



April 2017

**Castle Park Management Plan
OHV Trail Input**

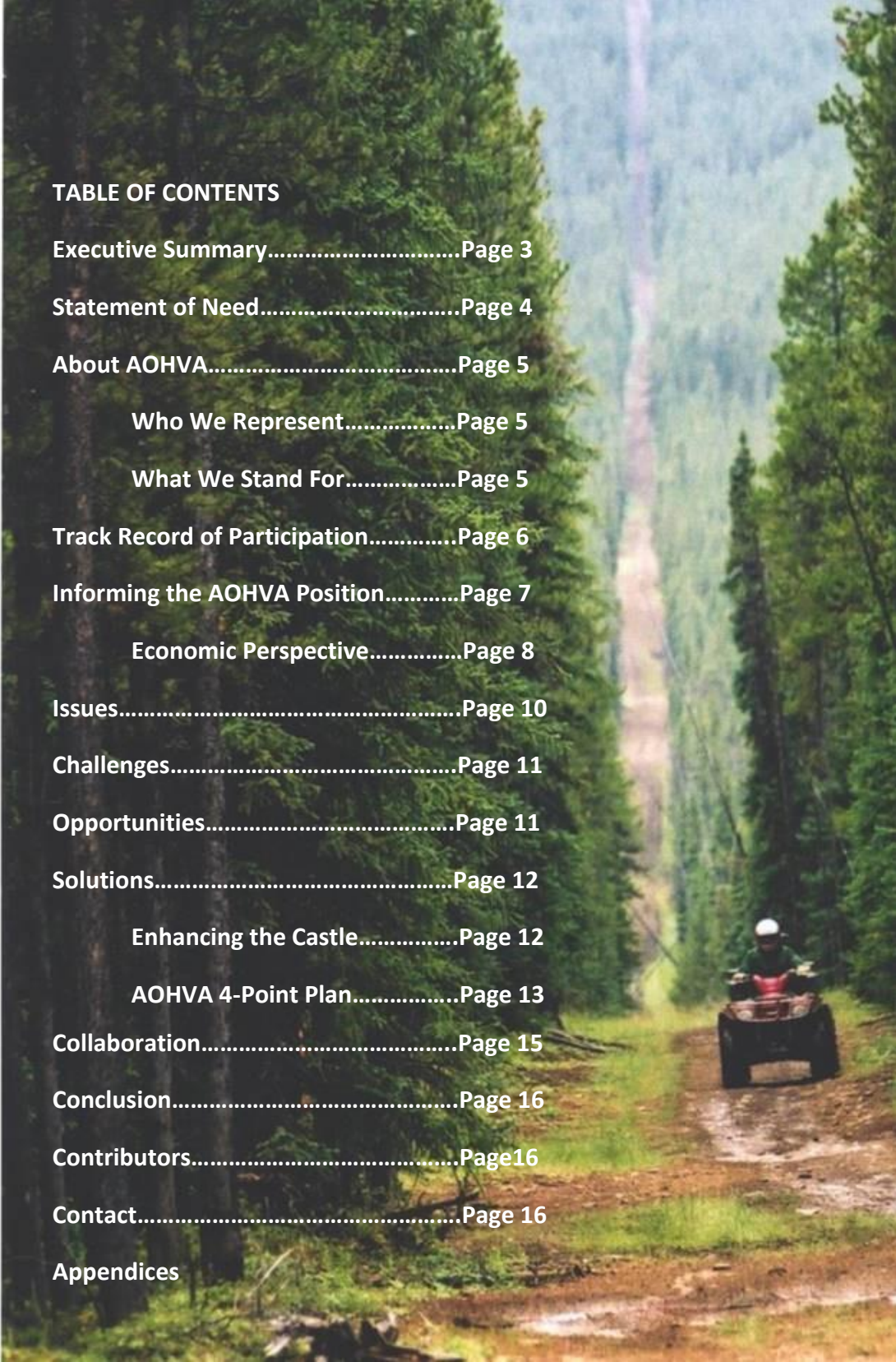
A photograph of a person riding a quad bike on a dirt trail through a forest. The trail is muddy and the rider is wearing a helmet and a green shirt. The background shows a dense forest of tall evergreen trees.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Alberta is currently enacting the biggest change to land use in the province in 30 years. With that in mind, the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) welcomes and appreciates the opportunity to provide the government with some important insight and information. It is our hope that AOHVA and the Government of Alberta, Environment and Parks will work together to establish a foundation from which to fortify Alberta's parks and public spaces, ensuring they are places all Albertans can enjoy.

AOHVA supports a shared solution, to the issues underpinning the Castle Management Plan, which strikes a balance between environmental stewardship and recreation opportunities.

We agree with Minister Phillips that “Healthy watersheds, responsible recreational activity and sustainable resource development, are not mutually exclusive.”

AOHVA supports the government's efforts and initiatives garnering public participation and consultation. Over the course of the past three months alone, we have reached out to tens of thousands of Albertans, advising them of the opportunities to engage in the public consultation process and encouraged them to participate by completing the Government of Alberta Survey on the Castle Park and Castle Wildlife Management Framework and by attending the public consultation sessions. Additionally, AOHVA Board members and those from our member clubs have actively participated in those sessions, and have completed the survey.

This is in addition to the countless consultations, meetings and working sessions AOHVA has attended over the years – offering our insights and recommendations to the government for initiatives including but not limited to: South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, Lower Athabasca, and North Saskatchewan Regional Plan in addition to Porcupine Hills and Livingstone areas.

Through this submission and thereafter, AOHVA seeks more meaningful opportunities to participate in the Land Use Framework and the Castle Park decisions, providing a unique perspective on OHV use on public land and reflecting a depth and breadth of experience unparalleled by any other group included in the array of participants.

Rather than simply install gates all across the Alberta landscape we look forward to working with our government to build a trail management legacy that all Albertans can be proud of.

AOHVA offers our 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use as a cornerstone of that legacy.

STATEMENT OF NEED

The Alberta Off-highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) welcomes the development of a Land Use Framework for the respectful enjoyment of Alberta's backcountry on the clear understanding that it is there to protect the environment and wilderness FOR the people and not to keep it FROM the people.

It is important to note that AOHVA supports a solution that strikes a balance between environmental stewardship and recreation opportunities.

We have worked with non-motorized and motorized groups and we have worked in collaboration with the Government for many years to ensure the tens of thousands of people who use OHVs have access to ride, fish, hunt and camp responsibly.

In every jurisdiction where OHV activities occur, it is groups like the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) who lead the way to promote safe, responsible and respectable vehicle use. AOHVA is as concerned as anyone about improper OHV use when it comes to the environment and peoples' safety. With that in mind, the AOHVA, in collaboration with other Albertans have repeatedly informed the provincial government of our interest to rapidly develop the framework for a user-funded, sustainable, environmentally responsible trail network; a system that could not only improve Alberta's environment but also act as a significant economic driver through increased tourism – a model proven successful in other provinces.



ALBERTA OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ASSOCIATION (AOHVA)

WHO WE REPRESENT

Our organization is comprised of a diverse group of people who care for and love the landscape.

AOHVA represents the interests of not only the estimated 165,000 users of off-highway vehicles but of the many associated family and friends who partake in related activities with OHVs being the central focus of recreational activities enjoyed by over 500, 000 Albertans.

We are learning from our members and OHV users across the province that one OHV often supports the recreation of five family members or more. It is well known that Rustic (Open / Random) Camping is closely tied to the OHV user outdoor experience and associated issues.

It is common to see groups of ten to twenty people camping together; perhaps some will go fishing, some will go hiking and some will ride OHVs, but it is the OHV that is central to the gathering.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

VISION:

The use of ATVs (all-terrain vehicles), ORMs (off-road motorcycles) and UTVs (side by sides) will grow significantly and individuals will continue to use OHVs in a responsible manner, environmentally friendly and respectful manner, on a wide array of public and private lands throughout Alberta.

MISSION:

The Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association is dedicated to providing safe individual and family motorized recreational opportunities in an environmentally responsible manner.

PRINCIPLES:

- Respect the environment and minimize impacts.
- Respect the rights of other users.
- Participate in the decisions that affect our access and use of public lands.
- Improve public understanding by addressing issues and concerns.
- Be responsible when riding by using designated trails and minimizing impact.
- Obey the rules and legislation.

VALUES:

- We value our privilege to ride on public lands.
- We value the natural and archaeological treasures that our great outdoors hold.
- We value nature and respect its diversity.
- We value clean air, water and land.
- We place a high value on the future use of trails for our children and other users

TRACK RECORD OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

AOHVA has been an active participant throughout the Land Use Framework and Regional Planning Processes.

- Lower Athabasca Regional Plan
- North Saskatchewan Regional Plan
- South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

In addition to attending meetings and public consultations, AOHVA has developed and provided documentation to the government for their review and consideration. Such documentation includes but is not limited to the following items; details of which have previously been formally submitted to Alberta Environment and Parks for consideration and response:

- Land Use Framework
- OHV Trail Management
- Rustic (Open / Random) Camping
- Public Consultation Observations

A detailed listing of the documents is included in Appendix 1: AOHVA Document Index.

INFORMING THE AOHVA POSITION

AOHVA is recognized for their depth and breadth of knowledge gained not only through the extensive participation in government-led land use planning initiatives but through years of first-hand experiences enjoying the backcountry and as stewards of the land.

AOHVA believes the vast majority of OHV riders consider it a privilege – not a right - to be able to ride their OHVs and enjoy Alberta's outdoors and natural landscape.

It's a privilege for ALL users: hikers, cyclists, skiers, snowmobilers, campers and OHV riders to access and enjoy our province's wide-open spaces. While the reputation of the tens of thousands of responsible OHV riders may at times be tainted by the reckless actions of a few, the reality is that OHV users love and do care for the landscape.



Over the past 30 years, responsible user groups, such as the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) and our members, invested millions of dollars and tens of thousands of volunteer hours to build trails for motorized recreation in Alberta. We have hauled material, built bridges and created a sustainable trail network to ensure that responsible trail users have a safe place to ride, hike, mountain bike and generally enjoy the wilderness of our great province.

Building upon this foundation of practical experience and insight, AOHVA endeavours to understand the impact and influence of economic and ecological perspectives on the important decisions made regarding OHV use in the Castle.

We offer the following for your consideration.

Economic Perspective

Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV)

A recent study conducted by Smith Gunther Associates Ltd for the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council evaluated the economic impacts of OHV use in Alberta. The study determined the total impacts of ATV and SxS activities to be in the range of domestic expenditures of \$1.6 billion to \$2.0 billion generating GDP of \$1.1 billion to \$1.3 billion.

Those are significant dollars flowing directly into Alberta communities, providing both local and provincial benefit.

The study further determined the size of Alberta ATV and SxS activities to be in the range of domestic expenditures of \$1.6 billion to \$2.0 billion generating GDP of \$1.1 billion to \$1.3 billion including labour force incomes of \$611 million to \$779 million. Tax revenues as a result of ATV and SxS expenditures yield \$289 million to \$347 million. Further, these activities and related expenditures generate fuller employment by 9,104 to 11,622 FTEs.

University of Alberta (U of A)

A study conducted by the University of Alberta, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, analyzed the economic expenditures of OHV users within the Crowsnest Pass area of SW Alberta.

Individuals were surveyed throughout the C5 Forestry Management Unit located in south-western Alberta, which includes:

- The Porcupine Hills
- The North C5 Forest Management Unit
- The Castle Special Management Area

The study found that:

- 11,000: A conservative estimate of the number of OHV trips made to this area from May-October 2014
- \$7.1 million: Estimated overall expenditures by OHV riders from May-September
- \$4.4 million: The estimated proportion of those expenditures spent in the local area

Alberta Committee for Eastern Slopes Stewardship

The Alberta Committee for Eastern Slopes Stewardship (ACCESS) is subcommittee of individuals from the following groups, representing passionate, responsible recreational users of Alberta's public Eastern Slopes.

- Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA)
- Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA)
- Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Alberta (RVDA)
- Individual Stakeholder Representatives and Contributors

Over 1,400 people responded to a survey conducted in March 2017 about Open Camping in the Castle area.

Based on these survey results, ACCESS determined that:

- The majority - 77 % - of those who open camp in the Castle area go as a group of 4 or fewer camping units.
- Campers spend an average of \$573 per camping unit per trip.
- 96% of respondents stated that they would stop coming to the Castle area or come much less frequently if Open Camping is not permitted in the park



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- *Based on the average amount spent per unit and the number of camping trips undertaken per year, campers spend over \$21 million each year camping in the Castle area.*
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ACCESS Survey findings are included in Appendix 2.

In addition to the studies and work referenced above, we understand new studies are being undertaken, investigating the socio-economic impact of OHV use to the local area.

ISSUES

As identified in previous participation efforts and in reviewing the Castle Provincial Park and Castle Wildland Provincial Park Draft Management Plan, we wish to draw your attention to ...

...a number of issues that require further investigation, evaluation and resolution by the government before sound decisions can be made and changes implemented.

1. Understanding the impacts of changes made to rustic (open / random) camping on public lands to OHV users and their families.
2. Understanding the impacts of changes made to the trail network to the larger family groups that accompany OHV riders to the backcountry.
3. Understanding how the Government of Alberta defines a linear disturbance.
4. Understanding the economic impacts in the area of changes made to trail access in the Castle.
 - a. What is the plan for businesses to recoup?
5. Understanding the ecological impacts of the future development described within the Castle area.
 - a. Concerns about water and infrastructure
 - b. Is there science that proves iconic tourist destination development is acceptable?
6. Understanding the underlying premise that the government is redefining what a recreational activity is, impacting who can enjoy public lands and how they may do so.
 - a. Redefining recreation as being non-motorized vs. access for all as intended in the national recreation statement.
 - b. Questioning the difference between snowmobile and OHV – as both are motorized

Additionally, through this submission, as on previous occasions, AOHVA respectfully requests access to the science used to make decisions about outdoor recreation in the Castle and across the province. This request, while made numerous times in writing, remains unanswered.

CHALLENGES

AOHVA, as a key stakeholder in the process and a willing partner in creating an effective solution, has identified a number of challenges that must be overcome to ensure success; including but not limited to:

1. The perception that all OHV users are damaging the environment
 - a. Fueled by misleading information and photographs that are not true representations of local activity.
2. Relationships between all stakeholder groups
 - a. Conflict between various user groups from fishing, hunting, grazing, equestrian, industry.
3. The reference and reverence to “the science”, without full disclosure of said science
4. The lack of investment for capital and operational projects over many years, with fees going into general revenues has created a tenuous situation today
5. Jurisdictional control is seemingly ineffective; there is confusion about who provides enforcement for what
6. Is there a political will to change how motorized OHV fees are collected and administered?



OPPORTUNITIES

It is our intent to establish a stronger working relationship with the Government of Alberta and the Ministry of Environment and Parks so that we can collectively work to protect and preserve Alberta’s outdoor spaces alongside the outdoor pursuits enjoyed by all Albertans.

Our proposed solution is comprehensive and actionable, inclusive and environmentally, socially, and financially responsible.

By incorporating best practices from across North America and by implementing innovative approaches to developing, managing and sustaining shared trail networks we can make Alberta the model for shared recreational trail development and management.

We have an opportunity to work together to create a Made-In-Alberta Solution.

SOLUTION:

Working Together to Preserve and Enhance the Castle

As an organization dedicated to finding the right balance between conservation and proper use of the outdoors, we know that some key parts of our province may require the reduction or removal of motorized recreation. We take issue with our government's plans to impose outright bans in certain areas though because it simply doesn't make sense.

In the Castle, for example, after committing to future motorized access the government now wants none. We believe that a proper balance in the Castle could be achieved; that a very fine trail network could be derived from what exists today. We are not only reasonable in our approach in terms of what we are prepared to compromise on, but we are prepared to demonstrate to all Albertans why our suggested approach is the right and fair thing to do.

At this juncture, it is important for everyone to fully understand the issues, the impacts and the options in providing outdoor recreation opportunities for all Albertans.

Concurrently, AOHVA and our members suggest taking an active role in:

- Assisting the government in identifying, evaluating and either closing or reclaiming and converting illegal trails to acceptable multi-use trails.
- Working together to return areas showing the effects of mismanagement to an acceptable condition.
- Continuing our work educating the OHV community about acceptable riding practices, rider safety and environmental consideration.

Preserving and Enhancing the Castle

	Requirements for successful implementation	GoA; AEP Recreational Trail Group	AOHVA Service Delivery Org.
1.	Define illegal trails	P	I
2.	Identify and inventory all trails and classifications	S	S
3.	Closing and reclamation of illegal trail areas	P	I
4.	Prioritize work required for remaining trails	S	S
5.	Project Completion	S	S
6.	Rider Education - Funding	S	S
7.	Rider Education - Implementation	S	S

Primary Responsibility – P

Input Required – I

Shared Responsibility – S

NOTE: AOHVA has prepared a Budget to address the proposed activity to preserve and enhance the Castle; available upon request for your consideration.

SOLUTION

AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use

Our proposed solution is comprehensive and actionable, inclusive and environmentally, socially, and financially responsible. By incorporating best practices from across North America and by implementing innovative approaches to developing, managing and sustaining shared trail networks we can make Alberta the model for shared recreational trail development and management; a model based upon the pillars of: Partnership, Funding, Enforcement, Sustainable Trails, and Education

We are committed to:

1. Working with the Government of Alberta, Land Use Framework staff and our own experts in designing and developing trails that are sustainable and environmentally-sound and repairing damaged trails. We support the establishment of a shared use park in the Castle region so let's get this right and move on to building proper trails for all Albertans to enjoy.



By incorporating best practices from across North America and by implementing innovative approaches to developing, managing and sustaining shared trail networks we can make Alberta the model for shared recreational trail development and management.

2. Dedicating 100% of an increase in OHV registration fees to tackling important issues like habitat protection and proper trail construction and maintenance in partnership with government under an accountable, transparent and arms-length management structure.

This approach to user fees will be a win-win for both AEP and AOHVA as it represents a collaborative approach to undertaking important work and shared responsibility, and importantly, there is minimal overlap.

AOHVA proposes an annual OHV user fee.

- The fees will be collected through the existing OHV registration process.
- For every OHV registration, AOHVA recommends that an open camping permit be included for a period of three years; on an annual basis.

Open Camping is closely tied to the OHV user outdoor experience and associated issues.

AOHVA recommends the following:

- An open camping permit will be required for all people that open camp in Alberta.
 - Registered OHV users will receive one open camping permit per OHV registered for an interim period.
 - Other recreational campers will be required to purchase an open camping permit.
 - Other recreational campers could follow a process similar to that currently in place for the WIN Cards; possibly through the same process and platform.
 - The annual fee for open camping will be determined by the Government of Alberta.
 - We envision a sticker that is applied to the window of a trailer, which stays with that unit for the year. Important data could be gathered through various registration means.
3. Giving law enforcement agencies the tools and mandate to fully enforce the law on anyone who violates the new trails management framework for the Castle and for other parts of Alberta as they are developed.

Law enforcement related initiatives could be funded by the existing \$54 OHV registration fees.

4. Building a better environmental and trail experience. Alberta can lead the way in OHV trail development by putting the onus on organizations like the AOHVA and its like-minded partners to be responsible for environmental stewardship as a means of eliminating improper use of the backcountry.

The delivery of education-related initiatives will be funded through the new OHV fees.

Such initiatives include:

- OHV user training
- Safety education
- Environmental education
- Member Club support



Our plan will work because it will be funded by OHV users not taxpayers; it will involve 100% participation by the users – and as such, they will be motivated to make it work.

NOTE: A Budget to address the AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use has been incorporated into the 2017 - 2021 AOHVA Business Plan. It is available upon request for your consideration.

COLLABORATION:

AOHVA has worked diligently and in collaboration with the government for the past 7 years to establish a dedicated and focused organization to ensure the appropriate development, enhancement and maintenance of user-funded, designated trails for all off-highway recreation enthusiasts in Alberta.

The collective representation, knowledge base and experiences of AOHVA and our members ensure a solid foundation from which to partake in important discussions, to inform important decisions and to collaborate on important initiatives.

We consider other key stakeholders such as the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Alberta and the Alberta Fish & Game Association to be our partners in seeking a solution to current issues related to OHV use on public lands. Additionally, our affiliation with numerous national and international organizations enable AOHVA to deliver highly-recognized safety and educational programs as well as trail development and management training.

Our understanding of and appreciation for the over-arching outdoor experience OHV users and their families seek in combination with our expertise in developing, managing and sustaining shared trail networks positions AOHVA as a strong partner for the government to deliver the most effective solution.

CONCLUSION

Delivering a Solution all Albertans can Support

AOHVA strongly believes that a successful solution is derived through mutual respect, trust, open discussion, and the input of diverse user groups who recognize that there can be environmentally responsible OHV use.

Rather than simply installing gates all across the Alberta landscape we look forward to working with our government to build a trail management legacy that all Albertans can be proud of.

AOHVA offers our 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use as a cornerstone of that legacy along with our desire and capabilities in being a strong partner for the government to deliver the best possible solution.

CONTRIBUTORS

Brent Hodgson - AOHVA President, Garry Salekin – AOHVA Treasurer, Kim Robicheau – AOHVA Office Administrator, Wayne Page, Pam Boytinck.

CONTACT

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APPENDIX 1

AOHVA Document Index

In addition to attending meetings and public consultations, AOHVA has developed and provided documentation to the government for their review and consideration. Such documentation includes but is not limited to the following items; details of which have previously been formally submitted to Alberta Environment and Parks for consideration and response:

LAND USE FRAMEWORK

- a. AOHVA - December 2016 – Linear Footprint Management Plan Clarification Questions
- b. AOHVA - January 2014 – Submission to Land Use Secretariat, SSRP
- c. AOHVA – November 2016 – Castle Park Management Plan OHV Trail Input, including Budget; document provided to Quad Squad for submission to the Castle advisory committee

OHV Trail MANAGEMENT

- a. AOHVA – September 2015 – Updated Establishment of a DAO for a Designated OHV Trail System, updated from 2010
- b. AOHVA – April 2014 – Trail – ESRD Approval Process (Trail Disposition for Recreation)

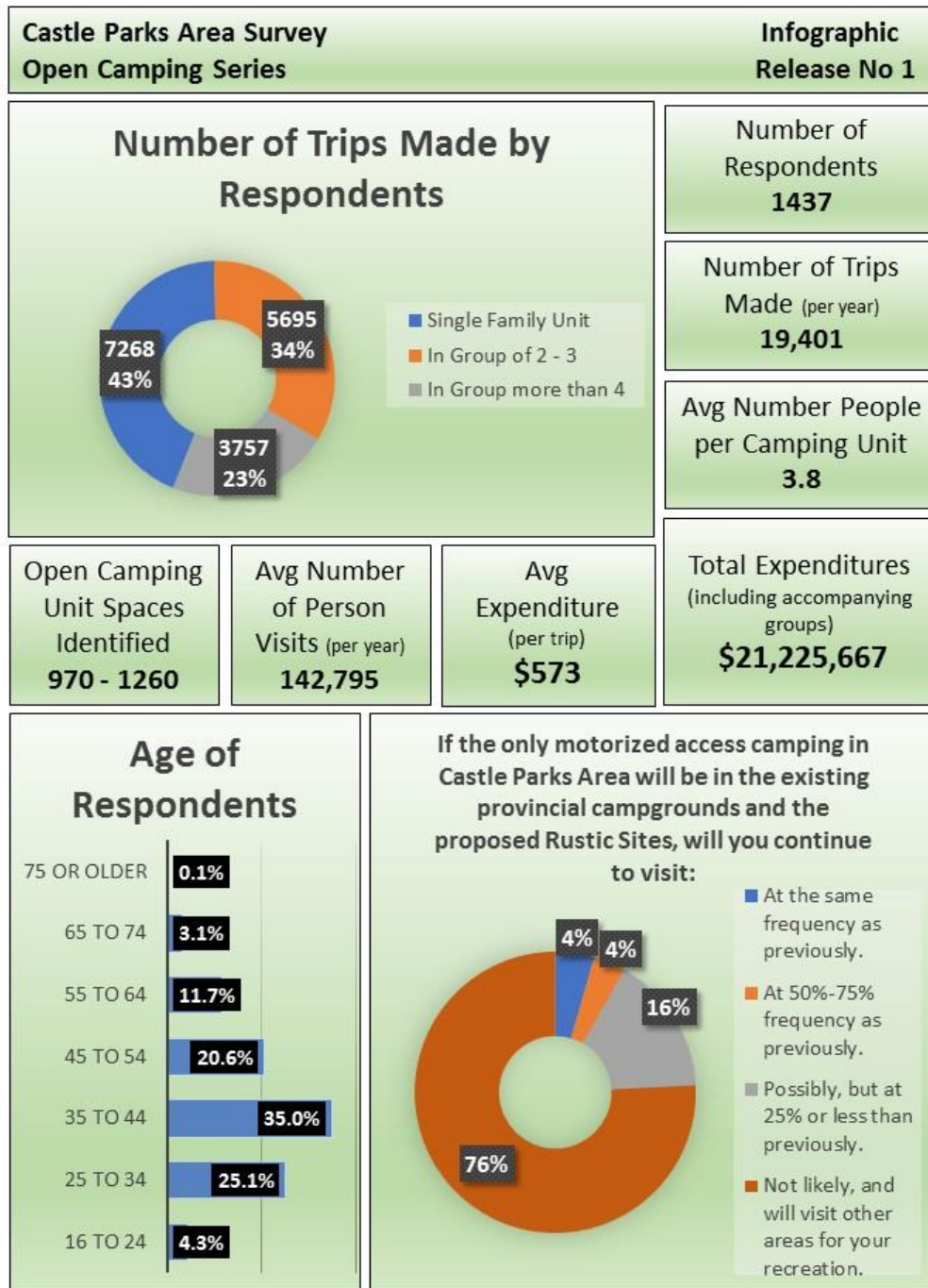
RUSTIC (OPEN / RANDOM) CAMPING

- a. AOHVA – September 2015 - Position On Open / Random camping
- b. AOHVA - January 2017 - Summary of Distribution

PUBLIC CONSULTATION OBSERVATIONS

- a. AOHVA – September 2016 - Observations on public participation process and collaboration approach that is currently being used in the Land Use Framework

APPENDIX 2



Alberta Committee for Eastern Slopes Stewardship (ACCESS)

Open Camping Survey – March 2017

APPENDIX 3

References

National, Provincial, and Territorial Economic Impacts of ATVs and Side-By-Sides 2015: Final Report. An independent economic impact study completed by Smith Gunther Associates Ltd., “The purpose of the study was to comprehensively determine the economic impact of not only the purchase of ATVs and ROVs but also related economic activities for Canada and each of its provinces and territories,”

<http://aohva.com/pdf/2016-launch-for-2015-Total-Economic-Impacts-of-ATVs-and-Side-Final-Report.pdf>

Prescott, S. (2017) *Analysis and Valuation of Off-Highway Vehicle use in Southwestern Alberta*. University of Alberta, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology