

South Athabasca Sub-regional Plan

Riparian Areas

This plan manages the footprint in the areas adjacent to lakes, rivers, and creeks while creating more opportunity for developments that support economic growth.

Key Components of the Plan

- **Setbacks (Page 20)** – establishes a 250-metre setback from the bank of all waterbodies and watercourses in the sub-region. Establishes a 100-metre setback from the bank of waterbodies and watercourses within the boundary of an in situ project area.
- **Flexibility (Page 19)** – allows the setback requirement to be waived if adequately justified by the applicant.
- **Exceptions (Page 20)** – the following industrial and recreational activities are exempted from the setback requirements:
 - Industrial: water intake and outflows, road crossings, electrical powerline crossings, telecommunication crossings, below ground pipeline crossings, oilsands exploration wells, temporary footprint, environmental monitoring wells, seismic lines, timber harvest, and restoration activities
 - Recreational: recreational infrastructure (i.e. trails, campgrounds, boat launches)

Riparian Area Facts

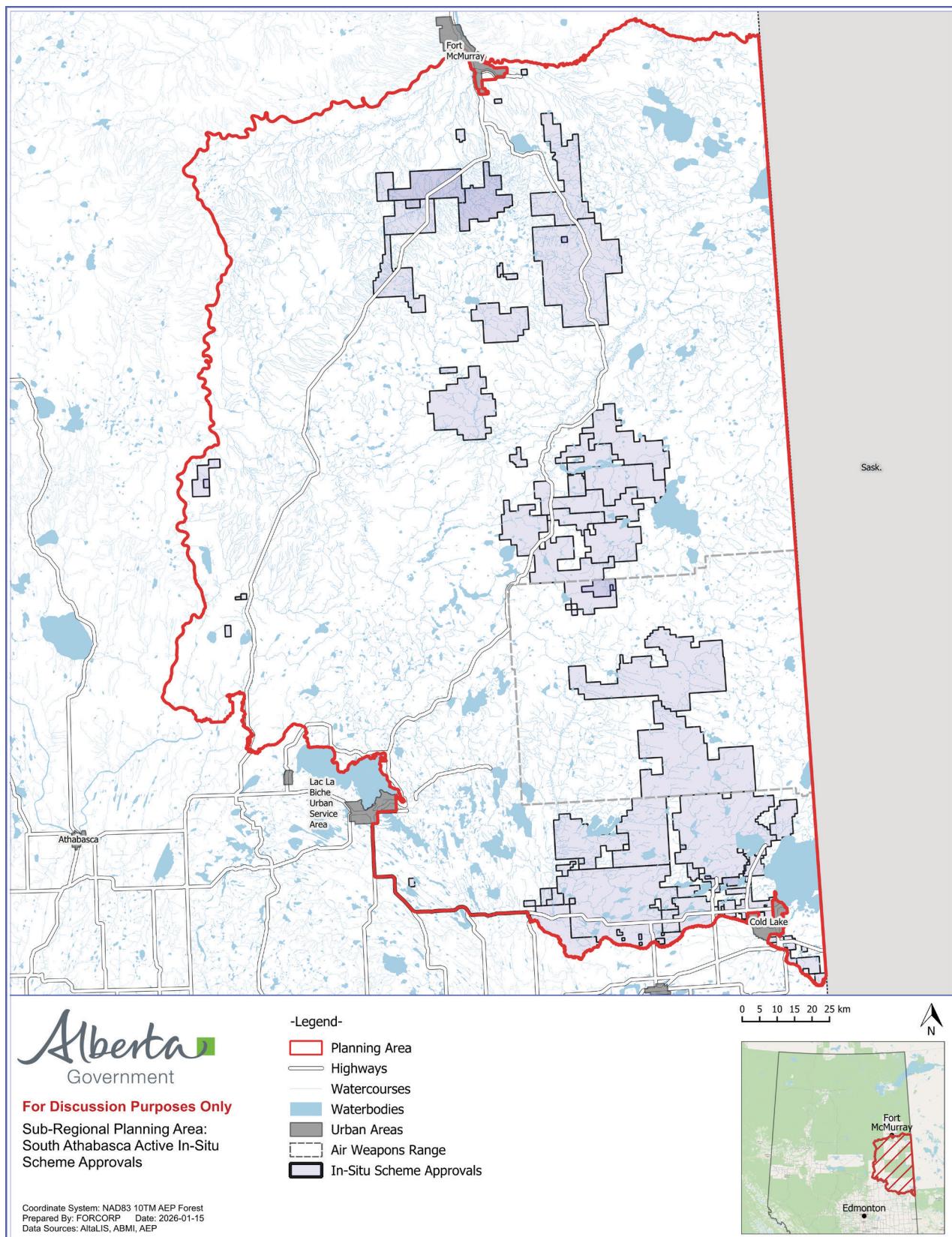
In this sub-region:

- There are roughly 7,200 kilometers of permanent rivers and creeks and 3,400 permanent lakes.
- The five longest rivers are: Christina River, Horse River, Sand River, House River, and Winefred River.
- The five largest lakes are: Cold Lake, Winefred Lake, Gordon Lake, Pinehurst Lake, and Beaver Lake.
- All of the proposed Recreation Management Areas (not the trail planning areas) occur beside water.

Did you know...

- Riparian areas occur where wet areas transition to dry, upland areas, often at the top of a valley.
- Riparian areas can support Indigenous traditional land uses, soil conservation, water quantity and quality, fish and wildlife habitat, biodiversity conservation, local climate moderation, wildfire mitigation.
- Riparian areas are important for attracting and supporting nature-based recreation opportunities.
- Some of the sub-region's major rivers, such as the Athabasca River, have headwaters in the mountains. Other rivers, like the Christina River and Beaver River, have headwaters originating from local lakes.
- Rivers in the sub-region tend to move slowly, resulting in wider valleys with large floodplains.
- Current setbacks are measured from the valley break/top of break for rivers, and the bank for lakes. The size of the setback differs based on the size and permanence of the river or lake.

Map of the lakes, rivers, and creeks in the South Athabasca sub-region also showing in situ project areas approved at the time of plan drafting. (This map does not appear in the draft South Athabasca Sub-regional Plan).



For more information: alberta.ca/south-athabasca-sub-regional-plan-engagement
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