



The Alberta Fish & Game Association is your voice in conservation

Porcupine Hills Hunting Pilot Project Survey (Link at Bottom)

Your Alberta Fish and Game Past President and Zone 2 Environment Chair have been actively engaged in a Government Recreation Advisory Group for Southern Alberta for the past few years, advocating for a more balanced access plan for hunting opportunities.

We had many recommendations for GoA to address numerous concerns raised by AFGA members about a significant reduction in hunting access in Southern Alberta with the creation of the Castle Parks, Livingstone, and Porcupine Hills Public Land Use Zones.

Two key AFGA recommendations led to the creation of a 3-year Hunting Pilot Project, which created additional OHV seasonal hunting access trails and game retrieval trails within the current Linear Density Threshold limits set by the Government. Please see attached photos of these two major AFGA recommendations, complete with our rationale and considerations, as well as level of support and comments by other group members.

The pilot had great support from GoA and our partners, but significant opposition from many other group members who stated they "cannot support or accept" additional hunting access in Porcupine Hills (similar positions were taken on Castle and Livingstone recommendations).

With the first year complete we have found that through our boots on the ground presence talking with hunters in the area there is great frustration, safety issues, and over crowding with the 2018 access map, and that these additional access points are a step in the right direction. Although some users did not comply with the designated trail system, we found most were eager to participate and support our efforts to improve hunting access. We saw a lot of vehicles parked at trailheads and walking to hunting areas, which is the intended purpose of increasing access to spread hunters out for a better experience.

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Many hunters stepped up to help report noncompliance, but we believe enforcement, further education, and consideration of other access points is needed to make this pilot a success that could be deployed province-wide with your support. Have your voice heard by clicking the link to the survey below.

<https://arcg.is/08HzOa>

Please feel free to contact us directly with any questions, concerns, or comments.

Bob Weir

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19. Increase seasonal hunting access in the northern portion of Porcupine Hills on select existing linear features connected to the existing trail system.

Rationale:

- Additional access is desired to address numerous concerns with safety, hyper concentration of hunters being over crowded, and cut off from important hunting grounds they have utilized for decades, hunters with disabilities and mobility issues.
- Trails for motorized access were carefully and meticulously designed with input of our members and in consideration of constraints raised by other RAG members, reflected in the AOHVA Trail Map Submission.
- These trail selections are based less on scenic recreational opportunities and more on branching off into areas that would only be open for hunting season (see seasonal access recommendation).
- From these vital entry points, hunters could once again access preferred hunting grounds to hike deeper into with much less disturbance of other hunters that we are seeing now with limited access.
- Very limited sensitive fish habitat and flowing water in the areas identified on the proposed map additions.

Considerations:

- There are approximately 30 kilometres of trails proposed, an amount that will not exceed the motorized access limits in either Zone 2 or 3 of the LFMP.
- The trails can be open from September 1 to the end of February and managed as restricted access.
- Closure of hunting access trails outside of the hunting season would allow the landscape and wildlife to rest during the busy spring and summer months when campers and recreational OHV users are seeking more continued use of the trail system.
- Co-branded signage could include GoA, AOHVA, AFGA, ACA, and other stakeholders that would like to partner on a sustainable trail system and best practices.
- Access to hunting trails should be based on users with valid tags.
- It is noted that some members of the advisory group do not support this recommendation by AFGA in representing their 20,000 members from across the province, thousands of whom plan their hunting season in the southern Alberta lands in question.

Level of Support:



1. Full support: Crowsnest Pass, HFGPA, CPQS, AOHVA, CFSS, ATA, AMA, AFGA
2. Acceptable: Willow Creek
3. Support with reservations: APOS, PCSA
4. I am not thrilled but can live with it: AOA
5. Need more information or discussion: Pincher Creek, RMFRA, OWC, Blood Tribe
6. Cannot support or accept: ABHA, CNSC, AEF, CCWC, LLG, UROC, Y2Y, Bradley, AHA, Siksika Nation

Reasons for Non-Support:

Pincher Creek: No comment.

RMFRA: Motorized access is not prerequisite for successful hunting. Additional enforcement issues. If there is a trail it will get used, how is off hunting season access prevented?

OWC: Ignores requests by non-motorized hunters for quiet hunting area. Consider half of request.

Blood Tribe: First Nations are allowed to hunt and fish year round that is not stated anywhere in this document

ABHA: No comment.

CNSC: This is a brand new recommendation. It was not brought to the RAG, no previous discussions. Do not agree with opening the trails in September.

AEF: Too much opportunity for abuse... lack of enforcement... there are many Alberta areas that have hunting without motorized access...

CCWC: No comment.

LLG: The Porcupine Hills represent a very narrow strip of land which already has an unsustainable number of linear features degrading its ecological and other sustainable values. There are many diverse hunting opportunities available as it stands.

UROC: Access should be limited to game retrieval and not in September which is a high use period for non-motorized trail users.

Y2Y: We do not support an increase of motorized access in Porcupine Hills outside of the current designated trail network. Any additional access will exceed LFMP thresholds. This recommendation was added without consulting the Recreation Advisory Group.

Bradley: No comment.

AHA: Leads to year round motorized trails. Small area for too many hunters. Nowhere is far from existing road. Bad for backcountry hunters. Too long season, affects other recreation.

Siksika Nation: No comment.


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20. Develop and trial a pilot project in the north Porcupine Hills to allow for motorized seasonal game retrieval.	
<p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional access is desired to facilitate motorized access for game retrieval. • Although younger and able bodied hunters may be able to and prefer strenuous and long distance pack outs, many of our members rely on the assistance of motorized access to be able to hunt and successfully harvest their game. • Disabled and mobility challenged needs are present among many hunters and within hunting groups. • Youth mentorship and young children hunting with our members is vital, and in many cases the youngsters are unable to withstand these strenuous retrievals that often take all night without motorized access. Our members' 	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions will be placed on timing and activity type on select trails to only allow access for hunters from September 1 to the end of February. This may reduce disturbance to wildlife and non-motorized recreation activities in the area. • There are approximately 15 kilometres of trails proposed, an amount that will not exceed the motorized access limits in either Zone 2 or 3 of the LFMP. (See proposed trail maps Appendix 4 and 5) • The pilot would run for three years, starting September 1, 2021. • A monitoring program will be established, with partnered stakeholders, to measure for the success of the pilot.

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<p>children should not be disqualified because they are unable to use the low impact assistance of an OHV for retrieval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited sensitive fish habitat and flowing water in the areas identified on the proposed map additions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must involve proper collection of quantitative data with appropriate statistical comparisons ○ Monitor disturbance of vegetation in order to assess whether added activity on and off trails contributes significantly to erosion, runoff and sedimentation. This will inform the decision about whether such trails can be excluded from measures of linear density <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-branded signage could include AOHVA, AFGA, and others. • Management of access and of users could be similar to the current Castle program where authorization based on users with tags (and a permit). • AFGA members will partner in stewardship to manage the area and report abuse using the RAP line. • Enforcement is needed and will be challenging. Potential changes to specified penalties may be required. • Project should take into consideration the area needs of non-motorized hunters. • If pilot is successful, it could be deployed for any PLUZ to enable game retrieval. • Additional density is not recommended due to the narrow confines of the Porcupine Hills. Off trail game retrieval will lead to more trails.
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<p>Level of Support:</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Level of Support Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Support Level</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Full support</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Acceptable</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Support with reservations</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. I am not thrilled but can...</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Need more information...</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Can not support or accept</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Support Level	Count	1. Full support	10	2. Acceptable	0	3. Support with reservations	2	4. I am not thrilled but can...	2	5. Need more information...	1	6. Can not support or accept	9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full support: Willow Creek, Crowsnest Pass, HFGPA, CPQS, AOHVA, CFSS, ATA, AMA, AFGA, Siksika Nation 2. Acceptable: N/A 3. Support with reservations: OWC, Bradley 4. I am not thrilled but can live with it: APOS, UROC, AOA 5. Need more information or discussion: Pincher Creek, RMFRA 6. Cannot support or accept: ABHA, CNSC, AEF, CCWC, LLG, Blood Tribe, Y2Y, PCSA, AHA
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ABHA: Follow the linear disturbance guidelines from the 2018 Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Recreation Management Plan and the Land Footprint Management Plan

CNSC: In Zone 2 we are at 0.37 of a 0.40 linear footprint. This proposal would increase to 0.49. Zone 3 is 0.59 of a 0.60 linear footprint. This proposal would increase to 0.90. This would be a very concerning precedent.

AEF: Too much opportunity for abuse... no enforcement... there are other means available for game retrieval

CCWC: No comment.

LLG: The number of linear features in use now in the Porcupine Hills is not sustainable. A majority of Albertans have clearly articulated a desire for quiet, nature-based recreation. A minority desiring wheeled access should not prevail over the majority.

Blood Tribe: Our Treaty right is adversely impacted with out any form of mitigation or compensation

Y2Y: Additional access will exceed linear density thresholds. Seasonal hunting access does not allow restoration of trails - they remain a fixture. Requests for non-motorized recreation/hunting opportunities in the Porcupine Hills must be considered.

PCSA: It seems like we have to either work with 19, which is so close to what is being asked for in 20. The requests for more trails for self gain and little thought gone into the large overall footprint t

AHA: Leads to more year round trails. Conflict with Operational rec# 11. Hikers age 70 accept they cannot go as far as when they were 30. Hunters should be the same.

