



Dear Premier Notley,
Dear Minister Phillips,
Dear Alberta Environment & Parks,

As businesses, sportsmen, and outdoor enthusiasts that depend on the protection and sound management of parks and public land, we support Alberta's proposal for Bighorn Country. Your proposal uses sound science and local input to balance conservation, preservation, and sustainable recreation. We believe it is in the interest of all Albertans and Canadians to protect the region's water, wildlife, and recreation for future generations.

As a vast and relatively intact wilderness, the Bighorn region presents a significant conservation opportunity. Its protection would secure vital habitat for Alberta's vulnerable and iconic wildlife, such as grizzly bear, wolverine, and bull trout, by helping them adapt to a changing climate by improving north-to-south connectivity along the Alberta Rockies. Protecting the Bighorn region also means preserving the North Saskatchewan's headwaters, and ensures clean and abundant drinking water flows for both the one million people downstream and the necessary irrigation for the region's agriculture, a goal many Canadians support and have been working toward for decades. Additionally, Bighorn Country provides an opportunity to increase Alberta's protected land to more than 15 percent, as the country advances towards Canada's Target 1 commitment to protect 17 percent of its lands by 2020. Parks and protected areas are a vital piece of Canada's national heritage as destinations for solitude, exploration and outdoor recreation.

Framed by the awe-inspiring Canadian Rockies, the landscapes of the Bighorn are worth far more than the natural resources that lie beneath them. Safeguarding these lands from continued industrial pressures coupled with improved management of its recreation opportunities would bolster its thriving outdoor tourism and recreation economy. Protecting public lands is a sustainable investment in our economic future. Non-motorized recreation in Alberta results in approximately \$5.49 billion in GDP (1.7 percent of provincial GDP), including \$3.37 billion in labor income and the equivalent of 77,430 jobs¹. Recent studies by *Headwaters Economics* in the Western United States found that rural counties with 30 percent of their land protected, experienced a 345 percent increase in economic growth between 1970 and 2010. By comparison, counties that have less than ten percent of their lands protected, experienced 90 percent growth during the same period². The enhanced protections afforded by the proposed Bighorn Country represent an opportunity for people to both improve physical and mental health and fuel a more diversified economy across the region.

Adopting your proposal ensures current and future generations of all species have an opportunity to experience the wildness of Alberta's natural places. We are united with Albertans and Canadians across the country and of every political stripe in supporting Bighorn Country and applaud your government's recognition of the environmental, social and economic value of conservation.

Sincerely,

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¹ <https://www.outdoorcouncil.ca/resources/Documents/Economic%20Impact%20of%20Non-Motorized%20Outdoor%20Rec.pdf>

² <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands/>