

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

URGENT NOTICE: Public Input Invited on Recreational Corridors Report

This mail out is a special request from SAPAA executive that stewards submit the enclosed questionnaire or complete the questionnaire on line by February 12, 2004. Please distribute this information to your networks and encourage as many people as possible to respond to the questionnaire. It is critically important that the Legislative Review Committee hear from the public at large, and specifically, those of us who come from a conservation perspective.

Due to the short timeline and imposing nature of this document, we have enclosed a guide to help you complete the questionnaire. Feel free to make changes as our responses are only suggestions. However, some points we feel should be emphasized in your comments:

- Stress that your comments are important and that the committee should not just use the statistical data gained from tallying the checked responses.
- In question #1, highlight that legislation for Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas should be amended to prohibit the use of motorized vehicles.
- Non-motorized users need to be a major player in establishing Recreational Corridors.

SAPAA executive want to emphasize the importance of environmentally concerned citizens making their voices heard. We are very aware of groups such as Quad Squad (you can find their web page at <http://www.cnpquad.com>) who are encouraging all their members to respond to the questionnaire. The winter 2003/2004 issue of *Nature Canada* has some pertinent information on ATV abuse.

Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review Report addresses the five main areas of concern to Albertan's: liability; safety and policing; operation, maintenance and accountability; privacy and access; and environmental stewardship. The Report and Survey is available on the government web site at www.cd.gov.ab.ca (on the home page select picture titled 'Recreation Corridor Legislative Review', then select 'Recreation Corridors Legislative Review Report' and 'Report Survey' from left sidebar.) You may also access the Report and Survey by calling (780) 415 - 1167 in Edmonton or toll free by first dialing 310 - 0000.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE
ALBERTA RECREATION CORRIDORS LEGISLATION REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE
JANUARY 2004

These are fairly extensive documents and it is difficult to answer many of the questions unless one has a lot more information, or understanding of the ramifications. Basically, one can Agree (A) with most of the points as stated, but they all need qualifiers, and it is the comments that need attention, not just numbers. I suggest that if you are not sure how to answer some of the questions, mark the 'Not Sure' (NS) box, but add comments for that item. They want complete responses for evaluation.

Rather than suggesting broad outlines, I have indicated below concerns for comment on certain questions. The more individual responses with comments which are submitted, the better.

On the last page, they want you to prioritise the ten most important recommendations, so I have concentrated on what seem to be the most important, or confusing, points, to target them for your selection.

1.1 (A) New Legislation: may not be required as long as **planning directions provide consistency throughout the province**. Some amendments to current legislation could provide clarity and direction, as mentioned in the Report. e.g. The Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act (WAERNA) should be amended to state that motorized vehicles are not permitted in Natural Areas, making this a clearly recognised and consistent factor. This is in line with the original intent of Natural Areas. Recognised Recreation Areas would be available for motorized users. Likewise, under the Provincial Parks Act, motorized vehicles are not normally permitted in Provincial or Wildland Parks, except in very rare circumstances, so **Designated Recreation Corridors within all Parks and Protected Areas, which include Natural Areas, would be for non-motorized recreationists only.**

1.2 (A) Maximizing benefits to all stakeholders: in theory, it sounds good, but some non-compatible activities will have to be excluded in certain areas to maximize benefits to all stakeholders.

2.1 (NS) Guiding principles: most are good but #6, **multi-use trails, if interpreted as use by both motorized and non-motorized use, are rarely successful**. Different blends of activities on different types of trails will be required to provide optimal experiences
#7, **continuity of the Recreation Corridor is desirable, but not necessarily for the same activity** e.g. corridors traversing any Protected Areas, including Natural Areas, would be for non-motorized traffic only. (See 1.1 above).

3.2 (A) Benefits to trail operators: good, but who are they, and how are they going to implement all the fairly stringent requirements? The Province is the owner-operator of most back-country trails and should continue this public service on these particular public lands, and also in the Parks and Protected Areas for which it is responsible. No-one else has the ability or resources to cover these very extensive trails. But Government will have to increase the resources to the Departments concerned. **Other Public lands may be leased to operators, but the Province must retain ownership.**

3.4 (A) Guidelines for Designations: different standards will be required for different types of trails

e.g. horse or OHV trails. **Accurate maps throughout the province are a prime requirement. One government service should be responsible for maintaining all current basic map data, to ensure computability.**

4.1 (NS) Local municipality support: community support is desirable but **these corridors are on public lands and should also reflect the interests of the larger urban communities who will also be users.** Parks and Protected Areas are not under MD jurisdiction, so Parks and Protected Areas Division has prime responsibility for Recreation Corridors on these lands.

4.3 (NS) Government assumption of ownership: this would depend very much on individual circumstances.

5.4 (A) Liability insurance for owner-operators: liability concerns have been mostly addressed by the recent Bill 208 (?). But the **Government must coordinate a province wide insurance program for operators**, as suggested, otherwise costs are prohibitive and counter-productive.

6.2. (A) Responsibilities for enforcement: **the question of who will enforce compliance has not been adequately examined and this is essential. The Province still has responsibilities for this, which Government must recognise and provide the necessary resources.**

6.3 (DA) Use of highway rights-of-way: **this should not be allowed for off-highway vehicles vehicles**, from a public safety point of view (**this should be a consistent provincial recommendation**). Walkers, cyclists are still entitled to use the highways, taking the usual precautions. 'Grand-fathering' existing motorized use should be strongly discouraged. Recreation Corridor demands should not supercede normal safety considerations.

6.4 (A) Range of uses and standards etc.: **there is a need to clearly distinguish between those corridors where motorized traffic is permitted (e.g. only where clearly signed) and non-motorized (e.g. if no signs present).** Different standards are required for different activities. Clear, up to-date maps are an essential requirement.

7.2. (DA) Local municipality agreement first step: the larger provincial recreation corridor picture must be taken into consideration, and the municipality encouraged to come on board. **Consistency of regulations between MDs is essential for education and compliance. The Division of Parks and Protected Areas also has the first authority where corridors are proposed through their Parks and Protected Areas (which includes Natural Areas).** e.g. municipalities should not facilitate potential unauthorised access

7.4. (A) Closure procedures: the Province maintains ownership of the corridor if the operator fails to perform his duties. **Long term commitment is required by the Province. Closure to those groups causing damage, prior to the occurrence of excessive irreversible damage, or by irresponsible users, may be necessary. Low impact users should not be penalised for damage for which they are not responsible.**

7.5.1 (DA) 'Grooming Fees' collected: **Public lands should be free to all those on foot**, according

to precedent. There should not be discrimination against those who have few resources. Motorized vehicle users should pay an increased licence fee, because of their relatively high impact. But **logistics for collections of other fees and monitoring would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.**

9.1 (A) Environmental stewardship: **there should be a definite obligation for all users, operators, and landowners to practice environmental stewardship. Corridors must not fragment previously undisturbed habitat, including small isolated Natural Areas, and must not compromise the values of our Parks and Protected Areas. Species at Risk Legislation must also be taken into account before designation, especially in wetlands or winter habitat. Cumulative effects of all other adjacent activities must be taken into account before designating any Recreation Corridors.** The small section on Environmental recommendations reflects the lack of representation by Environmental groups amongst the stakeholders.

Part III

2. You are asked for your top ten priorities. I have noted above 15 of the 31 recommendations for your consideration for selection. The others I think are essentially OK, without strong comments.

3. Missing recommendations: **The primary lack is that there is no VISION** of the purpose of these Designated Recreation Corridors, or who they are for. If you like the idea, you could suggest something like:

“ establishment of long term, low maintenance, connected trails to provide opportunities for Albertans, of present, and future generations, to increase their physical activity and improve their physical and mental health, and to allow our increasingly urbanized population to experience recreational opportunities in the natural environment.”

4. Additional comments: In particular, add that **you want all your comments to be noted and taken into account**, as while most of the statements are reasonable at face value, the success of the Review Report will depend largely on the the definitions, interpretations and implementations of the recommendations.

Other comments:

- There is a very heavy reliance on volunteers, who are increasingly asked to fulfill many other duties, which should be the responsibility of the Province. This does not guarantee long term, adequate or efficient operation. The Province must continue to play its part in maintaining its public lands for the public and provide adequate resources to do so.

- Urban communities are not given sufficient say, and a very substantial number of users will be from these more densely populated areas. When holding public meetings in the future, the major urban centres must also be included, not just rural communities.

.- There is minimal or no representation from ordinary citizens, those who do not have an organised group to speak for them, who mostly just want to take the kids out for a day's walk, or longer, on their public lands. Many stakeholder groups are well organized, and have lots of money and loud voices, so please speak up!

A.Dinwoodie, 16 Jan 2004