

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

Modifying permitted forestry activities in Pekisko Heritage Rangeland

Albertans can provide feedback on the proposal to amend the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan in the Pekisko Heritage Rangeland area to enable small scale timber harvesting to manage forest encroachment.

We are gathering feedback on proposed targeted amendments to the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) to allow small scale forest harvesting for managing forest encroachment while maintaining the ecological objectives of the heritage rangeland and ongoing range health.

Background

- South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and Pekisko Heritage Rangeland
 - The Pekisko Heritage Rangeland was identified as a new conservation area during the development of the SSRP. The SSRP identified permitted land uses in the area until such time as it is designated under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* (WAERNAHR).
 - This information is contained in the SSRP regulatory details sections 23 to 27 (pg. 171 to 172), Appendix L in the Conservation Areas table (pg. 198) and Note A (pg. 209), and Appendix F: Conservation Areas [Pekisko Area] (pg. 144).
 - This area of public lands helps to preserve and protect a representative part of Alberta's native prairie, using carefully managed grazing and traditional ranching practices to maintain the health of the grassland ecosystem.
 - SSRP section 25, appendix L (pg 198) and note A (pg. 209) currently allow forest management only for wildfire, insect and disease control in this area. This may include prescribed fire, single tree removal or other limited treatments as necessary.
 - Since the Pekisko Heritage Rangeland is now being designated under WAERNAHR as a "new" conservation area, the SSRP must be amended.

- 25(1) The Minister responsible for the *Forests Act* shall not, with respect to land that is included within Map Area "G", grant or renew any authority to harvest timber.
- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Minister responsible for the *Forests Act* may grant or renew an authority to remove timber for the purposes of the management of wildfire or the control of insects or disease

Note A: Commercial Forestry

Management for wildfire, insect and disease control will be allowed in areas where commercial forestry activities are not permitted. This may include prescribed fire, single tree removal or other limited treatments as necessary.

- WAERNAHR
 - Heritage rangelands preserve and protect natural features that are representative of Alberta's prairies using grazing to maintain the grassland ecology.
 - According to WAERNAHR, the Minister can permit a disposition to be issued or grant permission to enable the maintenance of range or forest health.
 - WAERNAHR requires the Minister to make decisions about dispositions in accordance with any applicable regional plan, including Heritage Rangeland Management Plans.
 - The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and Pekisko Heritage Rangelands Management Plan must be consistent with WAERNAHR.

For more information:

Website: alberta.ca/pekisko-heritage-rangeland-management-plan-engagement

Email: epa.pekisko@gov.ab.ca or LUF@gov.ab.ca

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Small scale forest harvesting for forest encroachment

- Pekisko Heritage Rangelands Management Plan (pg. 15): Identifies the need to manage the forest and shrub communities to slow and/or prevent tree encroachment while still providing a mosaic of forest, shrub and grasslands in the riparian areas. The plan proposes the expansion of commercial or local timber permits to remove identified woody vegetation.
- Proposed changes to the SSRP would allow the Minister to issue a disposition or give permission for small scale forest harvesting to slow and/or prevent tree encroachment to enable the maintenance of range or forest health.

Timelines for amending SSRP

- Feedback on the Pekisko Heritage Rangelands Management Plan and proposed changes to the SSRP will inform future amendments to the SSRP.
- The Alberta government may approve the Pekisko Heritage Rangelands Management Plan in advance of approving amendments to the SSRP.
- The Pekisko Heritage Rangelands Management Plan's directions about forest harvesting for managing encroachment will only be allowed once the amendments to the SSRP come into effect.

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