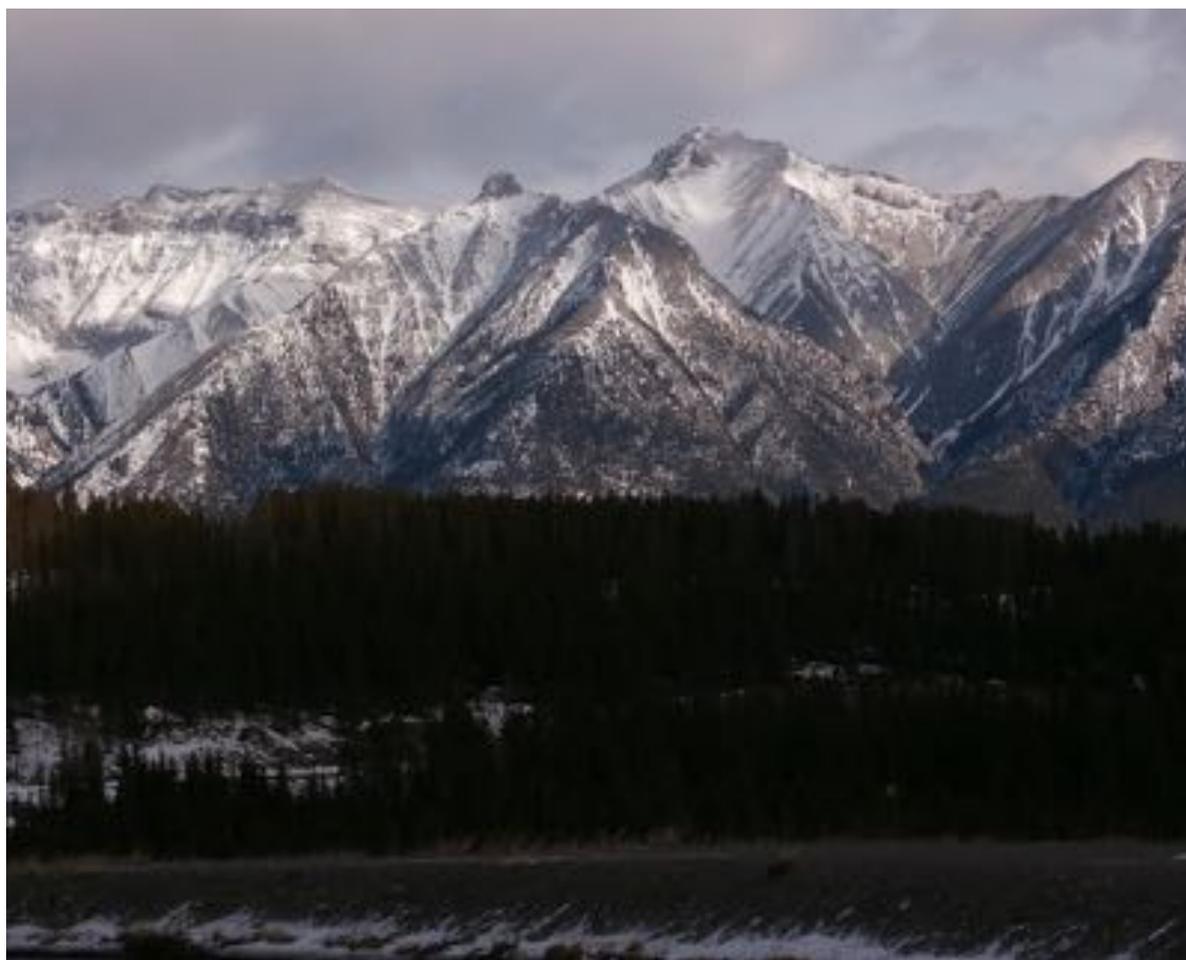


That awkward transition between winter and spring has arrived. Bike down low, ski up high.



**FRIENDS**<sup>OF</sup>  
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

## **If You Admire the View, You Are a Friend Of Kananaskis**



### **In this month's newsletter...**

- Trails Fest - June 11 - Kananaskis Village
- Trail Care Projects - Coming Soon
- Last Call for Crew Leaders
- Kananaskis Country Speaker Series
- Letter from the Board: The March Off-Site
- The Elements of Kananaskis: Heart Creek Provincial Recreation Area
- Witch's Broom

## TRAILS FEST - June 11 - Kananaskis Village

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator



On June 11th, the Friends of Kananaskis Country will host the 2nd annual **TRAILS FEST** at Kananaskis Village and we want you to join us! A celebration of Kananaskis trails, people, and culture - the event will consist of multiple activities that showcase the many ways trails are used.

- Connect with local hiking, biking, skiing and outdoor clubs & organizations showcasing their activities and how you can get involved.
- Learn what the Alberta Environment and Parks Backcountry Trail Rehabilitation Program on Public Land accomplished – and Phase 2 trail building of the newest Trans Canada Trail section: High Rockies Linkage project from Goat Creek to Elk Pass.
- Afternoon guided trail activity will include hiking, biking, trail running, bear spray demonstration and kid activities.

### **Event Itinerary**

10:00 – 2:00 Connect with local Clubs & Organizations

11:00 – 12:00 Presentations:

- Alberta Environment and Parks Backcountry Trail Rehabilitation Program on Public Land
- Trans Canada Trail: High Rockies Linkage – Phase 2

12:00 BBQ Lunch (free)

1:30 – 3:00 Guided Activities (hiking, biking, trail running, kid activities and more...)

For more information: [www.kananaskis.org/trails-fest](http://www.kananaskis.org/trails-fest)

And if you're a part of a club or group and want to exhibit what you do, contact Nancy at

**We look forward to celebrating Kananaskis trails, people, and culture with you.**

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### Trail Care Projects - Coming Soon

The warm spring sun is getting me excited for the upcoming Trail Care season! We have lots of great volunteer projects in the hopper, which I look forward to sharing with you in the April newsletter. So hang in there as we foster some anticipation around what the Trail Care season has in stock.



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### Last Call for Crew Leaders

Are you interested in leadership and trail work? Why not consider becoming a Friends volunteer Crew Leader. The role of the Crew Leader is to ensure volunteer participants have a safe and enjoyable Trail Care experience. This person represents the Friends at the trail site and liaises with Alberta Parks trail crews.

We ask that people interested in becoming a crew leader have volunteered a minimum of two Trail Care days and are willing to volunteer as crew leader at least 2 times during the 2016 Trail Care season.

As crew leader, it is required that you have basic first aid certification. Full course and recertification training will be offered by Alberta Parks, free of charge, in the spring.



To ensure volunteer crew leaders are well prepared to lead volunteer groups we provide an annual Crew Leader training which consists of;

1. **Indoor Session:** Review the role and responsibility of the crew leader, risk management, first aid protocols, paper-work logistics, volunteer tracking, and trail day event reporting. This is a good opportunity to meet other crew leaders and hear more about our plans for the upcoming trail season. Crew leaders will receive a Crew Leader Manual that includes information related to the above outlined topics covered during the meeting in addition to information about trail anatomy, maintenance, construction and tools.
2. **Field Session:** Training is facilitated by a professional trail builder who will go over trail anatomy, and the specifics around how to construct a trail, followed by trail maintenance.

Crew Leader Training dates are not confirmed, but are tentatively set for:

**Thursday, April 21:** Indoor Training Session, 6:30pm-8:45pm, MEC Store

**Sunday May 15:** Field Training Session, 9:30am-2:30pm, Canmore Nordic Centre

Returning crew leaders are asked to also attend the training sessions. For more information on volunteering as a Crew Leader, or anything else you can help with, contact Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator, at 403-678-5593 or [nancy@kananaskis.org](mailto:nancy@kananaskis.org).

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### **Kananaskis Country Speaker Series**

In partnership with the University of Calgary's [Palliser Club](#), we had a successful Speaker Series with outstanding presenters: Ben Gadd, Kevin Van Tighem, and Matt Mueller. To those of you who attended, thank you for your support! We hope you enjoyed the presentations.



We'll have another great speaker line up next winter, but until then, we are going to shift our focus to trail work!

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## Letter from the Board: The March Off-Site

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

Every year in March, the Board and Advisory Council meet for the day at the Delta Lodge in Kananaskis at what we call our “Spring Planning Off-Site” session. We review the previous year's Business Plan, write a new one, and set the budget for the upcoming year.

This year's session was particularly productive as we also went through a SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses –Opportunities-Threats) exercise, which resulted in the identification of several strategic issues we wanted to work on. In addition, utilizing tools provided by the Alberta Government's [Board Development Program](#) through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Board did a self-assessment exercise, identifying ways the Board itself could be more effective.



One area we discussed at length was an ongoing goal we set for ourselves last year to increase the partnerships we have with other like-minded organizations. As Nancy wrote last month, this includes the Canmore Trail Alliance; but you can look forward to exciting news coming soon about partnerships with the Bow Valley Stewards and others including the Conservation Officer community.

Board work is uniquely satisfying, especially given the strengths and collaborative ways that the Friends Board operates. The Board (*pictured at right, being silly; our Treasurer Loralie is missing*) is quite an effective team, and we tackle issues with a fun energy, knowing the kinds of impacts the organization makes. Our membership continues to grow, and we continue to chalk up success after success of which we are justifiably proud.



If you are interested in joining our Board, we would love to talk. We're currently seeking folks with skill sets in **Finance** or **Fundraising**, or with strong connections to the **mountain biking/fat biking community**, to enhance and build on our existing strengths in these areas. Enquiries about Board positions can be sent through our office at [info@kananaskis.org](mailto:info@kananaskis.org).



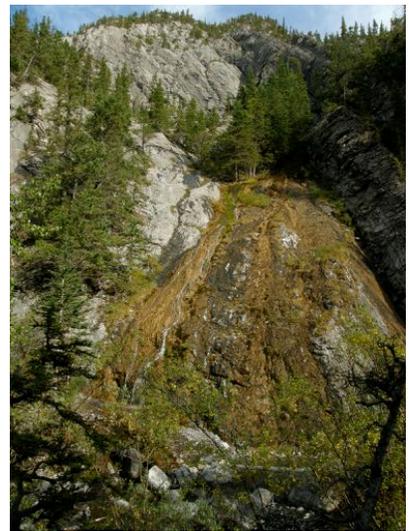
## **The Elements of Kananaskis: Heart Creek Provincial Recreation Area**

*4th in a series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications*

Kananaskis Country is not one park but a multi use land base consisting of numerous parks and public lands, all managed under one framework. In this series, we're going to look at each part that makes up K-Country. We'll look at the history, the rules, and significance the area plays.

There are 7 land classifications within the Alberta Parks system, 4 of which you can find in Kananaskis Country. So far, I have covered 3: Ecological Reserves (Plateau Mountain), Wildland Provincial Parks (like Bow Valley), and Provincial Parks (like Spray Valley). This month, we'll look at the final type of Parks system land that you'll find in K-Country: Provincial Recreation Areas ("PRA"). There are almost 100 PRA's in K-Country, but this month, we're just going to look at one: **Heart Creek PRA.**

A PRA is also a park just like a Provincial Park and Wildland Provincial Park, and they are all administered under the same act, the [Provincial Parks Act](#). Accordingly, it's easiest to think of a PRA as just another specifically designated Provincial Park. PRA's are generally small and encompass specific locations of more intensive activity.



As you may have surmised from the previous articles, what changes between these different Park classifications is to what end the park is managed. For a Provincial Park or Wildland Park, like Spray Valley or Bow Valley, preservation and conservation is paramount, pursuant to Section 3 of the [Provincial Parks Act](#). Four of the parts of Section 3 deal with preservation, conservation, and protection; only Subsection (d) is about facilitating use.

For a PRA, preservation is important (because it's a Park), but the park is managed primarily for recreation and tourism. To quote Section 4 of the Provincial Parks Act:



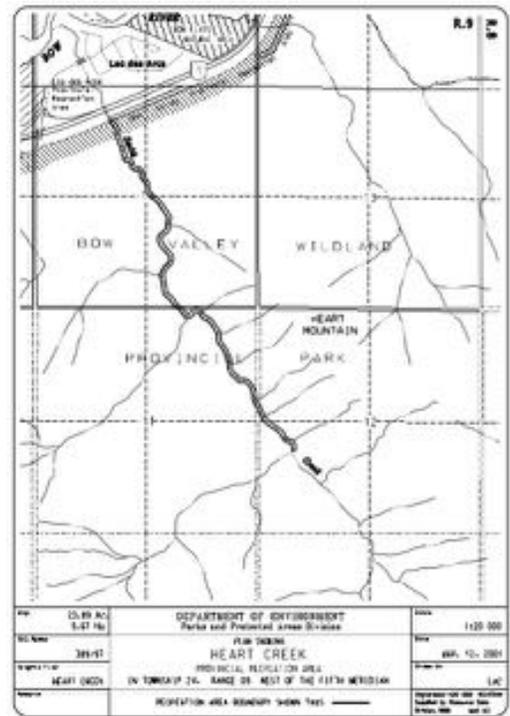
*“Recreation areas are established, and are to be maintained, to facilitate their use and enjoyment for outdoor recreation by present and future generations.”*

You can't ensure enjoyment by future generations without protection of what is there today, so preservation is important, too. For instance, Heart Creek PRA is occasionally closed to let bears "do their thing" in the canyon, even though you might want to go climbing. PRA's are proof that managing Parks is sometimes a balancing act.

As another example, just because a PRA is there for your recreational pleasure doesn't mean you can build stuff willy-nilly;

Section 9 of the Provincial Parks Act specifically prohibits the building of structures or improvements. You can't store stuff, either, so in Heart Creek, creating a climbing equipment cache is not permitted. It's a protected space, so harming trees, wildlife, archaeological artefacts, fossils or pretty much anything else isn't allowed either. It's a park and a protected space despite being there for your recreation. Part of the reason PRAs are generally small is to minimize the footprint created by recreational use.

And Heart Creek PRA is a LOT smaller than you think it is. It's only 9.7 Ha, or just under 24 acres. As you can see on [this map](#) (at right), the official PRA is just a **strip 100 feet wide** running about 2.7 km up the centre of Heart Creek valley starting at the edge of the Trans Canada Highway. The PRA doesn't include the official parking lot or the trail over to the PRA from the lot; they are both in Bow Valley Wildland Park, which surrounds the PRA. The parking lot is a designated Day Use Area in the Wildland Park.



Heart Creek PRA itself was created in 1997 by an Order in Council called “*The Kananaskis Country Provincial Recreation Areas Order (O.C. 389/97)*”, along with **91 (!)** other PRAs such as Highwood Junction, the original Evan Thomas, Elbow Launch and the Waiparous Group Camp. You can see the Gazetted version of the O.C. [here](#); Heart Creek was PRA #33 in the list. It's an impressively long list, giving me lots to write about...



The primary reason to make Heart Creek a PRA was the rock climbing activity, but also because an interpretive trail leading to the waterfall had been built in the 1970's. The 7 original bridges crossing the creek were installed in 1982. Rock climbing areas in the canyon include creatively named sections like The Bayou, First Rock, Waterfall Wall, Bunny Hill, Jupiter Rock and Blackheart. The guide sheets I have to the canyon's rock climbs show 103 individual climbs rated from 5.4 to 5.12d. It's also a popular spot for ice climbers.

The Heart Creek trail used to be a quiet, cool, green oasis. To quote Gilleen Daffern's 1994 edition of the book “*Canmore and Kananaskis Country: Short Walks for Enquiring Minds*”, Heart

Creek was:

*“...an easy walk through a lushly vegetated canyon with some unusual plants.”*

The flood of 2013 changed all that. As you can read [here](#), the flood cleared the canyon wall-to-wall, re-directed the creek making some climbing routes much harder to access. All 7 bridges were washed away, and the “lushly vegetated canyon” was no more. Restoration of this trail was a major effort by Alberta Parks and The Friends in 2013. Six of the seven bridges were dug out of the flood debris and reused. The trail got a new start near the highway, and was almost completely re-routed in the canyon. It has not yet returned to it's pre-flood green-ness, but it remains a cool place on a hot summer day.



As part of the 10-year project between the Friends and Parks, the interpretive signage along the trail is being re-invigorated. In the early summer of 2016, a series of new signs will be installed which will look at the 2013 Flood's impact on the environment, the wildlife and the people of the area.

You can only have a fire in a PRA (or any Park) in a fire pit or facility (like a BBQ grill) provided by Parks. There are none of these in Heart Creek PRA, so fires are not allowed. There are no BBQ grills in the official parking lot, either, so at Heart Creek, fires are not permitted.

Many people visiting Heart Creek park in the ditch along side the Trans Canada; technically, that's illegal, as it is parking without an emergency, on the side of a limited access highway, on Alberta Transportation land. Guardrails were installed a few years back to discourage the practice, but that didn't have much success. Soon, parking on the highway may not even be possible, as plans are moving forward to build flood management structures on the roadside both east and west of the creek on the south side of the highway.

Neither bikes nor horses are allowed on the trail, though I can't imagine why you would want to use either in this PRA.

### **Heart Creek Provincial Recreation Area:**

**Camping:** Not permitted.

**Fires:** Not permitted.

**Hiking:** One trail.

**Mountain biking:** Not permitted.

**Horseback Riding:** Not permitted

**Hunting:** Not permitted.

**Services:** None



## Witch's Broom

by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

I've been running articles over the last few years about "stuff" in Kananaskis, including critters and flowers and special places. I was out wandering recently and having a discussion with my trail mates about Witch's Broom, and just couldn't figure out what series to put it in, so just decided to make it stand-alone.

You've seen Witch's Broom in your walks, but most people have no idea what it is, or why it is there, and they often just call it a bird or squirrel nest – and it could be. But where does it come from?

A Witch's Broom is a mass of live tree growth, and several things can cause it. The most common cause around these parts is "broom rust", but brooms can also result from fungi, moulds, insects, mites, viruses or even some plants. All of these things can intentionally or unintentionally introduce **cytokinin**, a plant hormone that interferes with the other hormones that regulate plant growth. Once the cytokinin gets inside the tree, a small bit of the tree grows almost uncontrollably in a mass of sticks, needles and twigs all coming from a single point on the tree. This creates what looks like a nest or the switch from an old stick broom, hence the name.





Witch's Brooms look dead in the winter, then come alive in May or June in a burst of colour (usually yellow or orange) that are spores full of cytokinins. The small one to the left (with my glove for scale) is just starting to colour up. These blow around in the wind to potentially infect other trees (and probably make people sneeze, too). Spruce trees are the most commonly affected in Kananaskis, but firs – especially sub-alpine – can be hit as well, as can most

any other woody tree. The brooms don't appear to adversely affect the tree, and trees can have more than one broom.

Brooms range in size from 1 foot across to much, much bigger. Within 10 min walking distance of my house, in Bow Valley Wildland Park, there are almost 50 brooms. There are trees with brooms upward of 2 meters in size. The tree to the right has 11 brooms in it, all highlighted in red in the photo.



The brooms themselves are actually ecologically important here. Some insects such as moths or spiders uses them as nests, and some critters nest in them as well; northern flying squirrels often hollow out ones high up in trees to use as nests. Some plant fanatics around the world have used Witch's Brooms to deliberately infect trees to make dwarf cultivars. Brooms are commercially less desirable in tropical climates in cacao trees, where their presence reduces the yield of the beans to make chocolate.



### **Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed**

We are pleased to recognize the contributions of the [Calgary Foundation](#), [TransAlta](#), [Banff Canmore Community Foundation](#), [Patagonia Elements](#), [Husky Energy](#), and the many individual donors who support our work.

There are many ways to express your gratitude for Kananaskis Country and we are always grateful for contributions that help us maintain our programs, operations and restore flood damaged trails. Friends of Kananaskis Country is a registered charity in good standing and we provide charitable receipts for donations over \$25.00. You can reach us directly by mail at the address below, through the [donations link on our website](#), through [ATB Cares](#), or [CanadaHelps](#). Thank you for your support!

Friends of Kananaskis Country  
201-800 Railway Avenue  
Canmore, AB T1W 1P1  
403-678-5593

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