

South Athabasca Sub-regional Plan

Special Management Areas

This plan identifies five special management areas where some requirements may differ from those in the surrounding area to better support the plan's outcomes.

Key Components of the Plan

- Caribou ranges** – these areas describe the boundaries for the habitat caribou need to find food, mate, give birth to calves, and survive the winter. Caribou need large areas of undisturbed habitat to live their lives, avoid being eaten, and for their populations to recover.
- Project Areas** – oil and gas production is predominately in situ, or “in place”. The project area defines the boundaries in which bitumen recovery may occur over the life of the project; most of the development activity occurs in this area.

- Reserves and hamlets** – the area around Indigenous reserves and hamlets is important for the practice of traditional land uses.
- Riparian areas** – the area around lakes, rivers, and creeks support Indigenous traditional land uses, soil conservation, water quantity and quality, fish and wildlife habitat, biodiversity conservation, local climate moderation, wildfire mitigation.
- White Muskeg** – an important area for local Indigenous Peoples, the headwaters for the Christina River, and habitat for the Egg Pony caribou population. This area also overlaps oil and gas resources.

How are the special management areas used in the plan?

Areas in the plan with special management considerations were identified as being especially important to achieving one or more of the plan's outcomes – supporting the economy, environment, and people (see the Fact Sheet titled – SASRP Background).

The table below summarizes which interests or industries have special management requirements and in which area. If a section of the table remains blank, there are no special requirements in that area and the plan applies as written.

Plan Section	Caribou Range	Project Areas	Reserves and Hamlets	Riparian Areas (Page 19)	White Muskeg
Access Management (Page 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Avoid primary roads and provincial highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Access management rules do not apply		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Roads crossing through must follow most direct route	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Roads to new project areas allowed
Energy (Page 21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expectations for inactive well restorationLimitations on new footprint with exceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Setbacks are 100 m from the bank of lakes, rivers, creeksMost activities are exempt from setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expectations for inactive well restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Setbacks are 250 m from the bank of lakes, rivers, creeksMost activities are exempt from setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expectations for inactive well restorationLimitations on new footprint with exceptions

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

Email: epa.southathabasca@gov.ab.ca

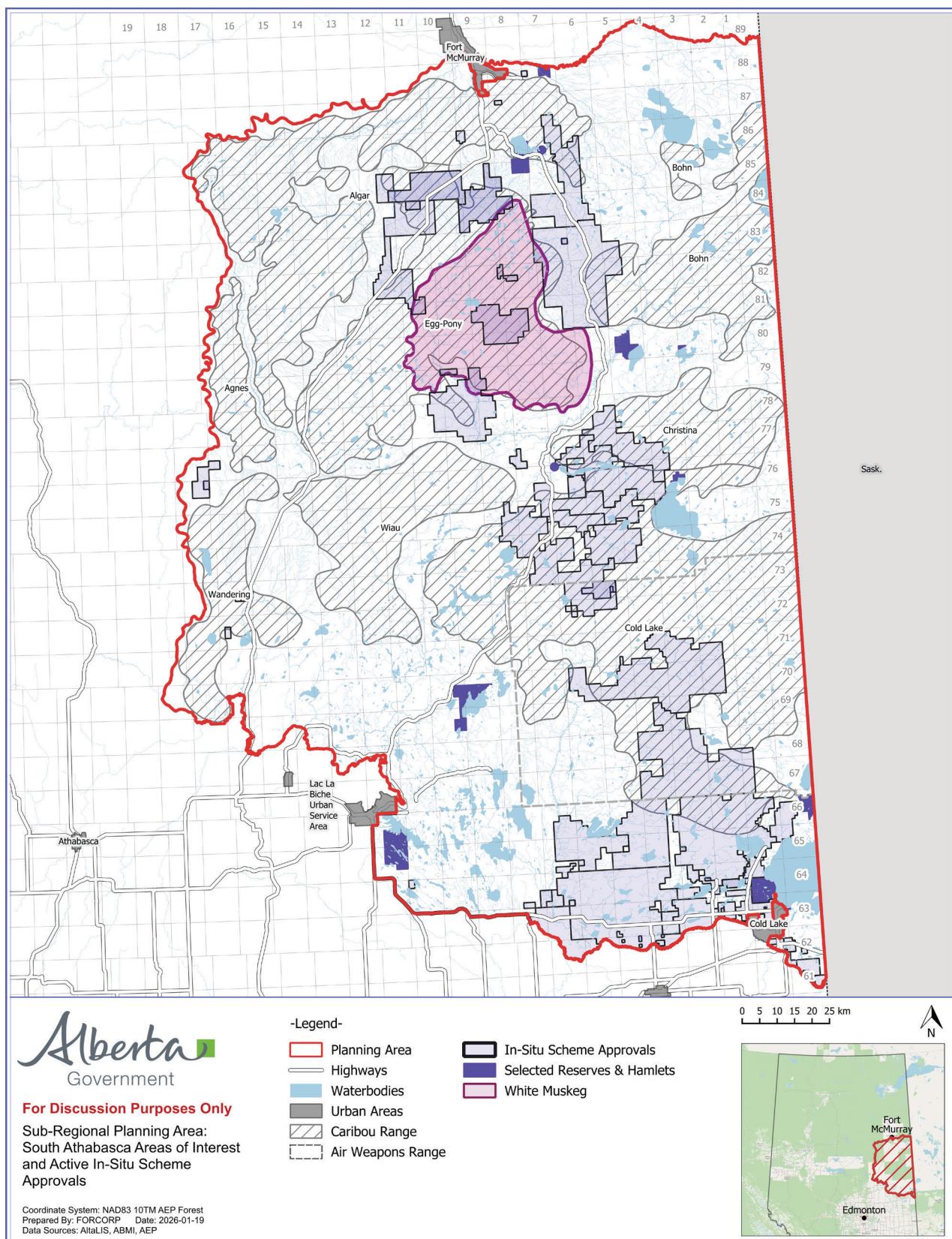
©2026 Government of Alberta | Published: January 2026 | Environment and Protected Areas

Classification: Public



Plan Section	Caribou Range	Project Areas	Reserves and Hamlets	Riparian Areas (Page 19)	White Muskeg
Linear Features (Page 25)	• Adjacent pipeline dispositions must create forested wildlife corridors			• Most linear crossings exempt from setbacks • Reduced width for seismic lines (source, receiver, access)	
Forestry (Page 27)	• Harvest Timing Series applies • Salvage harvest allowed • Firesmarting and tactical clearing cooperatively managed with Indigenous communities		• Firesmarting and tactical clearing cooperatively managed with Indigenous communities	• Temporary footprint exempt from setbacks • Timber harvest exempt from setbacks	• Firesmarting and tactical clearing cooperatively managed with Indigenous communities
Recreation and Tourism (Page 31)	• Maximum recreation Trail width of 3.75 m			• Recreational infrastructure (trails, campgrounds, boat launches) exempt • Maximum recreation Trail width of 3.75 m	• No OHV use between Feb 15 – July 15
Surface Materials (Page 34)			• Exploration and development activities not permitted	• Exploration and development activities not permitted	• Exploration and development activities not permitted except within a project area
Peat (Page 35)	• Exploration and development activities not permitted				
Public Land Sales (Page 37)	• Public lands not available for sale (existing/historic Métis residences may be considered for sale)		• Public lands not available for sale (existing/historic Métis residences may be considered for sale)	• Public lands not available for sale (existing/historic Métis residences may be considered for sale)	• Public lands not available for sale (existing/historic Métis residences may be considered for sale)

Map of the South Athabasca sub-region caribou range, project areas, select reserves and hamlets, lakes, rivers and creeks, and the White Muskeg. (This exact figure does not appear in the draft South Athabasca Sub-regional Plan)



Alberta