



ALBERTA
ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Lethbridge-West*

Mr. Laurence Roy, President
Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society
Box 4990
Edmonton AB T6E 5G8

Dear Mr. Roy:

On behalf of Environment and Parks, thank you for your comments on the Castle Provincial Park and Castle Wildland Provincial Park Draft Management Plan. We appreciate your time in sharing your insights.

Over the last few weeks, we have heard from thousands of Albertans who love to camp, fish, hunt and hike with their families in southwest Alberta. The Castle Wildland and Provincial Parks were created so Albertans can have a place to do the things they love for generations to come.

We have updated the draft parks management plan to reflect comments we have heard so far. Public consultation was extended an additional month until April 19th to provide extra time to examine the new draft plan.

The revised plan includes the following considerations:

- Alberta hunters will be permitted to recover game through limited use of trail networks during hunting season.
- Alberta ranchers will see grazing permits managed by rangelands staff. The province will continue to work with permit holders on a formalized agreement.
- Alberta anglers will see Alberta's fish populations protected through fish recovery strategies, including the threatened Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout.
- Albertans with mobility issues, including the elderly, will be given special consideration to ensure park access is inclusive.

When it is finalized, the Castle Provincial Park and Castle Wildland Provincial Park Management Plan will help protect our valuable natural and cultural resources. It will provide the foundation for long term economic benefits to the people of Alberta through increased tourism. To that end, we have committed to an investment of more than \$20 million over the next four years to the Castle Parks.

In addition to an updated draft management plan, the Government of Alberta recently initiated a series of targeted public information sessions and stakeholder meetings that began March 8 to kick off the Southern Alberta Recreation Management Planning Process. Please watch our website and local media over the next few weeks to see how you can engage.

Enforcement and education will be a critical part of a finalized Castle Parks Management Plan and the Southern Alberta Recreation Management Planning Process. Over the last decade, a lack of planning and investment in parks infrastructure and enforcement has created serious issues on public land costing Albertans millions of dollars each year. Last year, Conservation Officers and Fish and Wildlife Officers made more than 77,000 public contacts. This resulted in nearly 7,000 infractions – the majority of which relate to irresponsible use of public land, illegal camping activities and off highway vehicles. We have increased enforcement activities and will continue to make this a priority.

If you have not done so already, I encourage you to participate further in the consultation by completing the online survey at https://talkaep.alberta.ca/CastleManagementPlan/survey_tools/castle-provincial-park-and-castle-wildland-provincial-park-management-plan-survey.

Thank you again for taking the time to share your thoughts on this exciting initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P".

Shannon Phillips
Minister