



January 15 2014

AOHVA - Submission to Land Use Secretariat  
South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

## 1.0 Background

The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Consultation Sessions took place in 21 communities with Stakeholder and Public participation.

The Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) takes this opportunity to thank the Land Use Secretariat with the opportunity to participate at the various sessions as a Stakeholder.

The AOHVA is the official voice for off-highway recreational organizations and their members across the Province of Alberta. These organizations represent all-terrain vehicles (ATV), off-road motorcycles (ORM often referred to as single track) and utility terrain vehicles (UTV or side by sides).

In developing this submission, as a Stakeholder, the AOHVA has taken the approach of providing input on the plan as a whole and not focus solely on aspects of the plan referencing OHV.

In reviewing the Regulatory Details Plan on pages 7 and 8 it is noted that the SSRP Strategic Plan and the SSRP Implementation Plan are non-binding. As indicated in the details the SSRP is primarily a document of provincial policies. A Designated Minister could change these policies at any time. How would Stakeholders be advised or have the opportunity to provide input with perspective impacts these policies changes may have.

## 2.0 The Future of the Region

### 2.1 Regional Vision

From AOHVA perspective the SSRP is missing a key foundational component – values or guiding principles, to set the stage for the Vision.

Suggested Values/Guiding Principles could include:

- Respecting Diversity – the people, the cultures, the landscape, the recreational opportunities
- Respecting the Environment – air, water, private and public lands

As mentioned at various sessions the AOHVA attended, the Regional Vision is too vague. The AOHVA offers the following:

*Southern Alberta is a diverse, vibrant and prosperous region where the natural beauty of the mountains, foothills, farmlands and prairies are managed so that citizens feel connected to the land and its history.*

The balance of the current Vision statement addresses the implementation of the Plan.

## **2.2 Strategic Directions for the Region**

The economy is identified as an outcome within the plan, however there is no strategic direction for economic growth.

Within the SSRP it implies that economic growth will be either status quo or enhanced through tourism such as iconic destinations or nature-based activities. Nature-based activities need to be clearly defined for all readers of this Plan. It should be noted that throughout the Province of Alberta both motorized and non-motorized user groups enjoy nature-based activities.

## **2.3 Conserving and Maintaining the Benefits of Biodiversity**

The AOHVA encourages and supports the development and implementation of the Land Use Framework for the respectful enjoyment of the backcountry, understanding that it is there to protect the environment and wilderness for the people of Alberta and not to keep it from the people.

The AOHVA encourages the development of the linear footprint management plan with the hope that it would be concluded prior to 2017. A concern of the AOHVA and perhaps other user groups is the impact of linear footprint stacking and how that would be addressed.

## **2.4 Advancing Conservation and Integrated Management of Crown Land**

The AOHVA supports effective stewardship of Alberta's public lands, including the need to manage access and use, as well as the protection of sensitive areas.

In addition, the AOHVA is committed to work in collaboration with partners in educating the public about the need for responsible behaviour in wilderness areas and during off-highway recreational activities. It is our belief that strong education programs create awareness and helps diminish incidences of destructive and unruly behaviour.

A managed approach for motorized access and development of a regional trail system can be addressed through the establishment of a Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO). This proposed DAO would be comprised of representative from AOHVA, Alberta Snowmobile Association (ASA) and Alberta TrailNet (ATN).

Irresponsible use of public lands and/or environmentally sensitive areas by some members of the public impacts the landscape and generates negative media attention detrimental to legitimate activities. The AOHVA does not condone unruly or unsanctioned activity on the land.

## **2.5 Advancing Watershed Management**

The AOHVA is supportive of the need for watershed management. However, there is a need to clarify setbacks for riparian areas. This is a challenge with respect to trail development to ensure there is no encroachment. There are communities that require 50 metres set back. Is this considered to be the norm?

## 2.6 Providing Recreation and Tourism Opportunities

Trail building to national standards within provincial regulations authorized by a DAO with stakeholder input can make motorized recreational activity a world-class industry for Alberta.

There is a need to develop innovative ways to fund the development of more well situated sites for random camping, especially sites that would accommodate today's extra large RV's. However, if random camping is to be increased, consideration needs to be given to enforcement of regulations.

The AOHVA supports the creation of additional random camping within the identified Public Areas however the issue of enforcement needs to be addressed. Consideration should be given to the assessment of camping registration fees with these fees being dedicated towards maintenance and enforcement within these areas.

## 2.7 Access Management Plans

The AOHVA and its members are committed to work in a collaborative manner with user groups in the development of recreation and access management plans. However, the AOHVA strongly believes that this process could be accomplished through the establishment of a Delegated Administrative Organization.

It is further proposed that participation in Access Management Plans needs to be coordinated through provincial organizations. The provincial organization brings a broader perspective to the table rather than regional perspective.

Peter Drucker in his writings offered the following quote: *Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work.*

Within the SSRP there are seven to eight identified sub-plans. There needs to be a Doing Plan in addition to the Implementation Plan. This Plan needs to have a determined start and completion dates.

## 2.8 Conservation of Private Lands

It is the understanding of AOHVA that the Nature Conservancy of Canada has projects covering approximately 180,000 to 200,000 acres of land within Alberta. From a trail development perspective for both non-motorized and motorized user groups, these areas need to be identified in order to respect the integrity of these lands.

## 2.9 Expansion of Provincial Parks

A concern of AOHVA with the proposed expansion of Provincial Parks is the impact on current operations. For example in the area of Don Getty Provincial Park, there are OHV trails. This expansion may encroach on these trails. Would OHV still have access if expansion takes place?

### 3.0 Establishment of a DAO

**AOHVA believes that investment into a Provincial Designated Trail Program through a “Trail Enhancement User Fee” (implemented to fund a DAO) will achieve the following...**

- Economic benefits to communities
- The common goal of Environmental Stewardship
- Sustainable Recreation through a properly signed, maintained and developed Provincial Designated Trail system
- Secure funding for AOHVA led Safety programs
- Clear direction from the DAO regarding regulations on a Provincial Designated Trail system
- AOHVA as the go to organization for Regional Planning Consultation including development of Access Management Plans.

**The AOHVA wish to ensure that the DAO is efficient, with minimized bureaucratic entanglements, fiscally self sustainable, and partnership focused toward governments, private sector and not for profit organizations.**

- **NEW Recreation Trail Disposition Required**
  - This is an area that requires Government of Alberta action and development.
  - There is no current disposition available from Sustainable Resource Development or Tourism, Parks and Recreation that recreation organizations could use.
  - The OHV community requires a defined footprint on the landscape that allows for managed public access and infrastructure liability assumption.
  - The Service Delivery Organization could then be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and GOA disposition responsibility.
- **NEW Defined Trail Approval Framework Required**
  - This is an area that requires Government of Alberta action and development.
  - There may need to be recreation access management plans prepared and approved; which are clear and concise, and then recreational trails would go to land managers for recommendations not approvals.
  - The current process is inoperative as land managers are not willing or able to approve OHV trails within the current regulatory framework.
  - In the past there have been a number of stakeholder councils or committees set up to attempt to create a structure for multi stakeholder trail user collaborations. They have not been successful in achieving the expected results on approving, maintaining, or improving trail projects and infrastructure.