



The Draft Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

Dialogue with Albertans

The draft LARP is here.

The draft Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) provides a blueprint for how the region will develop and evolve over the next decades, to make the most of the incredible economic opportunity, serve a growing population and conserve a diverse natural environment.

As home to most of Alberta's oil sands, the region is expected to continue attracting investment, workers and families from across Alberta, Canada and the world. With the LARP, our province can anticipate and support that kind of growth, for the benefit of all Albertans. The plan will be reviewed every five years to keep it relevant and effective.



**Government
of Alberta ■**

A plan shaped by the views of Albertans.

Almost three years of research, science-based policy analysis and – most importantly – significant consultation have gone into the regional plan. People living and working in the Lower Athabasca region, and Albertans across the province, helped shape the draft plan.

Three formal rounds of consultation were held with stakeholders and the public, with a separate consultation with Aboriginal communities. The last round of consultation was this spring. On April 5, 2011, the Alberta government released an earlier draft Lower Athabasca Regional Plan. A series of public and stakeholder sessions were held in 13 communities across the region, including Edmonton and Calgary. Albertans throughout the province reviewed the plan online and completed an online workbook.

Albertans shared their views about the earlier draft plan, its overall approach, and its strategies and goals. Overall, people felt it was on the right track, but they also identified a number of improvements. This draft document reflects these views.

The draft LARP is now more understandable. It is better able to help the region develop in ways that support our economic, environmental and social goals.



Almost eight in ten (79 per cent) respondents agreed with the proposed vision for the Lower Athabasca region.



Over three-quarters (77 per cent) agreed that the plan's proposed outcomes would support the proposed vision.

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A healthy economy supported by our land and resources.

The Lower Athabasca is an economically dynamic region, with many opportunities for investment and job creation. The draft LARP aims to make the most of these opportunities, for the region's residents and for all Albertans.

It's not just about oil.

People said it's important to remember the Lower Athabasca has lots of other energy and mineral potential. The draft LARP now speaks to the prospect of electrical co-generation in achieving Alberta's clean energy goals. The plan also acknowledges the potential development of surface minerals, such as sand, gravel, peat, clay, marl and silt.



Agriculture is valuable.

Agriculture is a regional heritage and economic activity for many communities. Albertans said the LARP must value agriculture as vital to the region's future.



The draft LARP addresses agriculture more extensively. It recognizes grazing as important to ecosystem function. It looks to municipalities to identify where agriculture should be the primary land use, and encourages limits on fragmenting and developing farmland.

A broader goal for forestry.

Forestry is another major industry in the region. The draft plan has strategies to help forestry co-exist with other activities on the landscape. While people liked these strategies, they felt the LARP should aim to maintain and diversify the forest industry, so that it has a strong and promising future.

The draft LARP goes beyond managing timber shortfalls. It has a new strategy to manage wildfires, and supports the Alberta Forest Products Roadmap to support diversification.



82 per cent of respondents agreed with the LARP's direction of improving integration of industrial activities.



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Healthy ecosystems and environment

Albertans want to know that appropriate steps are taken to protect the environment. The draft LARP takes a partnership approach to limit impacts on air and water, better manage the region's landscapes and support biodiversity.

Clear rules around conservation lands.

A significant commitment of the draft LARP is to set aside 2 million hectares of land for conservation. Albertans supported this direction, and stressed the need for clarity about the purpose and intent of these lands.

The draft LARP clarifies what people can and can't do in conservation areas. This ranges from motorized recreation to how existing mineral tenure will be handled, providing greater certainty for industry and investors.

Keep the air and water clean.

Albertans want confidence in how the region's air and water are managed and kept clean, based on science-based plans.

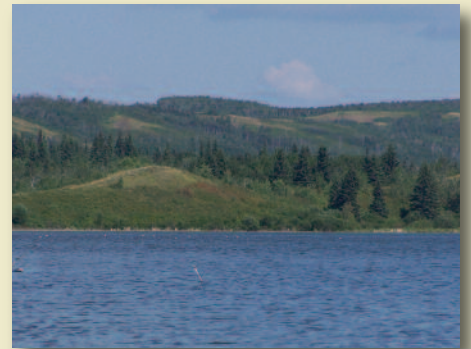
The draft LARP clearly spells out which air and water management frameworks are approved for

implementation. New frameworks to manage air and surface water quality will be regulated. The framework for groundwater will be finalized and the framework for surface water quantity will be updated. Once approved, the regulatory details will be included in the LARP.

Know what's happening in the environment.

If we're going to protect the environment, people said, we need to know what's going on in the region. Monitoring and reporting will be an essential piece of the overall plan.

The draft LARP reinforces environmental monitoring, and identifies the data the Alberta government will collect and analyze. Annual and five-year reporting will support Albertans' confidence in the region's environmental management.



Over seven in ten (71 per cent) respondents agreed with the LARP direction of designating new conservation areas in the region.



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Disturb less land and support biodiversity.

The Lower Athabasca is home to a diversity of species, among them, the woodland caribou. Albertans said this biodiversity needs to be protected by better managing lands and lowering land disturbance.

The draft LARP includes strategies for managing lands around rivers and water bodies. A framework to manage land disturbance is expanded to cover and better protect the Athabasca River Corridor.

The draft plan has more details on reclaiming industrial sites and managing oil sands tailings. Industries will work together to share existing infrastructure and minimize future land disturbance.

Managing land disturbance, biodiversity management and monitoring, and new conservation areas will contribute to caribou management.



89 per cent of respondents agreed with the LARP direction of encouraging timely and progressive reclamation.



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People-friendly communities with ample recreation and cultural opportunities

The Lower Athabasca has welcomed, and expects to welcome, thousands of new residents. The draft LARP supports liveable communities and a great quality of life.

Support Fort McMurray.

More workers and families will increase pressure on social and physical infrastructure, housing and municipal services. Albertans said communities need more support to plan for and accommodate growth, especially in the urban service area of Fort McMurray.

The draft LARP provides for a new Urban Development Reserve around Fort McMurray. Accommodating a planned expansion will help the community to prepare for new residents, businesses and opportunities.



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87 per cent of respondents agreed with the LARP's direction of strengthening infrastructure planning.

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Recreation and tourism areas for a growing region.

The draft LARP establishes nine new provincial recreation areas and five new public land areas for recreation and tourism. People supported this direction, and asked for clarity about the intent, and the activities allowed. This clarity has been added to the draft plan.

The earlier draft plan identified Lakeland Country as an iconic tourism destination. People asked what this means. The draft LARP clarifies how the Lakeland initiative will proceed – in consultation with aboriginal peoples, local governments, stakeholders and the public.



Protect treaty rights and work with aboriginal peoples.

The draft LARP reaffirms Alberta's commitment to honour the constitutionally protected rights of aboriginal peoples.

The draft LARP includes aboriginal peoples in future land-use planning, consistent with Alberta government policy. Examples are stewardship of the Richardson Backcountry, and developing tourism and cultural experiences that create economic benefits to aboriginal communities.



Work together for a stronger region.

Albertans stressed the importance of encouraging partnership and collaboration, including with regional stakeholders and with other provinces and territories, and the federal government.

The draft LARP incorporates these values, and will coordinate with other jurisdictions to align with other plans and strategies relevant to the region. By working together, everyone with a stake in the region's future – residents, communities, industry, governments and other organizations – will ensure the Lower Athabasca remains sustainable and strong.

To learn more about the draft
Lower Athabasca Regional Plan
visit our website at
www.landuse.alberta.ca

