



Alberta Hiking Association

9220 62 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6B 1P2

January 30, 2009

The Hon. Cindy Ady
Minister
Office of the Minister
Tourism, Parks and Recreation
229 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Ady:

We were recently sent an electronic copy of the report on the park users survey done for your ministry by the Praxis Group. The report is dated September 25, 2008, which leads us to believe the data in the report was available to the ministry at the time the parks planning document was being revised.

We are deeply concerned by the implications of a major inconsistency between the data in the survey and the statements and priorities in the document *Draft #2: Alberta's Plan for Parks*. The survey shows quite conclusively that Albertans on the whole want less OHV use in provincial parks and protected areas, whereas the *Plan for Parks* states (on page 8), "In addition to an increase in population, the kinds of park experiences visitors seek are changing. For example, Albertans tell us they need campgrounds that accommodate large trailers, facilities that minimize physical, social and financial barriers to participation and **access to designated trails for off-highway vehicles.**" (Emphasis added.)

There were two surveys: one a telephone survey of a sample of the general population, and the other a survey of parks users. Both surveys asked what areas respondents wanted to see reduced, unchanged, or increased investment of resources. On both surveys, "Trails and infrastructure to support increased levels of off road vehicle use" and "Land and facilities devoted to motorized recreational use such as off road vehicles" were the most popular areas for *decreased* resources

by a considerable margin. Easily twice as many respondents wanted reductions in resources for motorized off-road parks use compared to any other resource use. (This information is in figures on pages 20 and 43 of the survey report.)

Please explain to us why the plan for parks would so clearly contradict the survey results that must be representative of the views of the majority of Albertans.

The Alberta Hiking Association is an umbrella organization of Alberta clubs that organize walking, hiking and backpacking trips for their members. There are currently 20 organizations from around the province who are members, although we are still in the early stages of organizing. We believe we also represent the interests of hikers who are not members of clubs. Walking and hiking are by far the most common outdoor recreational activities of Albertans.

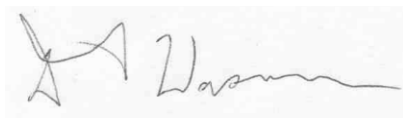
We strongly support the results of the survey report in favouring banning motorized traffic from trails in Alberta's parks and protected areas. Any trail regularly used by motorized traffic is no longer usable by self-propelled Albertans. Motorized off-highway vehicles are also highly damaging to the environment, not only because of physical damage to soils and vegetation, but also because of localized pollution and disturbances to wildlife due to noise and disruption of wildlife movement.

We greatly fear the plan for parks as currently drafted is laying the groundwork for increased OHV intrusion in parks and protected areas, against the interests and desires of the vast majority of Albertans.

We await your explanation of the discrepancy between the report and the plan, and hope the planning document will be revised to reflect the need to keep motorized traffic off trails in provincial parks and protected areas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Wasserman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "W".

David Wasserman, Interim Chair
On behalf of the Alberta Hiking Association

cc: The Hon. Ed Stelmach, Premier
David Swann, MLA
Brian Mason, MLA