

Summer biking and hiking are now in full force. Come to TrailsFest and help us celebrate!



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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TRAILS FEST - June 11 - Kananaskis Village



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.

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 (interpretive hikes, mountain biking, orienteering, bear spray demonstration and more...)

For more information and to sign up for a free activity: www.kananaskis.org/trails-fest

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

Trail Care Update

Our first project – the Highway 40 Clean-Up – was a success. We had to re-schedule from May 7 to May 14th (because of the Fort McMurray wildfire), but our crew was out and working hard on Saturday, May 14th. Many thanks to all who offered their support; on both days, we had more folks put their hands up than we needed. We cleaned 22 kms of highway from the Trans Canada along Highway 40 into Kananaskis Country and earned ourselves \$1,000 from Alberta Transportation for our endeavours. It truly was and is a win-win situation. Just as an aside and further to highway clean-up, we are considering extending next years clean-up further along Highway 40, past the Kananaskis Village turnoff.

Upcoming Trail Care Projects

We expect to have more dates confirmed soon.

June 18 & 22: Prairie Creek Trail
July 15,16,17: Volcano Creek Multi
Day Camping/Trail Building Weekend

To sign up: Click [HERE](#)



Canmore Trail Alliance Launched

We are pleased to share that the Friends of Kananaskis Country have launched the [Canmore Trail Alliance](#) (CTA)!



CTA is coordinated through the Friends of Kananaskis Country, and partners with Alberta Parks, the Town of Canmore, as well as recreational groups, clubs & businesses and the community at large to help with building, maintaining, and planning Canmore area trails.

What makes this program different from our greater Kananaskis Trail Care program is it's focus on the Canmore Area - trails and community. The CTA's role includes:

- Identify trail projects that require volunteer work
- Provide trained crew leaders to lead volunteer crews
- Help develop and advance trail initiatives that enhance Canmore area trails
- Provide trail updates and education
- Encourage participation
- Promote collaboration and inclusion
- Represent Canmore trail users

Trail days will be held Thursday evenings from 6-9pm and every/or alternative Saturday mornings from 9am-12pm. To date, we have trail days scheduled for June at the Canmore Nordic Centre, but there are also projects coming up in other parts of Canmore. Dates and project details are posted on the CTA website www.canmoretrailalliance.com and facebook page www.facebook.com/canmoretrailalliance/events.



Bears can be large by May. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

News from the Board

By Jamie McPhail, Board Member

**AGM
2016**

Our 2016 AGM will be held June 25 at the Canmore Nordic Centre in the Day Lodge, from 10:00 – 11:00 am. The AGM is open to our membership and the public.



The Elements of Kananaskis: Kananaskis Country Public Land Use Zone

5th 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.

I started this series back in September 2015 with Ecological Reserves, and have now covered all the different kinds of Parks in Kananaskis Country. To refresh your memory, they are:

- Provincial Parks
- Wildland Provincial Parks
- Provincial Recreation Areas

But Kananaskis Country is more than just parks and protected areas. It also includes Crown Land, also known as Provincial Land or Public Land. In order to manage this land, it tends to be sorted into different zones called Public Land Use Zones or PLUZs – though Public Land doesn't have to be in a zone. Throughout the province, there is a substantial amount of public land. To best manage K-Country's public land, almost all of it is sorted into various zones, and each of these zones has its own management framework.

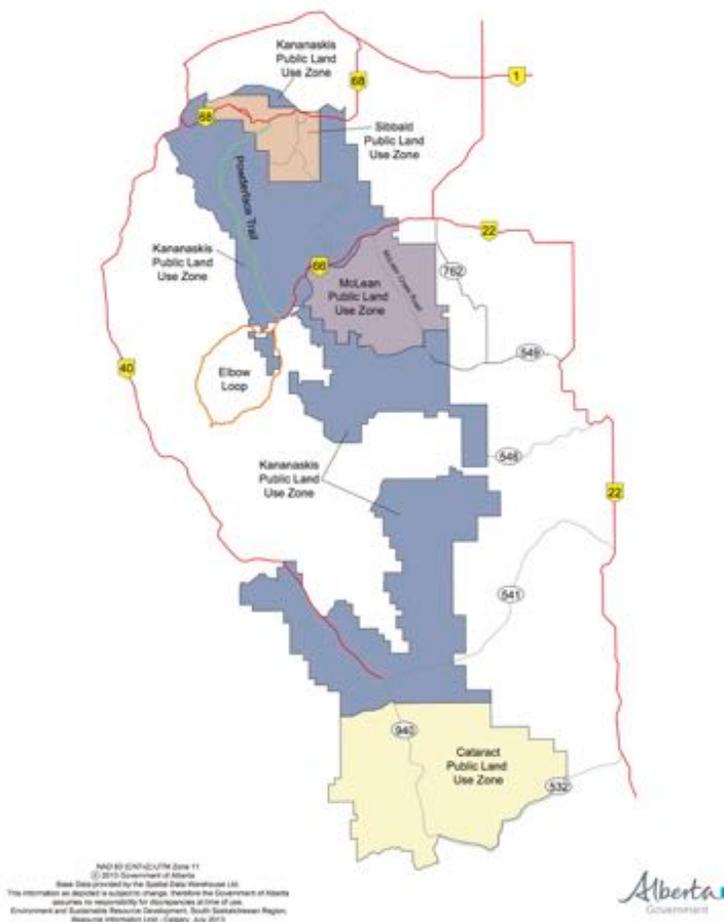
One of the largest of these zones is the confusingly named Kananaskis Country Public Land Use Zone, which I shorten to the **KC-PLUZ**. I find it confusing because it's only some of the land in Kananaskis Country, not all of it, but they don't ask me when they name things. There was a time

that this space was called the Forest Land Use Zone, but the name was changed several years ago. There are 4 PLUZs in K-Country, but in this article, I'm only going to focus on the KC-PLUZ.

Covering over 12,000 square kilometers, the KC-PLUZ consists of two large, and two small, disconnected tracts of land on the eastern side of Kananaskis Country proper; it is highlighted in Purple on the [map to the right](#). The PLUZ covers basically all of the land east of the designated Parks to the eastern boundary of K-Country. It has two major cut-outs; two other PLUZ's – Sibbald and McLean, which have their own management plans. In all of these spaces, any designated Recreation Area or Park is excluded from the PLUZ, and there are a lot of those exclusion zones, though they are mostly small.

The first tract of the KC-PLUZ starts up in the north at the K-Country boundary with the Stony Reserve around Hwy 68, and runs eastward to the eastern boundary of K-Country by Bragg Creek. It follows the eastern boundary of K-Country to Hwy 546 surrounding the east and north sides of the Sheep and Bluerock Parks, covers all the land east of a portion of Don Getty Wildland Park, then butts up against the east boundary of the Elbow Sheep Wildland parks. The first small tract is the extreme northern bit of the KC-PLUZ, north of the Sibbald PLUZ.

Kananaskis Country Public Land Use Zones



The second large tract does the same in the south, covering all of the eastern part of K-Country that is not a Park, plus abutting the southern end of Peter Lougheed, the east side of Elbow Sheep and Don Getty, and the north side of the Cataract Creek PLUZ. The split from the northern KC-PLUZ tract is created by two Parks (Sheep and Bluerock Wildland) that make up the Sandy McNabb area. The photo at left is the awesome Allsmoke Canyon past the Hogs Back south of the MacLean Creek Area

accessed from the Threepoint Creek trail.

The final tract is much smaller, consisting of a little blob of land between two bits of Don Getty Wildland Park south of Little Elbow Campground.

So all of this land is Public land, and NOT a Park. This PLUZ was established in 1979 along with the Sibbald, McLean and Cataract PLUZs to split motorized and non-motorized recreational activity.

Because a PLUZ is not a Park, the Parks Act does not apply. Rather, it is managed under the Public Lands Act, primarily by the [Public Lands Administration Regulation](#) (the "PLAR").

On public land, you can pretty much walk anywhere, ski anywhere, camp anywhere (*so long as you are more than more than 1 km from a road -- see below*), and hang out to your hearts content for up to 14 days -- unless you can't due to a closure or because it has been prohibited for any reason. It is Public Land for use by the public, but that doesn't mean you can trespass (if "No Trespassing" signs are up) or go under closure tape.

Being Public land, the Minister can grant all sorts of dispositions on it. He can let cattle or other animals run on it for grazing purposes (except bison – you can't run bison in K-Country. *That's a cow blocking my way on the North Fork trail in the photo*), he can permit trapping on it, he can permit mineral extraction and grant mineral surface leases (including oil and gas), he can sell the land, he can allow logging to occur, he can grant licenses to commercial operators to do trail riding, he can allow pipelines, he can allow cultivation – and almost all of these take place in KC-PLUZ. As one example, in March 2015, Spray Lakes Sawmills renewed a disposition they have had for ~60 years, through a Forest Management Agreement signed with the Minister, for the right to harvest timber in the PLUZ – though it's worth noting that much of the timber in the PLUZ can't be harvested for a variety of reasons, such as topography. There's oil and gas production and pipelines in a number of areas in the KC-PLUZ, too.



If you can get a disposition for "X", it would make sense that you can't do "X" without a disposition. So you can't take trees or gravel or rocks or any other resource off of Public Land, because the Minister hasn't granted you the disposition to do so. That's why you need a tree cutting permit to get your Christmas tree out of Sibbald every year, and why there's a designated space for you to do that. You can't collect fossils, either, nor take away any other resource of value (such as harvesting mushrooms or collecting deer antlers) without Ministerial permission.

Schedule 4 of the PLAR specifically covers the KC-PLUZ. That schedule has the following principal guidelines, based on why it was created:

- You can't use an off-highway vehicle in the KC-PLUZ (unless it's associated with a permitted activity);

- You can't camp or have a fire within 1 km of a recreation area or road.

Now, you ARE permitted to drive a snowmobile from the Sibbald area down the Powderface Trail and around the Elbow Loop from January 1 to March 15 each year. This permitted route crosses from the Sibbald PLUZ into the KC-PLUZ, and into Don Getty & Elbow-Sheep Parks.

There are all sorts of regulations governing commercial trail riding defined by the PLAR, and there are several commercial enterprises that use the southern and central portions of KC-PLUZ for trail riding.

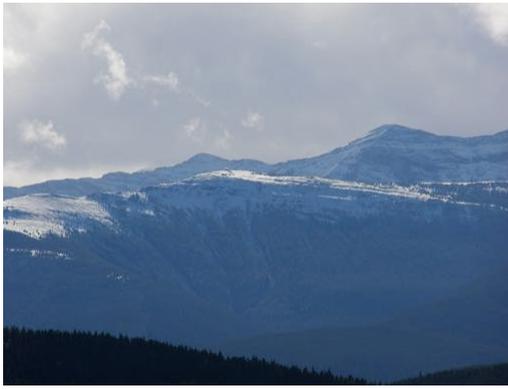
And what becomes interesting to The Friends in this space is trails. The trails in the KC-PLUZ are managed by the trail crews from Environment and Parks Lands Operations -- except that there are **no** Environment and Parks Land Operations trail crews other than those for flood restoration work, and that program ends this year. As a result, except for just a few notable "official" trails that are maintained with the assistance of Alberta Parks Trail staff, most everywhere you wander in the KC-PLUZ (especially the further south you go) is not maintained if it is official, or just not official so not maintained either. In the photo above right, there are no designated nor maintained trails from the 2nd valley north to the horizon.



Our friends at the Greater Bragg Creek Trails Association solved this problem for the KC-PLUZ area around Bragg Creek by building partnerships with Environment and Parks and other land users, obtaining a land use agreement on the Public lands, and designing, developing and building a trail system in that space -- because in essence, no one else could or would do it.

Aside from the GBCTA space, here's the groups of "effectively official" trails in the KC-PLUZ that are maintained:

- A number of trails in the Sibbald area. Most of these are maintained by Parks, including Tom Snow, Cox Hill, and Lusk Pass;
- The Powderface Ridge area, including Jumpingpound Ridge & Summit, Powderface Ridge, Ford Creek, Powderface Creek and Prairie Creek. E&P is also supported by Parks for many of these;
- The Quirk Valley area, including Wildhorse, Threepoint Creek, Volcano Ridge, Link Creek and Gorge Link;
- The Mesa Butte area, including North Fork, Ware Creek, 9999 & Death Valley



The Management Plan for the Sheep states that the Junction Mountain Fire Lookout access road will be maintained by Alberta Transportation, but the other routes to the lookout from the east will not be (*you can just make out the fire lookout in the photograph to the left*). A part of the Baldy Pass trail is in the KC-PLUZ space but carved out as it's own Provincial Recreation Area; the KC-PLUZ has lots of these little PRA carve outs like that.

The Friends and Environment and Parks were in conversations 2 years ago about assisting with trail maintenance in some of these areas (even the “official” ones) but we’re not there yet.

There are two designated "Recreation Trails" in the KC-PLUZ: the “Ford Creek-Jumpingpound Forest Recreation Trail” (*it's somewhere down in the valley in the photo*) and the “Little Elbow Loop Public Land Recreation Trail” (the latter being in several Parks as well as the KC-PLUZ). The fact that "Recreation Trails" are defined under the PLAR and designated doesn't appear to mean that much, other than that they are maintained, though the PLAR says you can't discharge a firearm on these trails. Interestingly, the trails themselves aren't designated, but the numerous quarter sections of land around them are (*the Ford Creek-Jumpingpound one includes Section 19-21-6W5, for instance*).



South of the Sheep and wrapping all the way around through the Highwood area up to the south end of Peter Lougheed, there are essentially **no** maintained trails in the KC-PLUZ. This includes "popular" unofficial routes like Loomis Lake, Odlum Creek, McPhail Creek, Carnarvon Lake, the Strawberry Hills, the Coyote Hills, the Cat Creek Hills, Grass Pass, Gunnery Creek, the Bull Creek Hills, Flat Creek, Sullivan Pass, Phone Line and Wolf Creek -- all unofficial, none maintained. The latter two were maintained and official but so underused they were dropped in 2008. So these may be better known but "occasionally used" is a better description than "popular".

So if you want “wilderness”, the KC-PLUZ is it, especially the southern half -- like the entire right side of the photo on the right. The majority of recreational use in the southern half is hunting, though there's plenty of hunting in the northern section, too. There are spaces (like south of the Sheep River trail and west of Highway 40) that are virtual “No Man's Lands” with almost no access and nothing but a whole lotta trees.



Random camping is not just permitted, it's about the only way to camp in the space because there is exactly ONE designated backcountry campground in the whole 12,000 square kilometer KC-



PLUZ: Wildhorse, in the Quirk Creek Valley (*it's in the forest on the left in the photo*). A backcountry campground in the Wolf Creek area was so underutilized it was closed in 2008. Just as in Wildland Parks, deadfall can be burned in random campsites, but live trees cannot be cut, nor can standing dead be used.

In a PLUZ -- in fact, in most of K-Country -- horses are only allowed on designated equestrian trails, you can find them by going to [this link](#) and filtering on the word "horse". You'll get a listing of every designated equestrian trail in K-Country, though not sorted by land base. In the KC-PLUZ, there are a lot of equestrian trails, mostly concentrated in the space between the Elbow & Sheep south of McLean Creek OHV zone, plus off the Powderface trail. Here's the list (I think; I may have missed one or two):

Eagle Hill, Deer Ridge, Quaitte Valley, Ford Creek, Ford Knoll, Powderface Creek, Powderface Ridge, Prairie Creek, Prairie Link, Sulphur Springs, Threepoint Creek, Trail Creek, Wildhorse, Death Valley, Gorge Creek, Gorge-Ware Connector, Green Mountain, 4 Volcano area trails (South, Link, Ridge & Creek) and many of the West Bragg trails

The commercial outfitters have permitted trails listed in their dispositions, so that list gets longer still.

As noted, hunting is quite popular throughout the KC-PLUZ. Trapping takes place in the KC-PLUZ; at least 11 Registered Fur Management Areas exist in the KC-PLUZ. Interestingly, dogs do not have to be on a leash in the KC-PLUZ, but they have to be leashed in any designated recreation area within a PLUZ. However, dog owners are *always* responsible for their dogs, so they always need to be under control and it is highly recommended, for the sake of the animal, the owner, large carnivores and nesting birds that they be kept on leash.

Kananaskis Country Public Land Use Zone:

Camping: Random camping permitted more than 1 km from a road or designated Recreation Area; 1 backcountry campground.

Fires: Permitted more than 1 km from a road or designated Recreation Area.

Hiking: +20 designated trails, plus the numerous West Bragg trails.

Mountain biking: Permitted.

Horseback Riding: Permitted

Hunting: Allowed.

Services: None



The Critters of Kananaskis: Least Chipmunk

16th in a series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

Kananaskis Country is home to a wide variety of creatures, great and small. Big ones, like bears and elk, get a lot of attention. In this series, I'm going to look at some of the ones we pay less attention to.

Back in the [August 2015 newsletter](#), I wrote about Golden Mantled ground squirrels, and how they are often mistaken for Chipmunks. The dead giveaway is the stripe on the face – stripes run through the eye in a Chipmunk. So it's easy to tell them apart.



But there are two Chipmunks in K-Country, the Least and the Yellow Pine, and they are virtually identical; it takes smarter people than me to tell them apart. Yellow Pine's are about 10% bigger, are more yellow and less grey (*you can see grey tinges in some of these photos, but not in others*), and also have brighter colours, but that's none of that is too helpful when they're not side-by-side. They like slightly different habitats; in most of K-Country, Yellow Pines are usually at lower elevations in dry pine forests, while Least's prefer moister forests closer to treeline, but that swaps the farther north you go. So I just generally assume that all the chipmunks I see are Least's. I don't think they care.



I have been a fan of chipmunks since I was a little kid in Ontario and they were bold enough to sit beside you and eat peanuts. Since peanuts are not native here, you'll find them eating seeds, especially anything coming from a fruit or berry. They gather these and store them, though not for hibernation, but as a reliable food source for when they wake up after hibernation. When Chipmunks find food, they stuff their cheek pouches full of it, and carry it home or to a storage place. They often build several small

food storage caches in their territory.

“Home” to a Chipmunk is usually a burrow, the bottom of which has a huge seed pile, and the top is just a little grassy nest. The main chamber is often 15 cm across, and will have a couple of tunnels that radiate outwards up to 1.5 m. Entrances are concealed under logs or rocks, and in all of my years of Chipmunk watching, I've never been able to find an actual entrance. They are ground dwellers, not really big tree climbers, but do build temporary nests in trees, especially woodpecker holes.



They sort-of hibernate, going into a state of torpor with a body temperature of 5° C, and the outside air temperature controls at what interval they wake up, snacking on stored food if they do.



Very similar to ground squirrels, they mate immediately after awaking from hibernation, with 3-7 pups born in mid-May, appearing fully weaned in early July. They only live about 5 years, and don't start breeding until the 2nd year.

They are predated by anything on 4 legs and lots of different birds, too, and stay alive by being fast and agile. Interestingly, their squeaks include frequencies we can't hear but dogs can. I have seen chipmunks face off

against dogs, but generally, they just race away from anything they see, including red squirrels.



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!

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