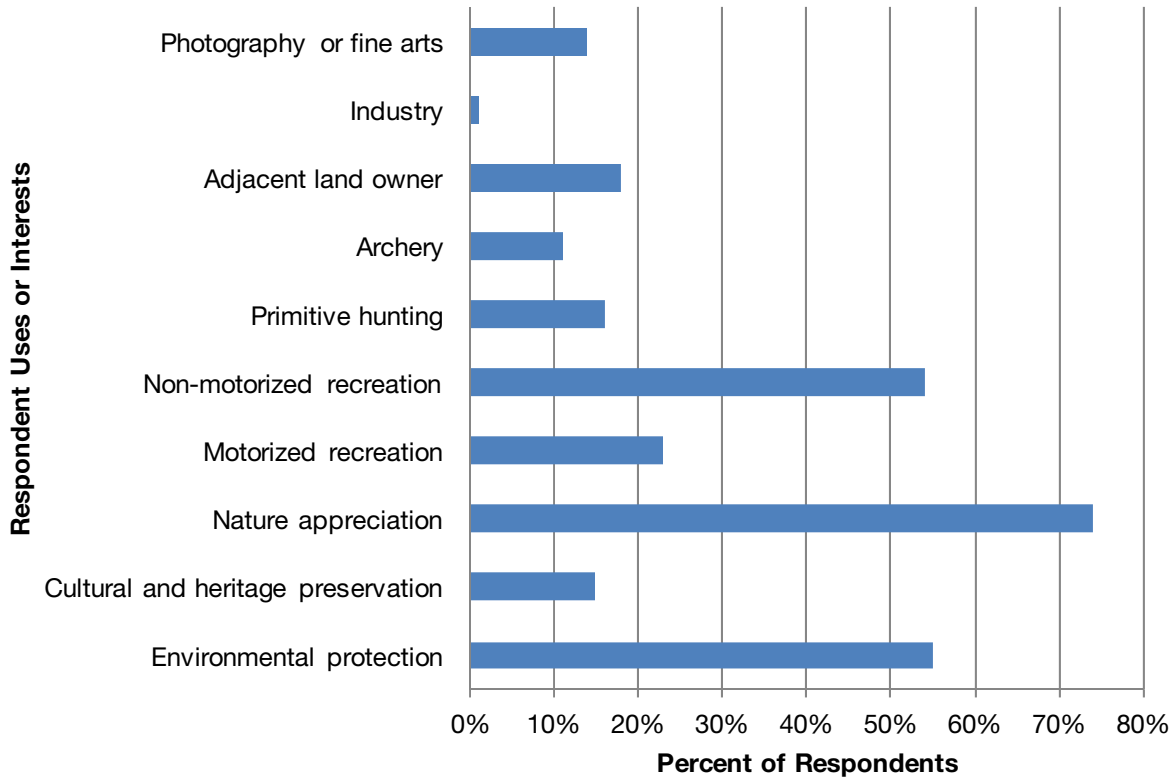


Figure 2. Primary residence of survey respondents

## 2.2 Current use of the natural area

The following summarizes the main discussion topics pertaining to the current uses of the Natural Area.

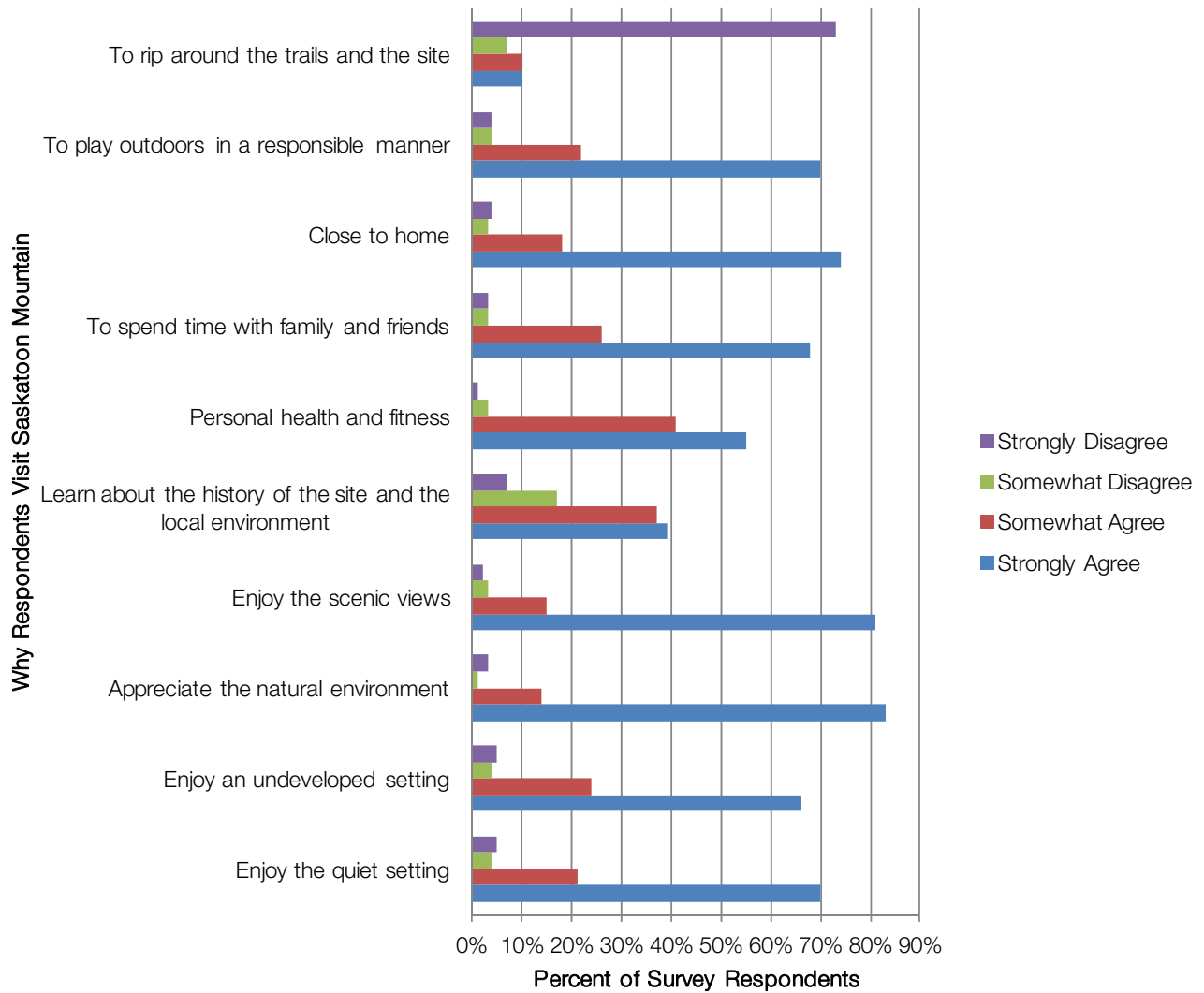
- Survey respondents were asked to identify up to three terms that best represent their use of, or interest in, the Natural Area. Nature appreciation (74%), non-motorized recreation (54%), and environmental protection (55%) were identified as the top three uses of the Natural Area (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Current uses of the Natural Area**

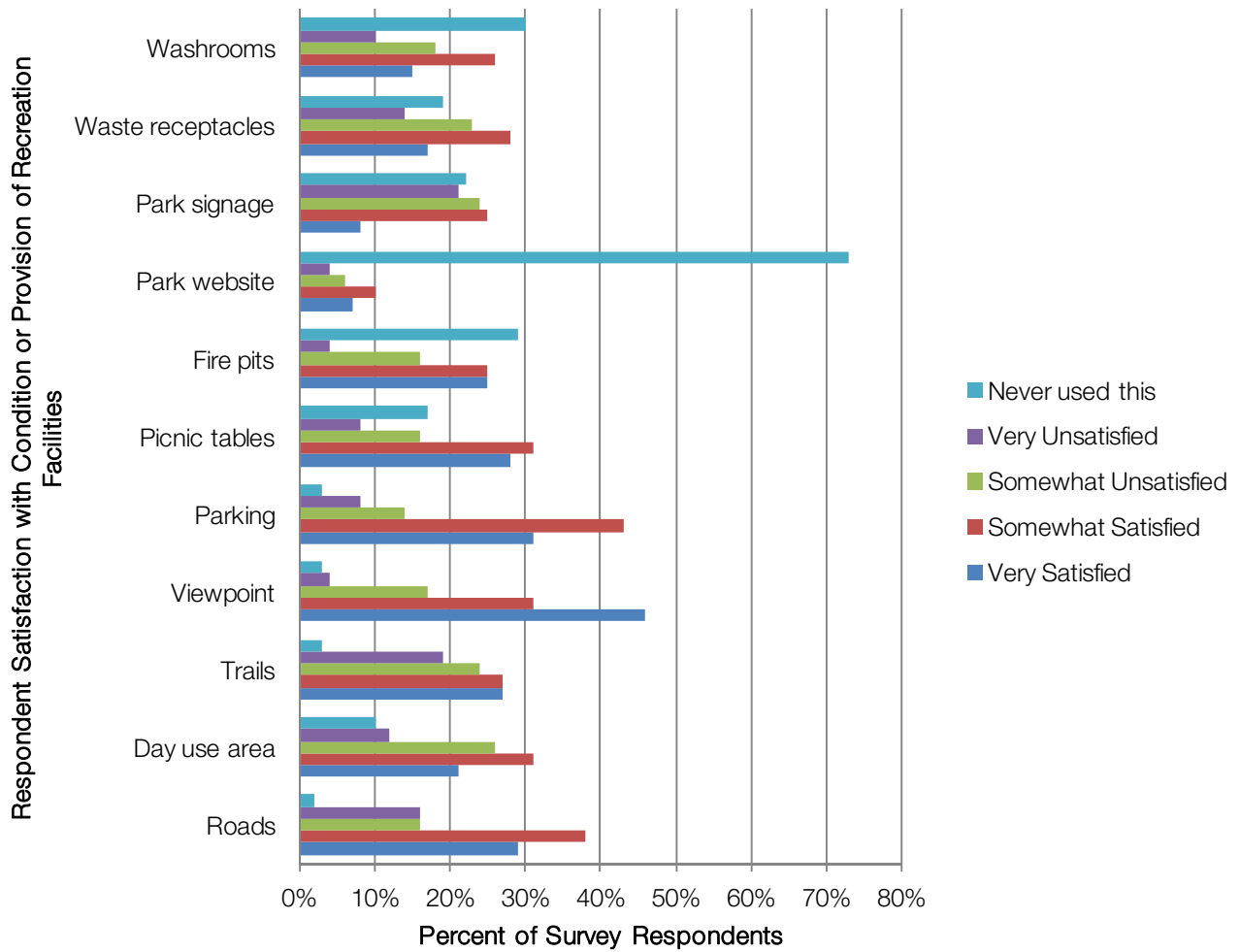
- As shown in Figure 4, the majority of survey respondents visit Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area for passive recreation activities such as appreciating the natural environment (83%) and enjoying the scenic views (81%). Many of these strongly agreed that they visit the site because it is close to home (74%). The figure also shows that the majority of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that they visit the site to recreate in a responsible manner, to spend time with family and friends, for personal health and fitness, and to enjoy a quiet, undeveloped setting. Most respondents (74%) strongly disagreed that they visit the site to “rip around the trails and the site.”





**Figure 4. Reasons for visiting Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area**

- Figure 5 shows that most survey respondents use the existing facilities and amenities. The rates of satisfaction differed for each facility, suggesting opportunities to improve many of the items listed in the survey. In general, respondents are most satisfied with the viewpoints and parking and less satisfied with signage, trails, and waste receptacles. 73% of respondents have never used the website for the Natural Area.



**Figure 5. Satisfaction with the quality recreational facilities and amenities**

- Open house attendees were asked to indicate their preferred recreation activities at Saskatoon Mountain by applying dots on a large display board, as shown in Figure 6. Figure 7 shows that the three most popular recreation activities in the Natural Area are nature appreciation, scenic viewing, and hiking. The three least popular recreation activities in the Natural Area are driving a 4x4 off road, driving an off-road motorcycle, and driving an ATV.

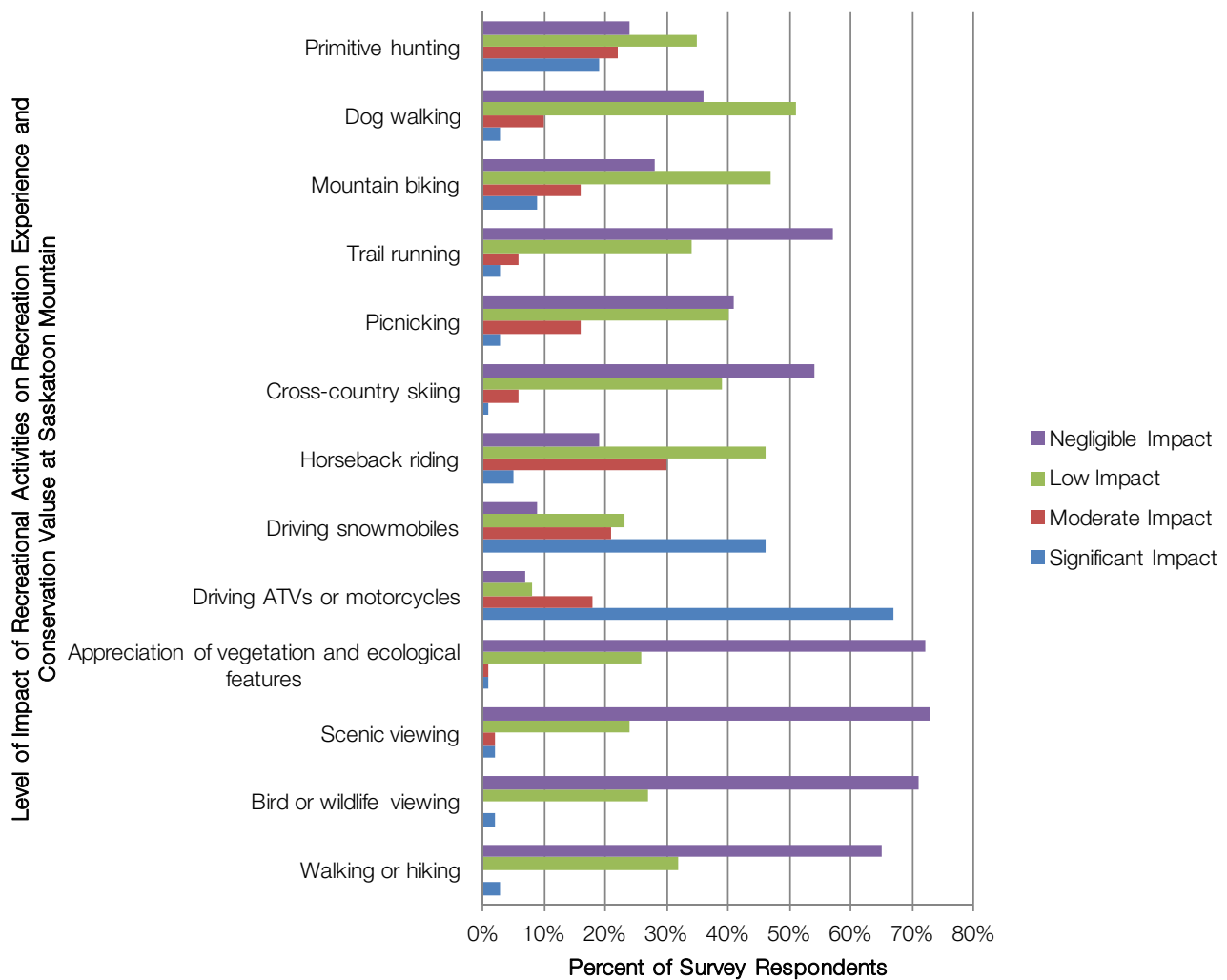


- Other activities undertaken at Saskatoon Mountain that were popular among survey respondents, open house participants, and stakeholder interviewees include:
  - tobogganing,
  - geocaching,
  - cross country skiing,
  - snowmobiling,
  - kite flying,
  - star gazing / viewing northern lights,
  - birdwatching, and
  - Aboriginal cultural/spiritual practice.

### 2.3 Management issues and concerns

The following points describe the main issues and concerns that respondents identified with the existing management of recreation activities and conservation values at Saskatoon Mountain.

- The most common reasons for which survey respondents were not satisfied with recreational activities in the Natural Area included:
  - Motorized activities are adversely affecting the trail and natural landscape.
  - Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users (noise, safety concerns, disruption to wildlife viewing).
  - Inappropriate behavior/uses of the Natural Area (littering, vandalism, drinking, partying) results in a degraded visitor experience that is no longer desirable for families.
  - Wayfinding and interpretive signage is limited or non-existent.
- When survey respondents were asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with the current management of recreation and conservation in the Natural Area, 64% indicated that they were either somewhat or highly unsatisfied, while only 6% of respondents indicated they were highly satisfied. This general dissatisfaction in managing recreation and conservation in the Natural Area was also noted by many participants at the open houses, as well as by stakeholders during the interviews.
- Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which particular recreational activities have a negative impact on the recreation experience and conservation values in the Natural Area. Figure 8 shows that 85% of respondents felt that driving ATVs or motorcycles had a significant or moderate impact and 67% of respondents felt that driving snowmobiles had a significant or moderate impact. Many participants at the open houses, stakeholder interviewees, and users of the online interactive mapping application also described adverse environmental and social conditions that resulted from motorized uses in the Natural Area.



**Figure 8. Degree of impact on recreation experience and conservation values**

- When asked to describe any other recreational activities that occur in the Natural Area and that have a negative impact on the recreation experience and conservation values of the site, the most common response was the extensive and intensive impacts associated with the partying that takes place on the site. Respondents indicated that issues such as public inebriation, vandalism to property, litter, fire hazards, public safety concerns, and degradation of visitor experience for other users were of primary concern. Many people noted that they no longer felt comfortable bringing families to the site as a result of these issues. These concerns were reiterated at the open houses and in stakeholder interviews.
- Survey respondents indicated that the highest priority issues to be addressed in this plan were:
  - Inappropriate behaviour (littering, vandalism, alcohol consumption, trespass on adjacent property, etc.) at 84%,
  - Protection of scenic lookouts at 70%,
  - Protection of environmentally sensitive areas at 63%,
  - Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation at 69%,
  - Enforcement at 62%, and
  - Recreation impacts on environmental values at 58% (Figure 9).

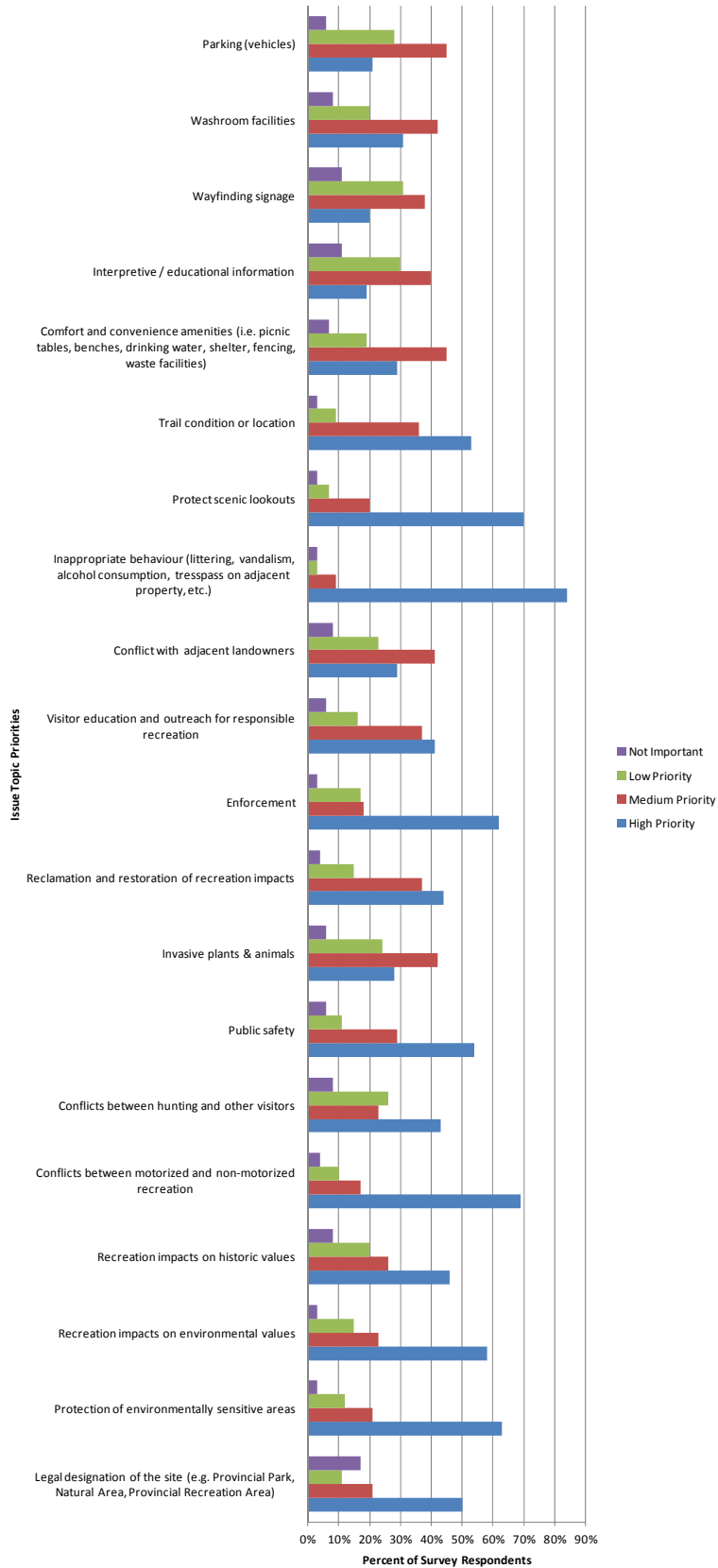
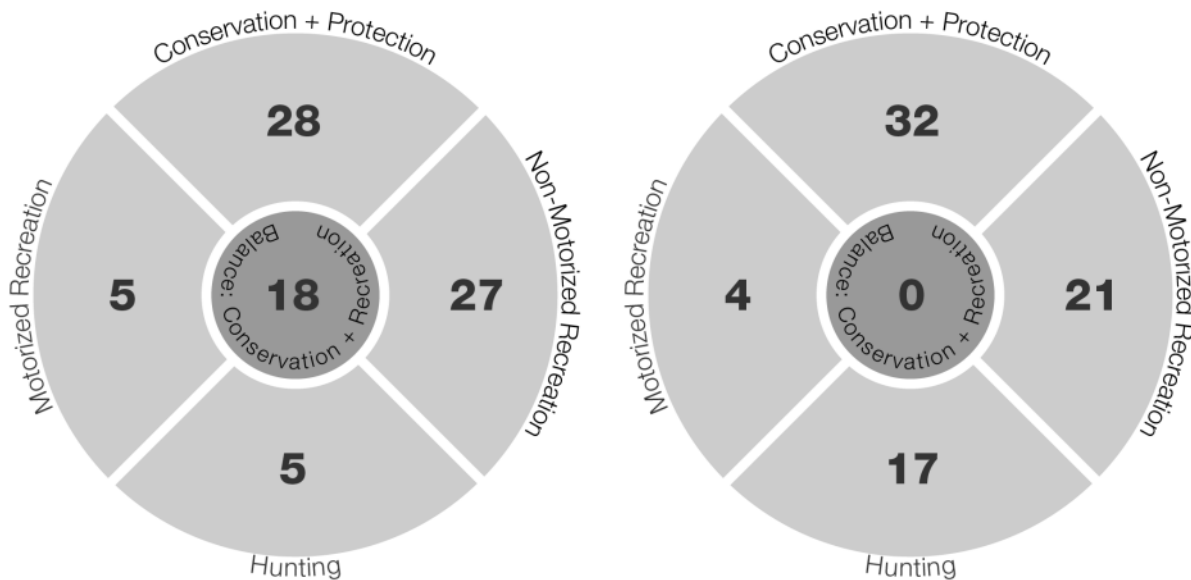


Figure 9. Plan priorities

- Using a Natural Area Compass, open house participants were asked to indicate which statements best reflect management priorities for the Natural Area. Figure 10 shows that open house respondents felt that a balance between conservation + protection and non-motorized recreation is a key management priority for the Natural Area.



**Figure 10. Results of the Natural Area Compass activity from the two open houses**

- Other common management issues that respondents identified as important to address in this plan through the surveys, open houses, and interviews include:
  - Increased fire risk from motorized uses and bonfires
  - Insufficient waste management
  - Communication towers degrading views and impacting the landscape
  - Limited recreation facilities
  - Limited maintenance of supporting infrastructure

## 2.4 Suggestions for improving the management of the site's recreation and conservation values

In the survey, respondents were asked what facilities, services or amenities are needed to improve the quality of their experience and the conservation of the environmental, cultural and heritage features in Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. Survey respondents were then asked what can be done to improve the management of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. Likewise, open house attendees, stakeholder interview participants, and interactive mapping users were asked to identify the types of changes that would most improve the quality and management of recreation in the Natural Area. The most common responses to these questions include:

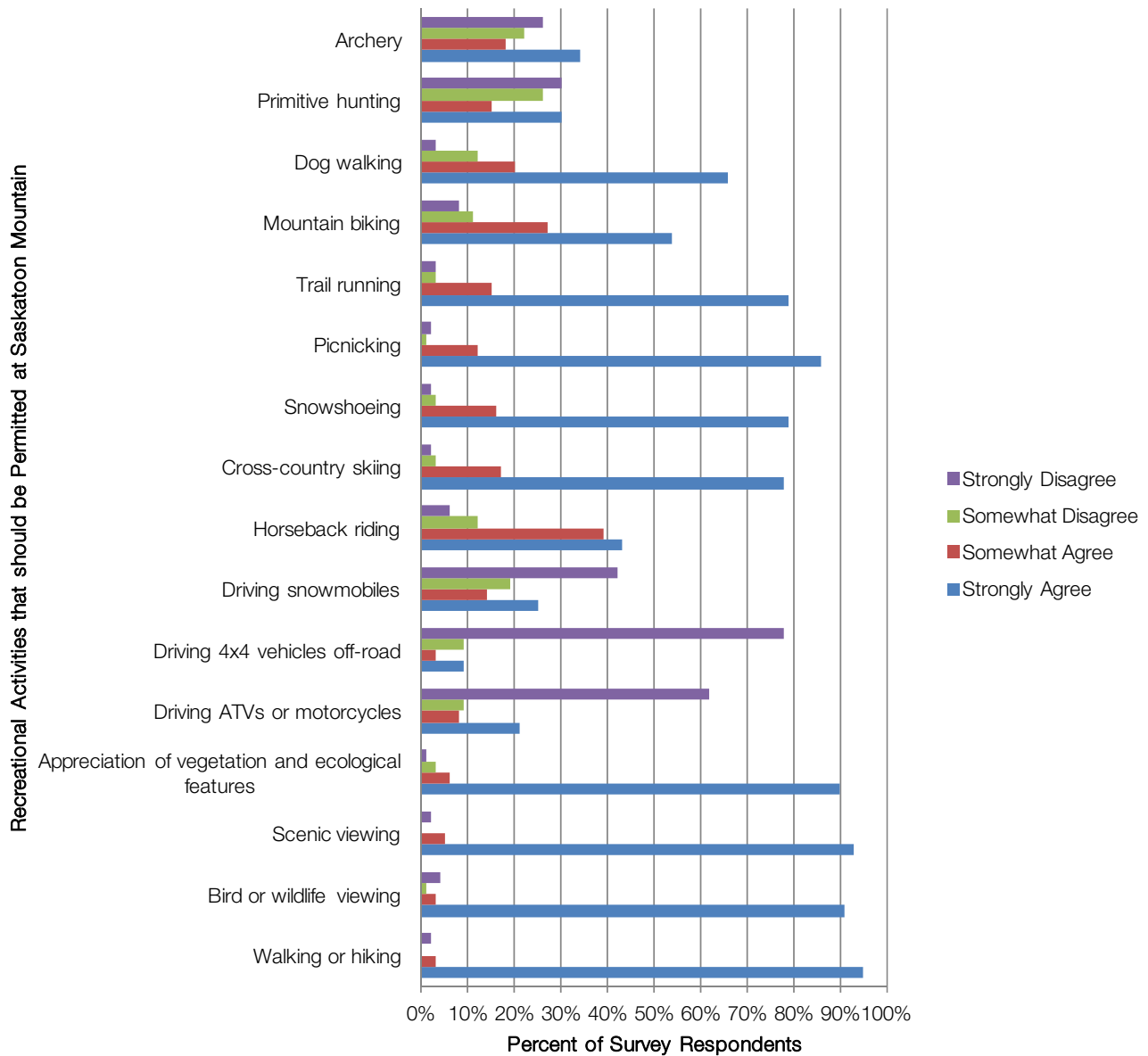
- Reduce the number of communication towers (require communications companies to use one or two common towers and remove the others)
- Ensure there are “eyes on the site” regularly (i.e. caretaker, most frequent RCMP, bylaw officer patrols, site guardian or stewardship group patrols)
- Re-designate the Natural Area to a Provincial Park or Provincial Recreation Area to restrict better manage motorized uses
- Restrict motorized uses
- Allow motorized uses only in specific areas of the site (motorized use zoning, user-designated trail system)

- Require motorized users to apply for membership in local Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) clubs
- OHV clubs, County and Alberta Parks to engage in regular outreach programs and events to encourage more responsible use and trail stewardship
- Collaborative opportunities for ongoing ecosystem recovery activities
- Development of supervised campground
- Upgrade recreation facilities
  - More trails
  - Trail improvements and regular maintenance
  - Day use area improvements to attract families again
  - Formalize parking and road access to day use area
  - Horse hitching post
  - Wayfinding, site maps, regulatory, and interpretive signage (cultural, heritage and ecological features of the site)
  - Enhance washroom facilities
  - More benches, waste bins at viewpoints
  - Day use shelter and wood stove
  - Better designed (more attractive) day use area
- Improve waste management services (including recycling)
- Fencing or signage of park boundary and adjacent private property
- Ensure hunting and other activities are compatible (address safety concerns)
- Encourage public involvement in managing the site (i.e. stewardship days)

## 2.5 Desired future for the Natural Area

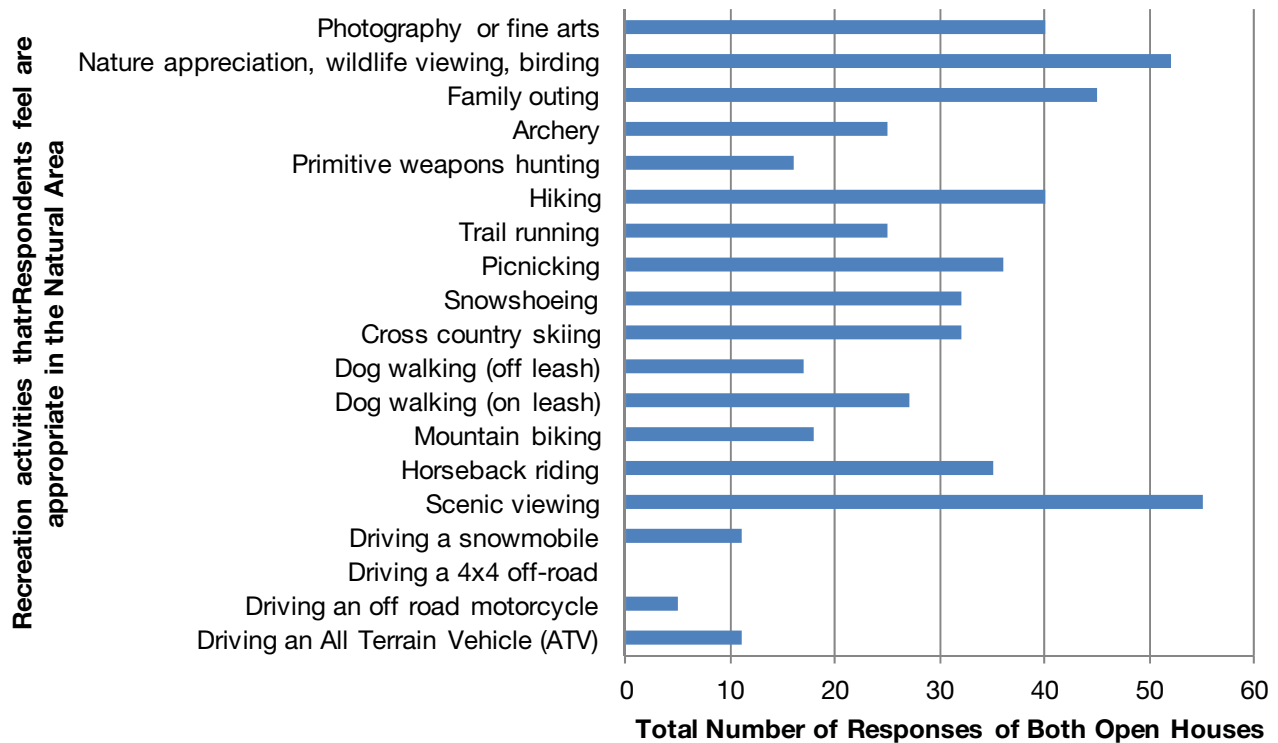
Figure 11 provides a summary of the types of recreational activities that survey respondents feel should be permitted in the Natural Area. The majority of respondents indicated that motorized uses are not appropriate. There was no clear consensus on whether respondents feel archery or primitive hunting should be permitted in the Natural Area. Respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that the remainder of the activities listed in the survey question should be permitted.





**Figure 11. Recreational activities that should be permitted in the Natural Area (survey respondents)**

Similarly, Figure 12 provides a summary of the recreational activities that open house participants feel are appropriate in balancing the recreation and conservation values of the Natural Area. The three recreation activities that open house participants identified as being most appropriate in the Natural Area are scenic viewing, family outings, and nature appreciation. The three recreation activities that open house participants identified as being least appropriate in the Natural Area are driving a 4x4 off road, driving an off-road motorcycle, and driving an ATV or snowmobile.



**Figure 12. Recreational activities that balance the recreation and conservation values of the Natural Area**

Other activities that survey, open house, and interactive mapping respondents commonly identified as being appropriate in the Natural Area include:

- Geocaching,
- Kite flying,
- Photography and fine arts,
- Disc golf,
- Tobogganing,
- Astronomy, and
- Camping (if appropriate facilities and services were provided)

When asked about their vision of the Natural Area, the following are the most common words and phrases provided by survey, open house, and interview respondents to describe the desired future of the Natural Area:

- Historical legacy
- Protection of natural features
- Preservation of biodiversity
- Quiet
- Panoramic views
- Responsible recreation
- Partnerships
- Love it, but not to death

- Respect
- Sustainable
- Education
- Community stewardship

These words and phrases were also consistent through the stakeholder interviews when interviewees were asked the same question.

### 3. Appendix A: Online Public Survey

#### CURRENT USE OF THE NATURAL AREA

Description

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please identify which term best represents your use of, or interest in, the Natural Area:

- Environmental protection
- Cultural and heritage preservation
- Nature appreciation
- Motorized recreation
- Non-motorized recreation
- Primitive hunting
- Archery
- Adjacent land owner
- Industry
- Photography or fine arts

Page 1 - Question 2 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Thinking about your trips to the Natural Area, please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of your experience for each recreational activity (if you do not participate in the activity, please indicate this):

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied	Never partake in this activity
Driving an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving an off road motorcycle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving a 4x4 off-road	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving a snowmobile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenic viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horseback riding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dog walking (on leash)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dog walking (off leash)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cross country skiing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowshoeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnicking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trail running	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Primitive weapons hunting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Archery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family outing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nature appreciation, wildlife viewing, birding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Photography or fine arts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 1 - Question 3 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please identify any other recreational activities you participate in and your level of satisfaction with the quality of your experience for each activity:

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Page 1 - Question 4 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Briefly describe the main reasons why you may not be satisfied with the recreational activities that you undertake in the Natural Area:

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Page 1 - Question 5 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the condition or level of provision of the following visitor facilities and amenities at the Natural Area:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied	Never used this
Roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Day use area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Viewpoint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnic tables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fire pits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Park website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Park signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 1 - Question 6 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please identify any other visitor facilities or amenities you are aware of in the Natural Area and your level of satisfaction with them:

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Page 1 - Question 7 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Briefly describe the main reasons why you may not be satisfied with the visitor facilities or amenities that you use in the Natural Area:

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Page 1 - Question 8 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Please identify the extent to which you agree that the following statements describe why you choose to visit Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Enjoy the quiet setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Enjoy an undeveloped setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appreciate the natural environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoy the scenic views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn about the history of the site and the local environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal health and fitness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To spend time with family and friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Close to home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To play outdoors in a responsible manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To rip around the trails and the site	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Close to home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 1 - Question 9 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please identify any other reasons why you visit the Natural Area:

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Page 2 - Heading

**YOUR VIEWS ON MANAGEMENT ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND CONFLICTS**

Description

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Page 2 - Question 10 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the current management of the recreation, cultural, heritage, and ecological values of the Natural Area:

- Highly Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Somewhat Unsatisfied
- Highly Unsatisfied

Page 2 - Question 11 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Please indicate the extent to which you feel the following recreational activities are having a negative impact on the ecological, cultural and heritage values of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area:

	Significant Impact	Moderate Impact	Low Impact	Negligible Impact
Walking or hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bird or wildlife viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenic viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appreciation of vegetation and ecological features	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving ATVs or motorcycles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving snowmobiles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horseback riding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cross-country skiing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnicking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trail running	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dog walking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Primitive hunting

Page 2 - Question 12 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please briefly describe any other recreational activities that occur in the Natural Area and are having a negative impact on the ecological, cultural and heritage values of the site.

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Page 2 - Question 13 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Thinking about your visits to the Natural Area, please indicate how important you feel it is for the Plan to address the following topics:

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Not Important	No Opinion
Legal designation of the site (e.g. Provincial Park, Natural Area, Provincial Recreation Area)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protection of environmentally significant areas and ecological processes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation impacts on environmental values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation impacts on historic values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflicts between hunting and other visitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invasive plants & animals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reclamation and restoration of recreation impacts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enforcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visitor education and outreach for responsible recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict with adjacent landowners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inappropriate behaviour (littering, vandalism, alcohol consumption, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protect viewscapes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trail condition or location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comfort and convenience amenities (i.e. picnic tables, benches, drinking water, shelter, fencing, waste facilities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interpretive / educational information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wayfinding signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Washroom facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking (vehicles)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 2 - Question 14 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please briefly specify other important management issues not identified in the previous question:

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DESIRED FUTURE FOR THE NATURAL AREA

Description

Thinking about your vision of the future of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Protecting the natural features, ecosystem processes, and cultural and heritage values of the Natural Area is the top priority.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing a diverse range of recreation opportunities is the top priority for the Natural Area.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balancing the protection of natural features, ecosystem processes, and cultural and heritage values with the provision of a diverse range of recreation opportunities is the top priority for the Natural Area.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking about your vision for the future of the Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area, please indicate the extent to which you agree that the following recreational activities should be permitted on the site:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Walking or hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bird or wildlife viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenic viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appreciation of vegetation and ecological features	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving ATVs or motorcycles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving 4x4 vehicles off-road	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Driving snowmobiles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horseback riding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cross-country skiing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowshoeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnicking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trail running	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dog walking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Primitive hunting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please identify any other recreation activities that you feel the Natural Area should support:

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Page 3 - Question 18 - Open Ended - Comments Box

What facilities, services or amenities are needed to improve the quality of your experience and the protection of the ecological, cultural and heritage features in Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?

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Page 3 - Question 19 - Open Ended - Comments Box

In your opinion, what can be done to improve the management of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?

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Page 4 - Heading

## ABOUT YOU

### Description

Page 4 - Question 20 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please indicate your age:

- Under 14 years
- 14-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 years or better

Page 4 - Question 21 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please identify the general location of where you reside:

- City of Grande Prairie
- Beaverlodge
- Wembley
- Other (please specify):

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Page 4 - Question 22 - Name and Address (General)

There will be two full-day working group meetings (stakeholder workshops) held in the spring of 2012 to discuss and refine the components of the draft Plan for Conservation and Recreation for Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. If you would like to participate in these working group meetings\*, please provide your name, telephone number, email address and the name of the organization or key interest(s) that you would like to represent:

 Name

- ✎ Name of Organization
- ✎ Phone Number
- ✎ Interest you would like to represent
- ✎ Email Address

Page 4 - Heading

\*Please Note:

Space on the working group is limited. Working group members will be invited to participate based on the need to ensure a diverse representation of interests to effectively address the challenges of this Plan.

## 4. Appendix B: Interview Guide

### About the Plan

The County of Grande Prairie has secured the services of O2 Planning and Design to work with the public and stakeholders of the Natural Area to prepare a “Plan for Recreation and Conservation”. The plan will be developed independent of the County or Alberta Parks. Once drafted, O2 Planning and Design will submit the plan to the County who will review, and if supportive, will advance it to Alberta Parks to consider implementation.

### Purpose of Interview

The purpose of the stakeholder interviews is to obtain broad views on:

- Values of the Natural Area,
- Types, intensity and impacts of recreational activities that are taking place on the site,
- Management issues, concerns and conflicts for the site,
- Vision and goals for managing recreation in, and conservation of, the Natural Area, and
- Management options for achieving those recreation and conservation goals.

The interview should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

### Interviewee

Name
Interest Represented
Date

### Interview Questions

#### ***Current Use of the Natural Area***

What recreational activities are taking place in the Natural Area?

What recreation facilities or amenities you are aware of in the Natural Area?

What is the condition of these features?

Why do you think people choose to visit Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area (what features of the Natural Area are important to local residents and visitors)?

#### ***Your Views on Management Issues, Concerns, and Conflicts***

What (if any) impacts are recreational activities having on the ecological, cultural and heritage values of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?

How are the recreation, cultural, heritage, and ecological values of the Natural Area currently being managed?

How effective are these management practices in maintaining the recreation, ecological, cultural and heritage values of Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?

Are there other important management issues, concerns or conflicts that need to be addressed to ensure a sustainable balance of recreation and conservation objectives?

***Desired Future for the Natural Area***

What words or phrases would you use to describe a vision of managing for recreation and conservation in Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?

In your opinion, what can be done to improve the management of recreation and conservation in Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?

What recreation activities do you feel the Natural Area should or should not support?

What facilities, services or amenities are needed to improve the quality of visitor experience and the protection of the ecological, cultural and heritage features in Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area?



# Appendix C

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE DRAFT PLAN

Do you agree with the overall vision, management principles and goals? Is there anything missing or anything you don't agree with?	Do you agree with the recommended management strategies? Is there anything missing or anything you don't agree with?
I agree	I agree
I feel that the overall vision, management principles and goals are well defined and represent the views of the attendees of the public forums. I truly hope that this proposal is approved by the County and forwarded to the appropriate officials as soon as possible. Having had a somewhat unpleasant experience with VERY noisy ATVs at one of the view points in early August when we had taken out of province guests to the 'mountain' to watch the sunset, it is very important that this plan be implemented. Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment.	The recommended management strategies are well defined and appropriate.
Yes I believe that a balanced approach with proper and enforceable access control is the only option.	Yes
Yes but I am most concerned that the area be protected from abuse. Enforcement costs money and the county is a relatively wealthy one. Please bear in mind that people's values will change over time and protecting that archeological site is key. There are not many sites that have evidence of human activities that far back in time anywhere on the planet. 12000 years ago predates all ancient civilizations such as Rome, Greece and Egypt. What you do today may have great significance to future generations.	
everything looks good	
looks very good so far! I didn't see any consideration for wildlife in the area-we usually see moose there and on the way up the paved hill on west side have seen a fox family. It would be nice if there was a report to locate them and consider some green space for them -perhaps that is where the ski trails and more remote hiking trails can be as well -less people use that. Please consider wildlife when choosing fencing options/routes. Perhaps in the tabaggon hill plan it can be set up so people aren't driving their kids up the hill-make parking at bottom and use signage to indicate those who walk up the farthest get the longest ride-kind of idea. This can minimize people driving up and down the hill. They do that now with ski doos, quads and their vehicles. dog poop bags on the walking main areas like they have at muskoseepi-might be an idea. Ensuring can and bottle recycling-everywhere-as this can be a source of money for site as well. milk and juice jugs if there is a campground. An idea is to develop a fitness course on trail system-chin up bars-log walks-hurdles-tires to run thru etc-to help get and keep our young people fit-possibly the schools can fundraise, volunteer and take this on and then use it to develop school aged kids who engage in the park and learn how to respect and look after it. Definately would like to see the schools involved so we raise generations of kids who learn to respect Saskatoon Mountain. Learn the importance of not littering, learn to cross country ski and snowshoe and tabaggon -as many families don't do that anymore-learn to tread lightly in nature-to respect the animals-as some families live near there and shoot the moose for eating their \$80-00 shrubs! School groups can help develop a nature interpretive trail-doing the artwork and write ups on local plants, trees, birds and animals. The other thing that was mentioned-is the noise of ski doos and atv's. Great to see that you are allowing only small atv's and that may alleviate much of the noise-but suped up ski doos wasn't mentioned and the noise of them can carry a long way. It would be nice if we could do something there when skidoo and atv memberships are established. One more activity that wasn't on your list-we go up there to watch thunderstorms as well. Your report looks great-I love that if atv's don't respect the trails that they won't get to have them-I think that is an excellent approach. We have stopped skiing up there because our trails don't even last a day before a skidoo rips it up and we can smell the fumes of the skidoo for a long time. We love walking up there and biking as well. We need to ask park enforcement to ammend their staff schedules so that there is enforcement after 4 pm and on week ends when activity actually occurs. Thank you for all your work! It's fantastic to see that this wonderful mountain is getting some protection finally.	
I am having trouble opening the draft plan but will continue to try. I have at attended both meetings in Beaverlodge so I am on board. What I did want to say was a repeat of what I said at the second Beaverlodge meeting. It is imperative that the access to the natural area via the intersection of township rd 722 and range rd 94 be limited to foot, horse,snowhoe and cross county ski users as soon as possible(no motorized vehicles of any kind). With every day that it is left open the more trails that are carved into the side hill and the more erosion that occurs. Many non motorized users park their vehicles at this intersection and walk up the hill. With private fences on each side of the right of way it would be easy to make a parking area with a person gate. A descrete camera could be placed there monitoring any vandellism should it occur. As for the current quads that enter at this location, they are travelling on the gravel roads from miles around the area so to have them travel on the roards a bit east of hear to use the desiganted quad area would not be a hardship for them.	
I think overall the plan looks good. As long as archery means bow hunting then I like the plan. I also don't want the natural area turned into a provincial park.	I think the plan is well laid out. And because the main reason for my use is walking with my wife and dog and bow hunting I like that you have seen the Benefit of how bow hunting is a non intrusive tool.
Yes, I agree with the overallvision, management principles and goals.	Yes, I agree with the recommended management strategies.
yes	yes
The idea of respectful use is a great idea and the proposals put forth seem to be well thought out except for a very biased slant against ATV recreation. I as a resident on the mountain would say that a great deal of riders are residents in the area with only a very few being from outside the area. Currently the way up on the power lines is used by a great deal of residents for motorized and nonmotorized users. Characterising the ATVer's as a drunken group of party goers envoking havoc on the entire region is unfair and shows just how a select few can bias an entire public meeting. Yes there are some that are in need of lessons on how to ATV respectfully and with care but the vast majority are not. The party going is in fact individuals going up the road route with cars and having parties ect. this is evidenced by the gentle man who drove his vehicle off the look out. Yet no one has said anything about banning cars and highway vehicles from going up there. Create trail systems that are for atv vehicles as proposed, signs and even a trail system registration fee and sticker would ensure those that use the atv trails follow the rules. Do not punsh the many for the transgressions of the very few. When you here generalizations, call them for what they are biased informational peices that are tactically used to set forth a particular agenda.	Again do not remove the Atv component from the area experience. Regulate it, adapt it, but just removing it will cause backlash. Especially with a majority of voters in the county, in the area actual ATV users.I wouldn't want to be the Reeve trying to get re-elected after supporting a total ban on recreational atv use for the mountain. In fact use it to the advantage of the other proposed strategies. A permit sticker on ones plates that ensures you have paid a fee to be on the trails, you have insurance, you have registration and that you understand the rules of the ATV and UTV areas. It would generate funding for nonmotorized trail systems and such for the park. Think about it people will pay 50.00-100.00 bucks a year to be able to ride there. People will not pay to be able to go for walks there. Genrating funds and using them to create 1st class nonmotorized facilities and programs will work satisfying the needs of both types of users. The development of an ATV recreational users saskatoon mountain group could overse the entire motorized trail system as a volunteer group. I would participate in such a organization. Finally ask every resident of the county located near the saskatoon mountain area what they think. From range road 94 to range road 89 do they use the mountain area for recreational atv use. You may be surprised just how many do !

Do you agree with the overall vision, management principles and goals? Is there anything missing or anything you don't agree with?	Do you agree with the recommended management strategies? Is there anything missing or anything you don't agree with?
I would like to see bowhunting remain as one of the activities in this area as it is a large part of our primitive weapons zone !	
I think the overall plan looks pretty good, definitely need to limit atv use in the area which I think could be difficult to police, the day use area needs steady policing in summer and a gate to lock for night to keep the party crowd elsewhere.	
Agree in principle with many of the ideas and goals. Want it left as primitive as possible.	Need clarification as to the "No Discharge of Firearms" Bylaw for the Natural Area. Is it still in effect? If so need immediate upgrade to signage as a way to educate the public and avoid abuses. Absolutely need bowhunting to continue as an activity. Am not in favor of making designated quad trails on the east portion of the area. This area has very little abuse/use by OHV's/trucks and if there is a trail network made the abuses will skyrocket without lots of enforcement/a constant presence. Both of which require significant dollars and manpower.
Generally I agree with the overall vision. Ideally, in a perfect world, I would prefer to see a total ban of off-road motorized vehicles as I believe, in this vast Peace Country, there surely must be plenty of places to run these vehicles without jeopardizing a highly specialized area like Saskatoon Mountain. I was ashamed when I took my out-of-province visitors to Saskatoon Mountain this past summer and had to witness their alarm when they saw the destruction and erosion caused by OMV's, as well as the wilful vandalism and strewn garbage. These destroyed areas will not recover by themselves; human intervention will be required. There are still wagon trail ruts to be seen across the land from wagon wheels from more than 100 years ago and ATV's, etc. cause more extensive damage to the terrain than wagon trains ever have.	I generally agree.
SOUNDS good so far This is a unique site and must be respected.	Yes, your plan looks complete but the crucial component will be the enforcement of by laws and policies.
The area needs to stay open to atv s there are limited places to go already.	On a daily basis more people use the area for atv ing than anything else
I agree	I agree
It is very well written and seems to address the needs of all users.	Yes, the strategies are well thought out. Perhaps we could make brochures available at local sales and repair shops of ATV's and ask those business owners to promote responsible usage. When local young people get a new skidoo or ATV the first place they head to is Saskatoon Mountain. As a resident driving on TWSHP Road 722 every day, I meet several every week. I also believe signage will be effective. Most people are very good about adhering to the paths and following the rules, as long as the rules and paths are communicated effectively. I would like to see an Outdoor Club formed at the high school where students go overnight camping and spend a couple of days exploring and learning to appreciate the wondrous place Saskatoon Mountain is. The local schools are an excellent launching pad for education about the area. Perhaps there could be a week during the year when schools could book field trips and have someone take them on guided hikes or show them where the ski trails are. It will take years of work and planning, but I believe you are on the right track. One thing I have learned from being an atv user is that it is fun to get muddy; however that is the thing that gets most atv's banned from places because it disfigures the landscape. Would it be feasible to have a couple of spots on the trails that are designated for mucking in? I agree with banning pickups from atv trails; as an adjacent landowner I have heard many stories of pickups getting stuck up on the mountain. Every time I am up on the mountain I wonder why there are not a lot more people there, so I'm glad there is a concentrated effort to make it more accessible to our residents and a better place for all.
I'm a bit uncomfortable with the inclusion of OHVs and archery, but it seems that these are the wishes of the participants. I like the fact that there seems to be ongoing evaluation of the program and that if something isn't working, it could be cut. Otherwise, everything seems to be in order.	I think in general, things are in order. It would be good to be able to respond to over-sights on-the-fly if it turns out that some things have been missed.
I like the plan in general, but I disagree with the banning of primitive firearms use as well as the extreme restrictions on ATV use. I live on Range Road 90 and like to use the east side of the area to access the trails with my ATV. Under this plan I would have to either drive on the road to access the trails or trailer my side by side to the area in order to use it. I also think there was a poor job done os informing the area residents of the open houses and other surveys. Today was the first that i heard on the radio of this plan. The county could easily have sent each of the nearby household a flyer outlining the process as we are the most frequen users of the area. I like to hunt, geocache, ride atv's responsibly, tobaggon, picknic and hike in the area. Had I known about the open houses and surveys I would definately have been there and would have made sure that a great deal more residents who use the area were represented as well. I believe that more discussion is needed before a final plan is implemented. Thank you for you time.	
Yes. Nothing missing.	Yes, it looks like a great strategy.
no	Yes I agree. What is the budget to implement this plan and who will provide those dollars?
The plan seems indecisive on ATV use. Whether on designated ATV trails or not damage will be done to a precious natural area in the south peace. I believe the use of ATV's should be stopped immediately. There is also the issue of noise pollution. Please give us a place to get away from that. You can hear them coming for quite some time before they arrive.	I like most of the plan. With my above objection to any ATV use I would also recommend not putting a campground in. Again, more development, more noise. O'Brien Park is a good example of what Saskatoon Mountain could be with the added benefits of non motorized enjoyment of the park. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



## SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE DRAFT PLAN

All comments received on the Draft Plan were considered and the following changes were made to the recommended management strategies.

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- p.41 » Improve the existing day use area by providing new or rehabilitated washrooms, picnic tables, firepits, **garbage and recycling bins, dog waste bag dispensers**, and clearly designated parking areas.
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- p.42 » **Conduct a baseline biophysical inventory to inform the development of the trail plan prior to developing any trails in the Natural Environment Zone B.**
- » Allow motorized ATV use on designated trails but only small ATVs such as quads and motorcycles. **During winter season, snowmobiles could be allowed on designated trails.**
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- p.44 *\*The campground is shown as a potential activity. Further studies and detailed design plans are required to ensure the suitability of the site for the development of a campground.*
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- p.45 » Work with provincial and local authorities (Alberta Parks, County of Grande Prairie, RCMP), to enforce the regulated activities on the site and surrounding Saskatoon Mountain. **Consider extending enforcement schedule to ensure presence during evenings when some inappropriate activities are occurring.**
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- p.46 » Develop an environmental monitoring program with partners, research organizations, and educational institutions to monitor use impacts on the natural environment **and on wildlife.**
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