

Sub-regional Planning

Profile of the Upper Smoky Sub-region

The Upper Smoky Sub-region (Figure 1) is located south of Grande Prairie and encompasses Grande Cache, Kakwa Wildland Park, and about half of Willmore Wilderness Park. It is adjacent to Jasper National Park.

The sub-region is 1,321,590 hectares (13,216 km²) – 2% of Alberta – and is almost entirely within the provincial Green Area, which is comprised of public lands managed for timber production, coal development, petroleum and natural gas development, traditional land uses, watershed conservation, fish and wildlife resources, recreational pursuits, and a myriad of other uses.

Home to Diverse Landscapes and Species

Nearly half of the sub-region is composed of rolling hills and plateaus with deciduous and mixed wood forests (e.g., Foothills Natural Region). Over a third of the sub-region is covered by mountains, upper foothills, and glacial valleys (e.g., Rocky Mountain Natural Region). The Boreal Natural Region covers 15% of the sub-region, characterized by deciduous, mixed wood, and coniferous forests interspersed with extensive wetlands.

The Upper Smoky sub-region is home to the Narraway and Redrock-Prairie Creek woodland caribou populations and ranges. These caribou are categorized as Southern Mountain Woodland Caribou. The abundance and occurrence of woodland caribou along the eastern slopes of Alberta has dramatically declined in recent decades, with only three populations remaining on provincially managed land.

A Balanced Approach

The natural resources in the area present an opportunity for economic development in the region and beyond while continuing to support social and environmental outcomes – the definition of a working landscape. The implementation of a balanced and thoughtful sub-regional plan will allow the Government of Alberta to deliver on the goal of doubling oil and gas production while also maintaining the working landscape in the region.

Natural Resources

The sub-region is rich in natural resources including timber, petroleum and natural gas, coal, metallic and industrial minerals, sand and gravel, and rangelands that support grazing. The sub-region has industrial developments, including one forest management agreement area (69% of the sub-region), petroleum and natural gas sub-surface agreements (58% of the sub-region), metallic and industrial minerals (19% of the sub-region), coal agreements (13% of the sub-region), and grazing dispositions (1.6% of the sub-region). There are 67 registered fur management areas across the sub-region.

The sub-region is of cultural and subsistence importance for Indigenous peoples. First Nations peoples have a long history in the area and have an important connection to the land, which overlaps the geographic area of Treaty 8. Métis peoples also share a deep history with this land. This plan was developed with consideration of Indigenous traditional land uses, values, and perspectives.

Economy

Approximately \$21.2 billion of Alberta's gross domestic product (GDP) was derived from this sub-region in 2020, which is 6.1% of the province's GDP. This productivity supports jobs in communities inside and outside the sub-region, representing a labour force of approximately 85,000.

For more information:

Website: alberta.ca/upper-smoky-sub-regional-plan-engagement

Email: EPA.SRPRegDetailsRP@gov.ab.ca

Figure 1: Upper Smoky Sub-region

