

# Sub-regional Planning

## Conservation Areas

### Explore new and expanded conservation areas

Conservation areas are important tools that can support species and ecosystems and provide intact landscapes for the practice of traditional land uses and a variety of recreational activities. Two areas have been identified as areas that could be designated as conservation areas under the Upper Smoky sub-regional plan:

#### Conservation Area A

The Caw Ridge, Sulfur Ridge, and Coal/Horn/Torrens Ridge. This area is approximately 40,000 hectares and is adjacent to Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park and Willmore Wilderness Park.

#### Conservation Area B

The upper foothills around Sheep Creek, montane areas west of the Smoky River and Sulphur River, and alpine and subalpine areas of Lightning Ridge. This area is approximately 55,000 hectares and is adjacent to Willmore Wilderness Park and Sulphur Gates Provincial Recreation Area.

Activities in the proposed conservation areas (identified in Figure 6) would be managed to minimize new land disturbances to support and protect conservation and recreation values until they are formally designated under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

New recreation and tourism leases may be issued once the conservation areas are designated under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

### Objectives

#### Enhance conservation opportunities in the sub-region

The proposed conservation areas provide habitat for woodland caribou and other species at risk, including wolverine, grizzly bear, bull trout, harlequin duck, American golden plover, and little brown bat. They also include important habitat for mountain goats and bighorn sheep. The alpine areas contain headwater streams that provide water to communities in the sub-region.

Conservation Area A is important for maintaining Redrock-Prairie Creek caribou range connectivity and in supporting caribou requirements for large tracts of undisturbed, old growth forest.

### Support traditional land uses

The proposed conservation areas have a long history of cultural relevance to Indigenous peoples, and they remain important places for exercising Treaty rights and traditional land uses. Indigenous participation in implementation of the plan, including the establishment of the proposed conservation areas, will support Indigenous peoples to preserve their ways of life.

### Maintain wilderness landscapes and low-impact backcountry activities, and enhance opportunities for nature-based recreation and tourism

The proposed conservation areas will maintain wilderness landscapes. They will support nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities that are well integrated with trail management plans and other recreation and tourism strategies in the sub-region. These areas will continue to provide opportunities for low-impact backcountry activities such as camping, hiking, and equestrian use.

Activities such as hunting, fishing, and trapping will continue in the proposed conservation areas, according to existing provincial regulations. Motorized recreation, including snow vehicles, will be permitted in designated areas.

### What other land uses will be supported in these areas?

Existing well-based activities requiring a disposition, such as petroleum and natural gas extraction, will be honoured and new surface dispositions will be permitted for these existing mineral agreements. Surface access will not be permitted for new mineral agreements.

No new coal exploration or mining will be permitted in the proposed conservation areas. No timber harvesting will be permitted in the proposed conservation areas unless it is for the purpose of managing the risk of wildfire, insects, or disease.

### For more information:

Website: [alberta.ca/upper-smoky-sub-regional-plan-engagement](https://alberta.ca/upper-smoky-sub-regional-plan-engagement)

Email: [EPA.SRPRegDetailsRP@gov.ab.ca](mailto:EPA.SRPRegDetailsRP@gov.ab.ca)

## Map: Conservation Areas

