

Bighorn Backcountry

Public Land Use Zones

Information for the Bighorn Standing Committee

What is a Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ)?

A Public Land Use Zone is a designation under the *Public Lands Administration Regulation* that supports enhanced management of recreational use on public land including a multi-use working landscape with forestry, oil and gas, grazing and other important industrial and commercial activity.

A Public Land Use Zone allows for:

- Planning and management of recreation activity in the area;
- The designation and ability to regulate recreational trails and areas for motorized and non-motorized use;
- Education and enforcement to support responsible recreation.

A PLUZ manages recreation on working landscapes.

Additional authority associated with PLUZs:

- An officer may order a person to refrain from doing anything that is dangerous to life or property within a PLUZ.
- A person vacating a PLUZ shall restore the public land used by that person to a clean and tidy condition.
- Restrictions (including timing restrictions, closures, speed limits, etc.) may be applied to trails or areas within a PLUZ.
- 100 metre setbacks from a lakeshore for off-highway vehicles (OHVs), overnight camping, tethering or grazing horses unless authorized by a notice or permit.
- 200 metre setback from a lakeshore for landing a helicopter unless authorized by an access permit.
- Restrictions on use of motorized boats unless authorized by a notice or permit.
- 1 kilometre setback from a Public Land Recreation Area or Provincial Recreation Area for camping or starting an open fire.

Management Plans

Management intent within a PLUZ is provided by a management plan and communicated to the public through signs and notices.

The management intent in the Bighorn Backcountry is set out by the 2002 *Bighorn Access Management Plan*, which aligns with the 1984 *Eastern Slopes Policy*. The Bighorn Backcountry PLUZ maps, that are available both online and in print, provide annual updates to recreation trails and areas.

How PLUZs manage recreation in the Bighorn Backcountry

Authorities of a PLUZ are applied to support site-specific objectives in the Bighorn Backcountry in the following ways:

- Use of OHVs and snow machines is restricted to designated recreation trails and areas identified in the Bighorn PLUZ maps.
- Timing restrictions for OHVs apply to protect against environmental damage. Most OHV trails open July 1.
- Temporary or emergency closures of trails and areas are posted on Alberta Environment and Parks website and on signage.
- Motorized boats are only allowed on the North Saskatchewan River.
- Motorized random camping is permitted in existing clearings within 75 metres of Highway 11 and the Forestry Trunk Road.
- Non-motorized recreation, such as hiking, backcountry camping, mountain biking, and equestrian use, is permitted, however there are some trails that have timing restrictions to prevent environmental damage in wet conditions.
- Setbacks to lakes for off-highway vehicle use, backcountry camping, and equestrian use are applied on a site by site basis.
- Designated backcountry camping areas are identified in sustainable locations and are equipped with backcountry toilets.

Does a PLUZ manage industry access?

A PLUZ does not manage existing or future industrial activity or leases on public land.

How is Industry Managed in the Bighorn Backcountry?

In the Bighorn Backcountry, industrial and commercial activity is managed through legislation including the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forests Act*, higher level plans including *Eastern Slopes Policy*, and standards and conditions applied to surface activities.

In the Bighorn Backcountry there are no forestry commitments and very limited subsurface energy commitments allocated.

Management of the Bighorn Backcountry

The Bighorn Backcountry is currently managed under:

1984 Eastern Slopes Policy: A policy originally published in 1977 that, through zoning, identified locations where protection, resource management and development should occur. It also identified compatible uses.

1980's and 90's Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs): The IRPs were refinements of the Eastern Slopes Policy and included: 1992 David Thompson Corridor Local IRP, 1986 Nordegg-Red Deer River Sub-Regional IRP, 1986 Rocky-North Saskatchewan Sub-Regional IRP and 1986 Brazeau-Pembina Sub-Regional IRP.

2002 Bighorn Access Management Plan and six Public Land Use Zones (PLUZs): An access management plan guided by the Eastern Slopes Policy that manages recreational and industrial access. The Public Land Use Zones provide compliance and enforcement tools to support the management of recreational access.

2006 R11 Forest Management Plan: A forest management plan developed and implemented by the Government of Alberta to maintain healthy forest ecosystems, reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires, the threat of large mountain pine beetle outbreaks and maintain healthy wildlife habitat.

Master Schedule of Standards and Conditions: Applies standards and conditions, including timing restrictions and setbacks, to surface dispositions based on environmental sensitivities, wildlife habitat, and best practices.